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~Editor's Note~

Dear Readers & Contributors,

Welcome to the October 2024 issue of IJELLS.

The compilation of short stories, one which would appeal to young readers and the other a translation by a maestro. One heart rending, eye opening memoir from an established teacher who is visually challenged to a book review encouraging us to pick up the book. Papers from across the neighbouring border to a research article by a popular musician with 1.5 million followers. This issue has three first time academic writers. The paper on continuous professional development is also worth a mention.

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

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Happy Reading and Happy Sharing!

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~Contents~

Editor's Note	02
Contents	03

~Creative Writing in English ~

The Chosen One	
Geetha H.....	04
The Second Chance	
MZ Maryam.....	05
Pivot	
S Mohanraj.....	16
Book Review of Elizabeth Strout's Tell Me Everything	
Poonam Minocha.....	17
Forty-Five Years Before and After Life with Blindness: My Memoir	
Mahabir Prasad Yadav.....	19

~English Literature~

Limitations of Reformist Ideologies in Gora	
Bhanu Bhakta Sharma Kandel.....	24
Gynocentric Perspectives: Struggle for Womanhood in Kathy Acker's Empire of the Senseless	
Mani Bhadra Gautam.....	36
Call to African Americans to cherish their past in The Piano lesson by August Wilson	
G Manjula.....	45
Plight of Women in the Novel Pinjar	
Manoj Kumar Singh.....	54
Eco critical Reading of Tamsula Ao's Tombstone in My Garden	
V Rushika.....	57
Hamlet and The Libertine: 15th, 16th and 17th Century Literature and Philosophy	
William John Titus Bishop.....	64
Disidentification Performances in Telugu Film Songs	
N N Sree Vaibhavi.....	75

~English Language Teaching~

English Teachers' Perceptions of Continuous Professional Development and Identity Formation	
Renu Singh.....	88
Author Profiles	101

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~Creative Writing in English ~

The Chosen One

Geetha H



In the tranquil garden's embrace,
Beside the fresh stream's gentle flow,
Amongst playful animals at play,
With birds' melodies in the air,
Your serene, mischievous smile shines.

I pray for your eternal joy to soar;
May your laughter harmonize with the wind's song,
And your happiness bloom like the garden flowers.

May each petal reflect your grace,
And each bloom echo your radiant charm.
This serene scene fills my heart with joy divine.

The Second Chance

MZ Maryam



In a dark room filled with young men and women, colourful lights blue, yellow, green and red beaming to the beats of music. Hands up in the air, Men and women dancing to the songs with a glass of wine in their hands. Suddenly, there was a quarrel, "How can you wish to leave? I paid you, for this night" a man with a cigarette in one hand and whiskey in other hand screamed at a woman in the bar. "Sorry, it's an emergency I'll repay your money" replied the woman and rushed to the exit and left the bar. The young man Aamir smashes the glass on the floor in anger and threw some cash on the waiter's face and moves out.

Aamir takes his car and drives in full speed to his apartment. On his way, he hits a bridge and his car rolls down into the river. It is 2nd October 2019, 12 AM on a Saturday night. There was no one around to help him, it was dark and his car was drowning in the "Naala" river. His head was wounded and he was bleeding severely. He tries to open the door from his right, but due to the water pressure he is unable to open it. His windows are jammed, and he is barely conscious. The front glass of his car has done a lot of damage to his face. His eyes are half open "O Allah help me, please. I don't want to die yet, somebody help me, take me out of here." He murmurs in extreme pain. He feels that his life has come to an end and the first thing that comes to his mind is his pious, god fearing parents.

One afternoon when Aamir was 16, his friends decided to try a cigarette for the first time. Aamir rejected but his friend Rayan mocked him, "Who are you afraid of? Your father? You are such a coward Aamir" he said. Then Aamir got triggered and he accepted the cigarette. When they were smoking in the playground after school, Aamir's dad caught him and dragged him to their house and scolded him terribly. Aamir doesn't talk to his father since then. The other day he returned home drunk, his mother slapped him in the entrance in front of everyone. He was 20 at that time. He went to his room and took all his belongings, packed his bag and left the house. It's been five years since; he didn't meet them nor talk to them. Now, he has grown to be a rich man, he sells drugs to college boys and has many other illegal businesses. He hears someone screaming "Oye stay awake, don't die". His whole life flashed in front of his eyes.

After a while, he sees the door opening and he's pulled out by somebody. "But who is that, why can't I see anyone. " He senses that the water is carrying him somewhere. He can't see anything clearly as he's almost unconscious. The voice he heard was identical, he has heard it

before, He was taken near a mirror " A mirror this clear under the water?" He saw his own reflection and the person is taking him through it. Aamir faints completely.

A while later He opened his eyes, he was there in a store room lying on a damaged bed, surrounded by broken chairs, broken cupboard and old newspapers. The light there was very dim coming from a torch which is kept far away, he was able to see things only partially. He was scared to death and he couldn't even move to escape because his leg was severely injured. From a distance, he heard footsteps of someone coming closer and closer, Aamir panicked and searched for a sharp iron beside him, he found a rustic scissor, grabbed it and kept it with him. He pretended to fall asleep. He knew that the person should not be an evil person who wants to harm him, "Why would someone leave a scissor deliberately if he was an evil human? And why should he save me and take me here to this creepy place instead of a hospital.

He has given me a first aid and bandaged my wounds? "Who's this man and what does he want from me?" the door opens and Aamir stays still and ready. A man, tall and lean but his face is unclear in this darkness, he has something in his hand. The man comes near Aamir and sees that he's sleeping. He touches Aamir's wound, Aamir gets up, screaming to attack him with the scissor. "What exactly are you??" Screamed Aamir in shock. He was astonished to see that the man is exactly like Aamir. He is confused to the core. "Who are you?" "Why are we identical?" "Where am I now?", Aamir yells. The man shut Aamir's mouth and says "Why don't you calm down for a minute?"

"Stop Screaming, I am not supposed to help you! I'll get caught, if you make noises. Give me a chance to explain everything" He said politely. Then he offered Aamir food which he just brought "this might be a shock, you're in our world, The mirror world". This world is similar to Earth, the only thing which separates us is the "Devil sea". "Devil sea? What is that" interrupted Aamir. "That's the sea of the outer world, that is your earth" You people do not know that a world like this exists, but we do know about your world. Ordinary citizens are not allowed to come to the water through the mirror exit except us, We're "The fishing cops". We happen to see many such accidents like yours in our routine of fishing once in a year.

But yours!! I couldn't leave myself dying in front of me. I didn't want to save you but I couldn't resist myself. I wrapped you in this invisible suite and smuggled you in, along with the fishes. We have an official meeting once every year. All elite people and government officials attend this meeting and the "devil fish" is brought for them as a feast. It is the fish which can be seen only in the Devil sea. We go there through the mirror exit kept in VIP room. There is only one "mirror exit" left in our world. The mirror exit has a gate keeper whose job is to stand there 24/7 guarding the mirror. We stay in the devil sea for six hours putting the invisible suite waiting for the devil fish. This is the "invisible suit", put it on whenever you're around people. Explained the man

After hearing all this Aamir responds "Thank you for saving me, but all this is strange and feels like a dream. I still couldn't believe that I came in through the mirror, I thought I was going to die". A deep shock was seen in Aamir's face, and it was definite that he had thousands of doubts in his head. "How do we look identical? Is your name Aamir too? He asks in confusion. "Oh! I forgot to introduce myself because you made a fuss a while ago "ha ha ha" he laughed. This is a mirror world and there are a lot of chances for people to look identical

to the outer world. And thank God a thousand times, I saved you because we're alike. Or I would have let you die "ha ha ha" he laughed again. I'm Sameer said he with a warm smile.

Aamir felt uneasy because he never felt such closeness to anybody before, and the warm smile he got was something new to him. "People always smile at me when I give them drugs and they pay me, but that smile is different. What a genuine smile, why do I feel so close to him like I know him from years" thinks Aamir. While Sameer interrupted "Okay brother, it's time for prayer, I'm leaving now! You pray here, I'll lock the door outside, don't open any windows and wait for me I'll be back soon" and left.

Aamir feels even more uneasy now! He is not the type of man who keeps in touch with religious man. "I have been caught here and can't even escape; why does his charming smile and the way he looked at me made me feel so happy! It's irritating to see me going to the prayer. "This feels so uncomfortable. I am not able to bare this feeling, Aaaaahh !!" shouts Aamir.

He calms down, takes a deep breath and looks around as he has nothing else to do. He finds an old box with pictures. He takes it and dusts it. it was Sameer's family picture. Sameer looked very happy in this picture with his parents. His parents too resembled Aamir's parents. It was as if he was looking at his own family with so much of joy and love. He missed his parents but his ego stopped him from accepting it.

He took another picture and they were on a picnic, under cherry blossom tree, Sameer lying in the lap of his dad with an apple in his hand gazing at the sky. His mother making sandwiches for them. A drop of water fell on the picture; it was Aamir's tear. He couldn't bear looking at it "Mom, Dad. It's been years, how are you both? Do you really think of me? At least sometimes? No!! They might hate me now; after all I have done to them!! Yeah I know, they hate me to the core, they neither want me back, after all I am a sinful child! Why would they want me back? They are happy without me, Aamir consoled himself.

The sound of unlocking the door interrupted him, Sameer is back "Assalamu Alaikum Aamir" what's up? What were you doing all alone... felt bored without me? Asked Sameer. "Nothing much", I was just looking at your family pictures. don't you have any siblings?" asked Aamir. Sameer nodded his head to say no. Then Sameer brought some cards and invited Aamir to play. Aamir too was getting bored as he cannot even move so he accepted and they played together. Aamir started liking Sameer. He feels the comfort of a true friendship in him. Sameer genuinely cares for Aamir without any expectations. This character of Sameer softens Aamir's heart a little. They get along together and play many indoor games and talk a lot.

10 days later.

"Aamir! Come let's have a walk that's necessary for your recovery" said Sameer. "Sameer that's enough, you have already taken a long leave from your university for my sake. Go brother I can manage without you" said Aamir. Sameer smiled, it's okay, you'll be able to walk normally in a couple of days, Insha Allah, then I'll take you with me anywhere I go.

He held Aamir's arms and made him stand. He gave him the invisible suit to put on. To activate it, he pressed the red button which was in the collar and Aamir was invisible. "Hold my hand" I want to know where you are then don't blame me when you fall "hahaha" laughed Sameer. "That's enough bro! Stop teasing me or I'll complain to Allah" said Aamir in a funny way. Sameer was a bit shocked to hear this word "Allah" from Aamir. He thought that Aamir doesn't believe in God and he's out of the fold of his religion. Though Aamir told it in a funny way, it was surprising to Sameer because Aamir never prayed or talked about Allah or Islam. But Sameer didn't make it obvious through his face.

He laughed and took him out of the store room. This is the first time after 10 days that Aamir is looking at a bright light and the mirror world. To his shock, many things there were made up of the mirror. "Can I get through any of these mirrors and reach my world?" asked Aamir. "No you can't. There is only one "mirror exit" in this world and that's in the control of our government. It is kept in the VIP room. Only fishing squads are allowed to go there and we have a squad of 10 members.

"You told me earlier that you catch only fish from our sea. Then how do you get salt here?" Asked Aamir curiously. We too have a sea here; we take salt from there. We have fish and other sea animals too. We have rivers, falls and many other things your world has. We use the devil sea only for devil fish for annual meetings." explained Sameer. They moved into the house passing by the garden. Sameer's house was huge made up of glass and mirror. It was like a castle, Aamir was amazed, Sameer continued explaining to him about the different types of mirrors present in their world.

"The saphiricca" is known to be the most valuable mirror and only the royal family owns it. Then the "Blazmo" which has a little less value, this mirror can be seen in rich people's houses. The least worthy and affordable mirror is the "bluemiline". These mirrors can be found only in specific objects like jewels, brooches and spoons. These things here are very precious like your golds and diamonds. Other than this the normal material used here to build buildings, furniture is the "glass mirror" which is the regular ones like sand and stones.

"Sameer you're back so early today" a voice from behind shook Aamir's heart. He instantly turns around to look; it was Sameer's mother. Aamir couldn't hold back his tears "Mother, my mother" he murmured. "I have cooked your favourite meal, hurry up and wash your hands" calls the mother. Sameer leaves Aamir's hand and points to the chair asking him to sit. Sameer's mom served him the food and sat next to him. She tousled his hair, "your hair is so rough why don't you take care of it properly" she scolded out of care This was such a pleasant scene, Aamir's heart was broken. He whispered "Mom. I really miss you, I know you'll accept me if I return, it was my ego which stopped me from coming back, I didn't want you to see the new me, the Me which looks like a Kaafir (disbeliever), the me whose heart has become a stone. Mom, I miss you and I want to see you Maa.. he wept.

Sameer finished his lunch and told his mother that he's going out. He held Aamir when his mother was distracted and they moved out of the house quickly. As they were walking on the streets, Sameer met many people and they greeted him with full respect. Aamir was quite impressed. He never got such genuine respect from people. People respected him for his money, people respected him out of fear. Those were not good people. They maintained good

ties with Aamir only for the drug businesses and police security. Aamir had all police of his city in his pocket. He bribed them for his business purposes.

They went to a playground "This is our meeting spot, I really missed this place" said Sameer. Then a few of his friends ran towards him and hugged him.. "We really missed you.. were you really that busy from past two weeks" asked one of his friends. "Rayan!!?" Aamir in shock. He resembled his friend Rayan. This guy? Seriously? He has a beard, proper hair, no ear studs and spikes and no torn jeans. He was the one who introduced me to the 'drug business'. He taught me to smoke, drink and even kiss a girl!!" Surprisingly stood Aamir.

"I really like this girl from my university. she is so modest, she covers herself and doesn't even talk to boys. I don't know what to do" told Rayan to Sameer. Sameer gave him a very good suggestion. Sameer asked him to talk to her father and see if he could marry her and get to know her through her father. Sameer clearly warned him that if he doesn't talk to her father and keeps crushing on her Shaytan (Satan) will play his game and make him commit huge sins.

Likewise, the other friends too gave him suggestions to take some sweets while meeting her father. One of them asked him to wear some nice clothes with perfume. On seeing this, Aamir really regretted not having the right companionship.

He realises how important a friend's advice is and how it can guide a man to the right way. Aamir and Sameer returned to the store room. Aamir confesses his inner feelings to Sameer." I am happy to see me this happy and blessed through you". My life is just the opposite of yours. I live alone without family and friends. For the very first time, I have got a good friend and that's you. I believe you'll too hate me when you come to know me and that's completely fine. I am used to it. In fact, I deserve it. Sameer interrupted, "you know what you are too good. I am not going to judge your mistakes and sins. You are my brother and I pray to God that you get the best life here and hereafter. All your problems and loneliness will be gone. "Yo bro, just get married to a good wife, you'll find a friend and a family, all in one "hahaha" He joked. Aamir laughed and felt a sense of hope after listening to Sameer.

3 days later.

Sameer comes running to Aamir and says that his parents are leaving out of town on some business purpose and they won't be back for at least 10 days. He says that it's a perfect time for them to be out of town because they can be free and stay in the house and not in this boring basement. "Bro you finally get to bath today hahaha, teased Sameer". "Shut up Sameer, I bathed a couple of days in your congested washroom and I don't even smell bad. You don't leave a chance to tease me" yelled Aamir.

Sameer went to send off his parents. "Look after yourself, don't stay awake late at night and do not forget to eat on time" advised his mother. "Don't take leave from your classes and pray on time too man" his father added. "Okay call me or message me whenever you are free" he said and gave them a hug.

Once they left, Sameer took Aamir into the house, "It's too good to get some fresh air without your stupid suit, how do you manage to swim with it? It's too packed though" complained Aamir. Then Aamir freshened up and put Sameer's clothes on. Both had their lunch and played games together. Aamir had a peaceful sleep that night. The next day when Sameer was up Aamir commented "Thank God your bed is not made up of the mirror hahaha." Sameer too laughed and went to prepare breakfast while Aamir was wandering around. He saw a beautiful necklace in the mother's room. It seemed to be very valuable and precious. It was finely curved and the stones looked very costly. It was purple in colour and too bright. "It must be 'saphiricca' or at least 'blazino' which Sameer mentioned that day. What might be its value in our world? Why don't I take this with me back home, I'll become one of the richest men in the world I suppose. But Sameer is my good friend. He has done so much for me; how can I betray him? But then it's fine for once isn't it?" Aamir thought and took the necklace and turned around to see that Sameer was standing behind him. "Um... Actually... I didn't want to... but... umm" stammered Aamir in fear. Not the fear of being punished or being hit, He felt guilty of doing such a thing to his friend.

"What's this feeling? Is it guilt? I have done this many times? Why does it hurt this much now? Oh God this is killing me. Aamir's inner voice screamed. Sameer interrupted and pretended he didn't know that Aamir tried to steal his mom's necklace "Isn't it beautiful Aamir? It's my mom's necklace. Very precious. You know why?" Aamir nodded 'No'. He continued "Because this one belongs to my grandmother. My grandfather gave it to my mom after she died. We have this as his memory" said Sameer.

"I just took it to have a closer look" Aamir lied and gave it to Sameer. Then Sameer told the heroism of his grandfather and the past of the mirror world. "You have seen our world, how good and peaceful it is, but it was not like this before because of your world "the devil world" said Sameer. "The devil world? what do you mean by that?" Asked Aamir angrily. "Your world is known as the devil world here and you people are called "devils" by the mirror world people. This is why we have certain rules here that are very harsh and known to be the top crimes of our world. The most heinous crime of our world is to bring devils into our world.

The one who sneaks a devil will be killed if he's caught. "Then why did you save me? Why did you risk your life?" Asked Aamir. "As I have already told you, I don't know why, at that moment I wanted to... so I did and I do not regret Saving you. You are my buddy after all." Smiled Sameer. "What happened back then is something which our people can neither forgive nor forget, so we cannot blame them for this. They have gone through it and they don't want the history to repeat."

Flashback

80 years ago when my grandfather Sham was 15 years old, this land was very prosperous and was blessed with more than the present. Then lived a lady named Rumi, she was very beautiful and young. She was kind hearted too. She was the daughter of the president of this land. She was never allowed to go to the "Devil sea" because of the dangers it holds. So she decided to go through the mirror exit all by herself. There she met a man, his name was Arham. He jumped into the Naala river to hide from the police. He was an escaped prisoner. Arham was a thief in the devil world. Rumi saw him and fell in love with him. So she brought

him to the mirror world. She proposed to him marriage and he accepted. She asked him to meet her father. "Come to No.9 Green's street sharp at 6pm." She told and left.

Rumi tells her father about Arham, he gets angry because she disobeyed him and went to the "devil sea" alone but later he accepts her idea. The next day Arham met Rumi's father and he asked him for his daughter. He asks him about his job and family. He says that he's an orphan and as he has come from "outer world" and that he has no job yet. He says he has no idea to return to his world and he wants to live in the mirror world for the rest of his life.

Rumi's father Aziz, accepts him and joins him in his team to work for the government as his assistant. Arham agrees but wants all his money, gold and diamond which he stole and hid in the outer world. So he asks Rumi to take him to the room where the mirror exit is kept. She eventually refuses but later she accepts when Arham insists. Rumi takes him to the VIP room and manages to divert the gate keeper 'Haris' for two hours. Arham asks her to wait near the mirror for a couple of hours until he returns. Arham gets out of the 'river Naala' and goes to the place where he kept his gold hidden. He reached there and the Director General of Police Hasad, caught him. "I know that you'll definitely come here for your gold and money, and I also know that you have gone to a place different from our world."

Arham was in shock after listening to Hasad. "There were rumours about it always but I didn't believe it until I saw you jumping into the river and you never came back. it's been 5 days since, I waited there for whole day but you were missing. This is more than enough for me to confirm that you have gone to that suspicious world" said Hasad the officer. Arham was blank and he couldn't even defend him. Officer continued "Why don't we make a deal? You bring me the intel and Information from there on Jan 24 at 4 am, once I get near the entrance I'll give signal to my men and they'll give you all your money and gold back and signed papers for your release. You can take that and go to any corner of the world and live in peace. How does it sound?" Arham accepted his deal and came back to the mirror exit. He got inside safely and Rumi closed the exit.

Is your work done there? Please never go there again I am afraid of losing you forever" said Rumi looking into Arham's eyes. Arham too promised her that he'll never go to the outer world again. A week passed, Arham and Aziz's relationship grew thicker, they shared a very close bond. They go out for tea often, they also go to the barbecue shop every night, when returning home from the office. Aziz shares his memories of his dead wife to Arham "my wife has gone, I too shall join her soon and I feel at ease that I've got someone perfect and suitable for my beloved Rumi to take care of her for the rest of her life. "Aaah I am at peace" Aziz takes a long breath. Sure sir, after all I am like your son. Arham pats Aziz's hand giving him assurance.

The next day is Jan 24th, an important day. This was the day when Hasad called Arham to come with the papers. This day is also important as there was a meeting among the ministers of the "mirror world". The meeting was to discuss about the newly invented and the most powerful weapon of "mirror world" so far. It was invented for an emergency to use when they are attacked by others. It is so powerful that it can destroy an entire country of the outer world.

President Aziz, Arham, the ministers, the secretaries and all the heads of the "mirror world" were present. They were neatly dressed, very serious and well mannered. They all were seated in the conference table while Aziz gave Arham a key and ordered him to bring the files from the locker in the president room. Those files had all the details about the mirror world and the secret weapon. Arham went to president room and took those files, he opened it and he was amazed after looking at it. It has the details about the treasure, presented in the mirror world and also the details of the secret weapon. He took those files and went to the mirror exit and told the gate keeper Haris, the president wants you now in the meeting. "Hurry up". Haris fell into Arham's trap and left his position.

Arham used this opportunity to escape. He pulled the lever, came to the devil sea, He swam swiftly to the shore. Hasad the officer and his squad with around 500 men were waiting for Arham's arrival. Arham handed over him the files wrapped in cover and informed "Hurry up the gate is open and the gate keeper will be back anytime soon" Hasad warned Arham "If this is a trap for me, you'll die before reaching the airport" and gave him the promised gold, money and release warrant and jumped into the Naala river with his force.

"What made you move from your position Haris?" Yelled Aziz. "Didn't you summon me sir?" Asked Haris, doubtfully. "But sir Arham..." Haris paused and ran to the VIP room, Aziz and other ministers too followed him, but it was too late already. Hasad and his force arrived. They surrounded the ministers and pointed their guns towards them. Hasad's gun was pointing to Aziz, he asked everybody to kneel and put their hands up. "The devil human, he betrayed us all!! I curse you to rot in hell" ferociously screamed Aziz. Rumi who just arrived heard this before entering the room.

She peeped through the door and saw the outer world people with guns "I knew something was wrong with Arham after his visit to the outer world. I am the reason for all this, she cried and ran to her teammate Hamza. "Arham betrayed us all. Father, Haris and other ministers are in danger, please do something Hamza. I think they're after the weapon cried Rumi. Hamza was a scientist, he had a device invented just then "The invisible suit". He asked Rumi to put it on. He also wore one and told Rumi "Hold my jacket or you'll lose track of me". What are we going to do? Asked Rumi. "Destroy the weapon and kill them all !! Take some snipers too.. It is only we who can save them now " replied Hamza.

The suit was perfectly working. They rushed to the spot and quietly sneaked in. They both were moving softly and reached near the mirror exit. But unfortunately Rumi slipped and pushed the cup near her. Bang!!! Someone shot her knees. She fell down and Her jacket stopped working and she was exposed. "My daughter!! My child!! Why did you come here" cried her father helplessly? Hamza was a real gentleman, he couldn't leave Rumi and go. He went near a police officer snatched his gun, exposed himself and turned towards Hasad to shoot him but Hasad shot first in Hamza's chest and He died.

"Aaaaahh" screamed Rumi with pain. The pain of guilt tortured her a lot more than the pain of the bullet on her knees. Hasad thought not to waste more time and risk his life. He shot Aziz and ordered to shoot every minister, heads and the secretaries. All were shot dead in front of Rumi's eyes. She couldn't bear to witness all this, her heart was pierced and wrenched out of pain.

She took a gun from next to her "woe to me !! woe to me !! woe to me!! she cried with tears in a broken voice and shot herself. The heads, the ministers, the president, Aziz, his daughter and rest of the powerful people of the "mirror world " were dead. Now Hasad announces him as the new ruler of the mirror world and he orders his army to kill everyone who is against him, He was in search of the weapon. "The mirror world is mine! The weapon is mine! The treasure is mine hahaha" he laughed wickedly. People were forced to accept him as the ruler.

Hasad didn't provide the basic necessities like food and water sufficiently for those people. Every provision was limited and restricted. Moreover, he tortured people as he pleased. He treated them worse than slaves. He burnt people alive for his entertainment. He gave them worse punishments like beating them with thorny rope for asking some little extra groceries to make food. The children were forced to be his slave. He used women as he pleased. He put them in inhumane living conditions and tortured them.

But then formed a group called 'Aswad', who worked secretly for the people. Grandfather Sham was one of them. Group Aswad smuggled food and water from the enemies to their people. They tried several ways to kill Hasad, but every try led to failure and they couldn't take any strong stance against him because they'll be killed if they are caught. They worked in secrecy, and so many got caught and killed. Sham was one of the core members of the group and he was a strong and quick witted person. He saved many Children and women. They as a team dug tunnels underneath their houses and connected it with one another so that they could escape in case of emergency.

The situation lasted for seven years. Neither did Hasad find the weapon which he was searching for years. Just like every year he hosted his 'crowning festivals' were the ministers and high class people those were his supporters were allowed. This happens in a place called Shoki far from the town. All his people including the secretaries and town head went for the festival to celebrate his 7 years of kingship.

Hasad was sitting on a gold chair with some wine on a silver glass. Suddenly, it started getting darkened on a midday with strong winds and rain. Hasad and his ministers went inside the only building in Shoki to save themselves from getting wet. Slowly the water level increases. Hasad and his people were waiting for the rain to stop. But it got severe, the water increased even more and reached the 2nd floor. They all went to the last floor. Rain water started leaking from the walls and windows leaving the floor wet on the 3rd floor too. There were hundreds of people on a single floor. It's been three days and the rain doesn't seem to stop. All the food and clean water they had is over.

Arrogant Hasad started to feel the fear. The fear of death was seen in his face. The air around there started suffocating. He ordered "throw half of the people out of the building or I'll die" and half people were thrown to drown in the water. The rain increased slowly and slowly, Hasad's arrogance was broken, He was forced to be humble. He licked the dirty water from the floor to suffice his thirst. The water filled the last floor of the building too.

Hasad and all his arrogant companions were drowning to death. The people from the town found out that all the people who went to the festival in Shoki are dead. They thanked God and rejoiced in their freedom. Sham and his teammates took the land to reconstruct their

world. They set new laws and order and allotted rulers for different places. The leftover "Devils" were arrested and few were killed. Hence the peace came back to our world. And from then on we started hating the people of outer world and it is a greater crime to expose ourselves to you or to smuggle you in our world. If I am caught, I'll be killed on the spot said Sameer. "what do you mean by killed on the spot" it is the mistake of our ancestors.

How can they kill you for that?? Asked Aamir in a loud voice. "What else do you expect after the slavery; we have gone through? Anyhow it's safe for us to be hidden and live in peace. To maintain peace, we need strict rules" explained Sameer. "You're right though" replied Aamir in a low voice. There was silence for a while. Aamir felt very guilty for trying to steal again. He started relating him to Hasad and he is so much guilty and frightened now. "Brother I too was a devil, not to somebody else but to my own people and now I promise to become a human again and act like one.

Once I get home, I'll go back to my family and apologize." He confessed to Sameer. "Oh God please forgive me for all that I have done. I'm no longer the old Aamir." He thought and moved slowly towards Sameer and gave him a tight hug and cried. Sameer smiled "that's okay brother!! We all are humans and humans can change any time unlike devils isn't it Aamir?" Asked Sameer. Aamir smiled "Yes yes, indeed". Aamir felt a sense of relief, his heart was light. He prayed for the first time after years with Sameer, and decided to leave the mirror world that night. It was midnight and the sky was filled with pitch darkness. Aamir decides to leave and Sameer gives him the invisible jacket to put on and asks him to follow. They got down the street. The streets Were empty and filled with unusual silence. Sameer took him to the main office where the mirror exit is kept.

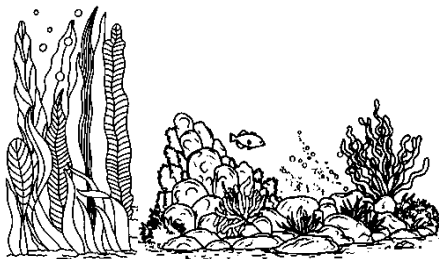
Sameer had the pass to enter the VIP room where the mirror exit is kept as He is one of the fishing cops. But there is a gate keeper guarding the mirror exit. Sameer gets an idea. He takes the risk and goes to the gate keeper and says "Hey man the downstairs has caught fire, hurry up and put the fire off." The gate keeper runs down to protect the building from spreading fire. No one else is around, so Sameer used this chance and told Aamir in a mild voice "remove your suit quickly" Aamir removed the invisible suit. Sameer held his hand and took him near the mirror exit. He put the password and pulled the lever, the passage opened. Sameer put his hand through the mirror to confirm if it had really opened. His hand went through the other side and came in wet with the sea water. " So is that all brother? Here we depart" Aamir game Sameer a shake hand, pulled his wrist and gave him a one sided hug and bid farewell.

"How dare you trick me?" A shattering voice from behind shook Sameer's heart. It was the gate keeper holding two guns in each hand and pointing towards both of them. " I have called the emergency patrol, you both are dead" furiously shouted, the gate keeper. "The grandson of Sham has done such a treachery and betrayed his own people? I pity your grandfather" he said looking at Sameer. Aamir whispered to Sameer " the gate is open behind, we still have time, we can just jump and escape. come with me, come on !!!"

The gate keeper continued "you are a monster Sameer! You are a monster who has brought a Devil to our world again!!" All the guards arrived with guns. Aamir biting his teeth "Get Up You Idiot". Sameer turned his head to Aamir with tears in his eyes and gave a smile "How can I come?" He said and pushed Aamir in the open passage letting him escape. Gunshot!!! Sameer

fell down screaming in pain. That was the last thing Aamir saw and heard from the mirror world. The mirror is broken and the entrance for the mirror world is lost forever.

Police arrive, people gather and a commotion happens. People rescued Aamir from the Nala river. He was taken to the hospital. He recovers and gets his consciousness after 24 hours. He turns on the TV, "A 25-year-old man Aamir rescued from river Naala after an accident. The accident occurred yesterday 2nd October 2017 and the nearby people rescued and called the ambulance. He has no major injuries and doctors consider this as a miracle." Said the news reporter. The door opens "My son, how are you?" Aamir's mom entered with tears in her eyes. "Maa forgive me, for me for the sake of Allah, tell dad that I have changed and I'm no longer the old Aamir. Please mom forgive me, he screamed in agony. His dad was near the door, hearing his son cry " I do not know what changed him, but thank you my lord", he fell on his knees.



Pivot

S Mohanraj

Mathematics is not a subject everyone likes, it is difficult. Why should we add, how do we cope with division? What are numerators and denominators? How are they related? Why do we have equations and why should we solve them? One cannot understand several questions like this. I often used to tease my friend with such doubts. When I got to the eleventh standard, for some strange reason, mathematics distanced itself from me. I could continue my studies reasonably well up to the postgraduate level. But the fears that loom large cannot be wished away, perhaps they pursue us tirelessly.

After a long gap, mathematics encountered me again. I may not have any need for it now, but I felt several angles mentioned in geometry were staring at me fiercely. With the meagre knowledge I had of mathematics, I began to respond confidently to the questions my son asked: "Three angles or corners get together to form an equilateral triangle." As I was explaining and using mathematical terms, the triangle, gradually acquired huge proportions and became a circle and began to rotate in front of me. This hallucination lasted a while and I felt I was standing on each angle and each side was entrapping me. Squares, rectangles, square roots, were all staring at me from every corner of the house. Suddenly, I had a flash and thought - there are only lines, no angles. Somebody was erasing the lines I had drawn with a pencil to shorten them; they were attempting to redraw the lines after erasing them a number of times. That person knew that I had deliberately drawn long lines, though there was a need only for short lines.

When my son drew my attention, I was dragged out of my dream. "Mummy, what is a dot?" This time I gave the answer in a very casual manner.

"Son, a dot has no angles, nor any corners. Similarly, there are no lines either. Dot is such a point from where angles, corners, straight lines, lines originate. A dot has no shape nor character of its own. But the beginning and the end are both hidden in it."

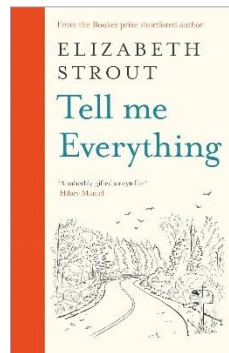
After uttering these lines, I got caught in some unknown struggle and began to wonder. My son's light touch brought me back into this world for a second time.

This time, as I became conscious, I understood that I was myself a dot. Though nobody took notice of me, I realized that I was the pivot of all activities at home. I realized everyone revolves around me.

(Original story is in Hindi titled 'Duree' by Vaani Davey. It was translated into Telugu titled 'Irusu' by Dr Roop Kumar Dabbikar. This story in Telugu is translated into English by Prof S Mohanraj)

Book Review of Elizabeth Strout's *Tell Me Everything*

Poonam Minocha



Strout, Elizabeth. *Tell Me Everything*. Penguin Random House, New York, 2024

This recently published novel by Elizabeth Strout which revolves around the character of a sixty-five-year-old lawyer, Bob Burgess and his friends, relations and acquaintances in Crosby, a town in Maine, explores and unfolds the many-layered emotions, complexities and uncertainties in human relationships. Though the 'action' revolves around Bob who is involved in defending a reclusive man suspected of killing his mother, '*Tell Me Everything*' is not a plot-based fictional story. Rather it is the relationship between Bob and Lucy that anchors the narrative.

Tell Me Everything brings together characters from Strout's earlier fiction, especially Lucy Barton and Olive Kitteridge. As the writer manoeuvres the dynamics of relationships through the depiction of the friendship between Olive and Lucy, and between Bob and Lucy, the reader keeps acquiring fresher perspectives on love, longing, loneliness and the strong need to connect. While the story-sharing sessions of Olive and Lucy bring about shifts in perspectives on how they view each other and the world around them, the friendship between Bob and Lucy (verging on love?), hinges on communicating, sharing their routine as well as their innermost thoughts, their fears, their regrets and their candid opinions on people, situations and relationships. Their conversation during their daily walks along the river unfurls the deep desire in every human to be heard, understood and not be judged.

Although the narrative pivots around the story of Bob and Lucy, the various facets of the lives of other characters like Olive Kitteridge, Matt Beach, Margaret Estaver, Pam Carlson, Mrs. Hasselbeck and Charlene Bibber show that life is still worth living, even if it does not turn out the way we want it to. Strout portrays beauty, hope and passion in the lives of ordinary people, and shows how human beings can be strong despite their frailty. She intertwines their stories and weaves it into the main fabric, capturing the subtleties and nuances in relationships with remarkable insight, compassion, empathy and understanding.

Tell Me Everything leaves us pondering over how ordinary situations and events play a crucial role in exploring our inner selves and understanding the journey of life. The lives of the various characters, their battles, their struggles, their fears and the way they transcend or deal with them reflect that life is not about winning or losing, but about understanding and empathising. Strout illustrates how one can find hope in one another. As Lucy says, "*Love comes in so many different forms, but it is always love.*"

Poignant, real and relatable, Strout's novel reverberates with an old-world charm despite the contemporary setting. Her style is effortless and easy, yet exquisite. She moves between the past and present, skilfully creating a beautiful tapestry of interconnected memories and events. Strout's book is certainly a masterpiece that cannot be left unfinished. Nor is it a book that one would want to complete in a sitting or two. One would want to savour every word, every emotion, every interaction. And on reaching the end, one may feel like going back to it, to relive the lives of the characters, delve into the innermost corridors of their minds and explore their 'unrecorded lives'. *'Tell Me Everything'* tells us that no life is ordinary or unremarkable. There is a distinctive charm and silent courage in every life. What Lucy says about the stories she shares with Olive-- "*People and the lives they lead. That's the point.*"— is precisely the point of Strout's novel as well.

Forty-Five Years Before and After Life with Blindness: My Memoir

Mahabir Prasad Yadav

As I write this memoir, I cringe, yes I shudder; as I type, my hands shiver and my fingers quiver like timorous leaves of the trees.

Peculiar times, strange days, strange dates, strange misgivings, strange hopping of mind, aah, how it again smites the memory lanes! In my solitude, I am absolutely lost in contemplation of the time exactly Forty-Five years before and after.

When someone does worst to someone, he or she thinks that person would suffer the worst. Similarly, when someone does the best to someone thinks that person would enjoy and celebrate. But hardly anybody bothers to realize that sometimes it may so happen that the best may emerge out of the worst and worst may emerge out of the best that one does. Sometimes some people do anything, just as a fun and frolicity, without thinking what will be the consequence of such an unmindful action. Sometimes, some people just do anything and anything happens very miraculously.

So it happened with me Forty-Five years before and after. Having lost my eye sight completely due to small pox, as well as both my parents very early in my early childhood, the whole world for me was absolutely bleak and black, dark and dreary, yes, full of darkness and despair, where nothing except mires of miseries existed for me as no conduits of sustenance were perceptible. In such a world, nothing existed to interest me or to console me in my toils and turmoil Forty-Five years ago. I was just a wanderer constantly in quest of such essential values of common human life as food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care Etc. Of the necessity of love, I knew nothing as there was none to love me or whom I could have ever loved as my brother or sister or friend. Education and learning, religious discourses in Hindi especially on that great sacred favourite book Shriramcharitmanas composed by the great Hindi poet Goswami Tulsidas Jee fascinated me the most in my ancestral village which I happened to hear in the village temple, but though as a small child, I know naught how I realized and rather concluded in my mind that for attainment of education and learning, first of all the food, clothing and shelter were essential. Thus I concluded in my fancy that the place where all the aforesaid were imparted was a greater and better place but I wasn't clear whether such a place will accommodate me as a blind boy, and moreover, what about if I happen to rise beyond expectation?

Hence, in quest of the cited afore, I all alone a blind child, hungry, thirsty, tired, in deep despair, with mere recollection of Lord Ram Jee which was etched and inculcated in my mind and heart by some religious teacher, I set out on my first journey by train for Ayodhya Jee about which I had heard that such religious centres or cities had schools imparting education, food, clothing and shelter to the blind persons.

I have been on several journeys by train since then, in fact so many so that I never bothered to count or recall, but my first, second and the third journeys by train are so etched and inculcated in the depth of my mind, and are so indelible that I could never erase or obliterate them from my memory lanes.

Anyway, back to what I said afore that I set all alone on my journey by train to Ayodhya Jee. I had to walk on foot a long distance in a rustic region from my ancestral village and cross two rivers, one main and the other its tributary, reach a bus station to travel by a roadways bus before arriving at the railway station for boarding the train heading towards Ayodhya Jee. I boarded the train at the night with the help of some stranger and for the whole of that night I was engrossed in the contemplation of what a train was like, I was trying as a blind child just to understand what a train could be, in fact, I wanted to touch the whole of the train from front to its back, ah, perhaps I might have been lost in the endeavour of concept formation of which psychological theory and the process I happened to read and learn while studying for my BEd., MEd. and Special PGDSEd. degree and diploma courses during my latter life. So in the following morning, I de-boarded the train at Ayodhya Jee, but very strangely, as I alighted the train, I know not who and how quickly someone held me by the hand and dropped me at a hermitage where some saints were perched on the raised platform side by side spreading their bedsheets as bed. I occupied one of the side raised platform for my stay at the hermitage, thinking all the while that from there and by them only I would be led to the school for the blind students or perhaps the blind school could be under their management. But nothing of the ilk happened that I had imagined so passionately. Nobody talked to me except a boy who might have been somewhat senior to me in age. Escorted by him, I took lunch with those saints of the hermitage when they assembled for the meals. After that nobody ever conversed with me for the whole day and night, may be they were busy in their prayers or collections of some money and materials for themselves. As I experienced a vast gulf of communication, and even non-availability of any escort to assist me in moving around to toilet in the morning, nor anyone was found interested in discoursing about the blind school in quest of which I had come so far, I all on my own decided in my mind better I go back to my village from where I had come all the way for education and shelter of which no speck was perceptible around there where I had cherished my expectations in abundance.

That same morning the date of which I just don't recollect now, I left the hermitage and set out on my journey back to my ancestral village where I was left by my parents before their sad demise and the complete loss of my vision in my early childhood.

Having left the hermitage, I walked on the road thinking it would lead me to the bus station. I might have arrived near the railway station of which I wasn't actually aware of as outside in the front parking area so many cabs, taxis and tempos were parked calling passengers which I in my imagination considered as the buses. I boarded and entered one by one in almost every tempo and taxi standing over there perching for a while on whichever seat I could have got requesting driver whether he would condescend to help me a ride and drop me if he was driving towards my village district head quarter. As I kept trying and requesting, I was chucked out

pitilessly. In the meanwhile, I knew not whether a Train was also standing there the half of which was on the railway tracks a little outside the railway station platform.

A stranger, may be one of the taxi or tempo drivers or one of passengers around or the passer by, or may also be one of the railway workers pulled me hard by the elbows, told me to board the train and pushed me into the heavily crowded railway carriage mockingly saying “This will take you to your home village.” I still recall some people objecting to that deed, some chuckling outside and some still bursting into peals of full throated laughter saying, “This blind boy will die somewhere this way!” But I didn’t die anywhere so far. The train began to move and quickly accelerated its pace. Hungry, thirsty, weary, with a dry throat, yet not trounced, I sat on the floor of that train’s compartment. Nobody to talk, nobody to call of my own. Forget that aside, indeed nobody to take pity on me, a poor blind boy in such a miserable plight. Anyway, the train took the whole day and finally arrived at Lucknow late in the evening of that day. Everybody got down and so did I too. After de-boarding, I walked around that train to and fro, ah groping it to and fro in wonder and awe, from front to back, and thus learned that this kind of an object was called a train. As I moved from front to back of that standing train, I happened to meet the Guards and driver whom I requested to help me reach my village, but they expressed their inability to help me as they were going off their respective duties, but thank God that they explained to me that I had come all the way very wrong, off the route, and it was Lucknow railway station called Lucknow Junction where that standing train had dropped me. That was the second train I had boarded. The first was the one which I had taken for Ayodhya Jee. Now, I don’t recall properly how I came away from that standing train, perhaps, somebody might have guided me, but now it doesn’t come to my mind so very easily. I took out my *Lungi* from my satchel, spread it out and slept on the platform of that Lucknow Junction of the Railway Station for the night. As usual, I woke up early in the following morning too, With the help of the people around, I was able to find a nearby temple where I could go, stay for a day, take bath, and say my prayers Etc. The head priest of that temple was also the owner of a nearby restaurant catering tea, milk and two times meals. That head priest of the temple and the owner of the hotel was a saintly figure and a very nice gentleman, though he talked very little, and very softly, almost inaudibly, yet he seemed cooperative and compassionate in finding the address of the school for the blind I had been looking for. I sojourned there for few days and then decided to leave for now again back to my ancestral village from where I had come all alone as a totally blind boy in journey by first train to Ayodhya Jee in search of blind school for my education and shelter which proved a mirage of me, as I reached Lucknow amok in an unplanned journey by the second train.

That was the Tuesday evening of 20th July of the year 1976 Which I discovered latter on from some documents and recollections of certain incidents. I was fasting for the Tuesday, the day of Lord Mahabir Jee or Lord Hanuman Jee. With the help of a compassionate gentle man, I boarded the train at the railway station called Lucknow Junction and tried to go back. The train began to move fast. The compartment of that train was almost empty in which very few passengers had occupied their seats. It was quite cool and breezy as the window panes seemed broken or removed for some reason in that ordinary compartment of the Passenger Train.

As I felt the cool of the gentle, soothing breeze coming from the windows of that fast moving Passenger Train, I began to recite and chant some very important and favourite Hindi verses from the great epic Shriramcharitmanas composed by the great Hindi poet Goswami Tulsidas Jee which I had crammed and rote-memorized in the village school for the normal sighted children. My recitation and chanting of the verses of Shriramcharitmanas so impressed and so immensely delighted the co-passengers that they began to talk to me rather affectionately. Some of the co-passengers asked me in which school and where was I studying, to which I replied that I was in search of blind school where I could study. When they asked me as to how I could sing so well the verses of Shriramcharitmanas and how I had learned them, to which I simply replied that I had learned them all in the village school meant for normal sighted children. A stranger of that train passengers while gladly conversing with me, told me that he would lead and show me the blind school in Lucknow itself if I readily consented to go with him and sojourn at his home in his village for a couple of days. I felt a creeping sensation of fright, a strange sense of awe and wonder, yet consented saying that such a blind school would be the heaven for me on earth where I would most willingly go for my education and training; and in fact, I stated that I was in quest of such an institution and that was the reason why I had come all the way from my village to Ayodhya Jee and Lucknow. So I calmly consented and went with that stranger to stay for a couple of days in his village if he could fulfil his pledge to escort me and show me the blind school in Lucknow where I could secure admission.

The said was done. I with that great soul arrived at his village home on Tuesday the 20th July 1976 late at night, dwelt there on Wednesday July 21 and till evening of July 22, 1976 and then the same evening I left with him again back to Lucknow by train in search of a school for the blind. That train got too late and on the following day on Friday the 23rd of July 1976, it arrived at Lucknow Junction sometime late in the afternoon when the schools might have been rather closed which added to the displeasure and discomfitures of the gentle man as he had to go to his relatives for the night stay while I was also with him as a blind boy which he didn't like at all. He vehemently instructed me not to express any desire to have any food or water stating that his relatives would not like it. I replied to him that I was fasting that Friday for *Ekadashi* and hence, I would not have liked to have any food or water. As I said so I did.

Hungry, thirsty, tired, in a miserable plight, though not trounced as yet, I spent the night without any speck of sleep on the broken wooden-string cot uselessly lying in the courtyard of the huge home of gentle man's Brahmin relatives, got up early in the morning as usual, took my bath by pulling ground-water from the hand pump and silently said my prayers as I had already practised. I all the while cherishing the aspiration and expectations of blind school in my brain and bosom kept counting the seconds, minutes and hours, till I thanked Lord Almighty that eventually that gentleman got ready and escorted me to that Government School For The Blind Lucknow where I was somehow able to secure my admission on that glorious breezy drizzling day of the Saturday morning, the 24th July 1976 and thus, where I could realize not merely my dream, but a kind of my rebirth on the earth in that School, in that temple of learning and wisdom; yes, in that heavenly abode on earth, in that paradise on earth where the foundation stone of the humungous building of my education was so laid down that it ultimately arrived at its pinnacle of magnificent M.A., M. Ed., Pg. Pd. S. Ed., M. Phil. and Ph.D., eventually

placing me on the position of English Professor in one of the premier institutions of the nation called Lakshmibai College University Of Delhi.

Ah! This is July 2021 Forty-Five years after.
That was July 1976 Forty-Five years before.

Forty-Five years' before in the year 1976, Tuesday fell on July 20, Wednesday on 21, Thursday on July 22, Friday on July 23 and that great Saturday fell on July 24 a glorious breezy drizzling day of my life or else better to call it the glorious day of my rebirth, before which I felt outcast, dead in life!

Exactly after Forty-Five years now in the year 2021 those days are falling on the same dates or those dates are falling on the same days making me lapse deep down into memory lanes wherein I float on the torrents of the past and present streams of consciousness of my human mind; so restlessly that I just know not where to go and drown, dissolve with the universe or else what to do or dream of while I am moving in the A.C. railway coach of the train from Delhi again towards Ayodhya Jee for darshan with my wife and young son who is grown-up enough to find it all very funny to himself as I narrate it all to him!

That time, I was just an illiterate wandering blind child of a village peasant!
Now I am a professor of English literature, imparting education and dwelling in Delhi!
Ah! Could it ever have so happened? Yes, it did!

~English Literature~

Limitations of Reformist Ideologies in *Gora*

Bhanu Bhakta Sharma Kandel

Abstract

In *Gora*, Rabindranath Tagore presents a compelling examination of discrimination within the Brahmo Samaj, a reformist movement in colonial Bengal that aimed to challenge orthodox Hinduism. Despite its progressive ideals of equality and social justice, the Brahmo Samaj is shown to be mired in contradictions, particularly in matters of caste, identity, and social stratification. The character of Gora, who initially champions orthodox Hindu beliefs, serves as a powerful vehicle for Tagore to explore the limitations of reformist ideologies that seek to replace one dogma with another. The novel critiques how even movements rooted in progressive thought can harbor exclusionary tendencies and maintain hierarchies. Tagore's philosophical stance in *Gora* emphasizes the need for a more profound and holistic understanding of equality that transcends superficial changes in ritual and belief. Using universal humanism, Tagore advocates for an inclusive spirituality beyond rigid religious or caste-based identities. He suggests that true liberation and social reform must come from recognizing the shared humanity of all individuals rather than clinging to narrow sectarian divisions. The novel ultimately calls for a rejection of dogmatism in all forms, proposing instead a compassionate, humanistic approach that embraces diversity and fosters genuine equality. Tagore critiques the Brahmo Samaj's failure to live up to its ideals and offers a vision of social harmony based on tolerance, inclusion, and the recognition of the fundamental oneness of all people. MLA has been used for referencing, and the theory of social discrimination has been extensively used in preparing the article. The readers will be aware of the implicit intention of the writer that discrimination pervades in any group of human civilization. People who advocate against sociocultural discrimination practice discrimination when someone does not think and behave like them.

Keywords: Brahmo, Caste, Discrimination, Exclusion, Hatred, Hindu, Orthodox, Reform

Introduction

Discrimination is a global phenomenon that transcends cultural, geographical, and socio-economic boundaries. It manifests in various forms, including race, gender, religion, caste, ethnicity, and more, affecting individuals and communities worldwide. Despite differences in context, the underlying mechanisms of exclusion, marginalization, and inequality are strikingly similar across societies. Whether through systemic racism, gender bias, religious intolerance, or caste-based oppression, discrimination continues to perpetuate social divisions, limiting opportunities and undermining human dignity. Addressing these global patterns is a collective

responsibility that requires a commitment to fostering inclusivity, equality, and mutual respect across all communities.

The very concept of discrimination begins from the concept of belongingness and identity, primarily a cultural one. Even “a biological process,” as K. Avruch has said, “is caught in a cultural web” (266). Culture, as Edward W. Said (1993) has defined in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, “is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought...” (xiii). He further adds, “Culture in [this] sense is a source of identity, and rather combative...” (xiii). As Richard Jenkins observes, how we know ourselves is basically the same as we know others, depending upon observation, retrospection, and projection (69). The process of selfhood operates within and between individuals that is realized initially about others; this process continues throughout life; the presentation and elaboration of self-identification draw upon a broad palette of accessories in the human world. Identity thus denotes how individuals and collectivities (groups) are distinguished in their relations with other individuals and groups (Jenkins 18). In other words, identity is our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others, which includes us. As E. Shils remarks, “It is held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affinities and a civil sense which is low in many, high in some and moderate in most persons” (131).

Therefore, the strongest belongingness between/ among the people develops based on family, custom, place, religion and language (Fenton 79). Moreover, as Anthony Elliot has quoted Freud, “. . . certain forms of self-love are not only a good thing for social relations but lie at the core of the involvement of individuals with culture and politics (79); narcissism is essential to the integrity of the self, and highly beneficial too genuinely moral and cultural aspirations. It is also important to note that the identity of the self is framed upon a fundamental sense of psychic insufficiency, lack, absence, and trauma. Sometimes, through the projection of ‘Otherness,’ hatred of other people establishes a seemingly conflict-free society. It is the result of frustration that finds confirmation in the more destructive and negative aspects of contemporary cultural life. However, the concept of this identity and sense of belongingness acts adversely as a cause of hatred upon others when they do not behave the same way and they keep different beliefs.

Method

This research paper has been prepared using secondary data and is a library-based study. Indeed, no field work has been carried out, but books, journals, magazines, and electronic materials have been consulted as far as they are available and appropriate. It is more of a cultural anthropological study of how people behave worse in the name of reformation, which is almost a global phenomenon.

Discussion

In *Gora*, there is no harmonious relationship between the Hindus and the people who have joined Brahma Samaj. This is not precisely Christianity, but it reviles Hindu philosophy, the

caste system, and the concept of touchability and regards Christ as God. They are monotheists in opposition to the Hindu pantheism. One society despises the other society, i.e., Hindus despise the Brahmos and vice-versa, especially the people who are strict about their religious adherence. Binoy has met Paresh Chandra Bhattacharya, a Brahmo, and his (almost adopted) daughter Sucharita, whose Hindu name is Radharani, during an accident, and they have invited Binoy to visit their house. Binoy, who is primarily attracted by the natural beauty of Sucharita, wants to visit the Brahmo family and talks about it to Gora, but he does not like the idea. "Gora thumped his knees as he replied. No, I do not advise you to go. I can put it down in black and white so that the day you go to their house; you will go over there completely. The very next day, you will begin to take your meals with them, and then down goes your name as a militant preacher of Brahmo Samaj!" (Tagore 10). Gora does not like Binoy visiting the Brahmo family because he thinks those people will grab him so entirely that Binoy will become a Brahmo.

Gora further adds his fear about the 'doom' of his friend, "There is no 'next' after you are dead and gone from your own world. You, the son of a Brahmin, will throw away all sense of restraint and purity will end by being thrown on the refuse heap like some dead animal" (Tagore 10). The Brahmins dread the Brahmos so much that once one visits a Brahmo family, one is dead or an outcast from his society. The visitor will forget the sense of restraint that is in Hindu society, and the person will be impure and be thrown away and despised, regarded as a dead animal. A person does not only become impure by visiting a Brahmo family but as worthless for the Hindu society as a dead animal.

The Hindus think that the Brahmos are the ones who attack the Hindus, and they prey on the Hindus whenever they get a chance. Gora exclaims, "This much is certain, that they belong to the genus predatory, and if your studies lead you too near them, you will go so far in that not even the tip of your tail will be visible" (Tagore 13). Gora suspects that if one gets in touch with the Brahmos, the person disappears there; one loses one's identity and dips down in their principles and practices. Gora does not eat in his mother's room or his father, Krishnadayal, because she is relatively liberal about religious matters and has kept a Christian maidservant, Lachmiya. Anandamoyi observes, "And as for your father, he has become so orthodox that he will eat nothing not cooked by his own hands" (Tagore 15). A husband does not eat anything cooked by his wife; it is not only that he does not let his wife touch any food of him. Gora, the son also does not eat anything touched by his mother. He insists in this kind of restraint, "Yes, I do, I must insist on it. It is impossible to take food in your room so long as you keep on that Christian maidservant Lachmi" (Tagore 15). He is disappointed in his mother's liberal behaviors; he adds, "Scriptural rules must be accepted as final. Mother, I wonder that you, the daughter of such a great pundit, should have no care for our orthodox customs" (Tagore 16). Some orthodox Hindus want every Hindu to practice the orthodox principles strictly; some educated Brahmins are still not less orthodox than the old generation. Binoy is reprimanded by Gora when he learns that Binoy has drunk tea with the Brahmo family. However, Binoy is relatively liberal and retards at "But really, Gora, if it is blow to society for someone to drink a cup of tea, then all I can say is that such blows are good for the country" (Tagore 23). People think that to drink a cup of tea for a Hindu in a Brahmo family is a great 'blow' to society; it is a great disregard for society.

It is not among the Hindus who practice and exercise discrimination against the Brahmos, but there are some Brahmos who are too "rigid" (Tagore 121) and insist on

"indiscriminate observance" (Tagore 121). It is clear when Paresh Babu observes about the Brahmos:

There are plenty of such people amongst Brahmos also. They want to sever all connections with Hinduism without discrimination; lest outsiders should mistakenly think they condone also its evil customs. Such people find it difficult to lead a natural life, for they either pretend or exaggerate and think that truth is so weak that it is part of their duty to protect it by force or guile. (Tagore 122)

The people who are extremists in observing the difference, for no logical reason, are pretenders because it is not that easy to live a life with that much strictness. Liberal thought, practices, and observances make life easier and more natural, but the bigots think that it is their duty alone to save the community. They think that if they practice liberalism, their sect will be weak, and they try hard by force.

Lolita is attracted to Binoy, who is not a Brahmo, even though he always has a soft corner for all humankind, which is considered a great tragedy in the Brahmo family. The Brahmos think that it is a crime to have a girl married at an early age, and also they have sent their girl children to school, but what they cannot tolerate is the mixing of a Brahmo girl with a Hindu boy in this instant. Binoy and Lolita come home together, leaving the other family members back at the Magistrate's house, where they perform a drama to please the magistrate and his wife. However, Lolita cannot dare invite him in her house, "So she could not have Binoy slinking away from the door, as if she were indeed a culprit. She wished to make her relationship with Binoy as clear as before; she did not want to belittle herself in his eyes by allowing any of last night's illusions and hesitations to persist in the broad light of day" (217). Lolita, a Brahmo girl, tries to make her own decision about choosing her life partner, but she cannot do so; she hesitates and cannot invite Binoy into her home because she fears the Samaj.

The Brahmos despise the Hindus so much for their worshipping idol that they think they are idolaters; they are many backward and uncivilized people. It is what Harimohini, who happens to stay at Paresh Babu's house for a certain while, experiences. Except for Paresh Babu, everyone who visits their house looks Harimohini down and sneers at her as if she were an animal just caught and brought home from the jungle. Bordasundari, Paresh Babu's wife, has grown so stiff in these matters that she talks to ". . . every member of the Brahmo Samaj, important and unimportant, to win them over to her view. There was no end to her complaints about how bad it was for the children to have the example of this superstitious, ill-fated idol-worshipping woman always before them in the house" (Tagore 268). She regards anyone who worships idols as a bad omen, and she does not like her children to see this idol-worshipping woman anymore.

Mistress Baroda does not only disrespect Harmohini and insult in front of everyone for her idol worshipping and sticking to Hindu observances, she further tries to harass her and spoil her faith by making her drink the water drawn by the low-caste or Muslim servant just but to harass her:

The high-caste servant, who had been told of to draw water for Harimohini's cooking, would be put on to some other work just when his services were required. If the matter was ever mentioned, Barodo would say. "Why, what's

the trouble? Isn't Ramdim there? Knowing very well that Harimohini could not use the water handled by the low-caste Ramdin. (268)

It is always wrong to practice the evil of untouchability on the part of Harimohini, but it is greater foolishness for Mistress Baroda to try her best to hurt the faith of an orthodox Hindu woman only because she observes caste strictly and she does not belong to Brahma Samaj. Mistress Baroda thinks that she is pretty modern; she is more civilized and forward only because she does not observe caste discrimination. If someone points out the discrimination shown to Harimohini at her home, the so-called humanitarian family, she would say, "If she is so high caste as all that, what makes her come to a Brahma home? We can't have all these silly distinctions here and I, for one, am not going to allow it" (Tagore 268-9). Mistress Baroda is so hostile against the Hindu observance of caste and behaves so foolishly that she forgets the truth that one is free to observe one's religious faith of one's choice; no one can force the other to join the one that one likes. She wants Brahma Samaj to be stricter on its observances and practices and close every door against the non-followers of Brahmaism. She remarks, "The Brahma Samaj is getting quite lax over social matters- that's why it's doing much less for social uplift than it used to do" (Tagore 269). In her opinion, being tolerant of Hindus or the followers of other religions is to grow lax and not serve the society. When Mistress Baroda's friends come to visit her, and Harimohini is there, ". . . on such occasions Harimohini, in the simplicity of her nature, would try to help in making them welcome, but they on their side hardly disguised their contempt. They would even look pointedly at her, while Baroda was making pungent comments on orthodox manners and customs, in which some of them would join" (Tagore 272). The Brahmans, who are proud of themselves for being more modern and liberal in their manners, are not less biased than those called orthodox. They do not only make harsh remarks on the Hindus but show their contempt on them, they provide but "attacks" (Tagore 272) on the Hindus.

Mistress Baroda does not like Sucharita to help her aunt; when Baroda finds Sucharita to help her aunt Harimohini, Mistress Baroda remarks to her husband, "D'you know, your lady is getting to be mighty high caste. Our touch is contamination for her!" (Tagore 272). Sucharita is detested and is not counted as a Brahma because she gives company to her aunt. Even Haran Babu, the Brahma preacher, is sarcastic about Sucharita's behaviors, "I have heard that nowadays you take only sanctified food offered to idols. Is that true?" (Tagore 274)?

Brahma Samaj and its leaders are no more liberal and tolerant of other faiths and sects either. "Haran could forgive almost anything, except the following of an independent path, according to their own judgment, by those whom he had tried to guide right" (Tagore 276). He, the preacher and leader of Brahma Samaj, never likes any one of his Samaj to think and act independently. One has to seek his permission before one does something. One has to do as he judges right. The whole Samaj should be directed by him. His judgments are final. It is a fascinating fact that in the name of liberalism and opposing the orthodoxy of Hindu society, there is another society that has developed no better than the old one. It has kept the whole society under the control of certain people like Haran Babu, who is a very narrow-minded person. People like Paresh Babu, who are liberal in the real sense, are not only pushed back, they are never consulted, but they are criticized for being liberal. Society is supposed to be more liberal, but it has developed to be parallel in orthodox observances. In Hindu orthodox

society, people are enslaved to the principles, but in other societies, people are forced to be slaves of certain persons.

Mistress Baroda is so intolerant of the people who keep faith in other religions, and they worship God in different ways. She bursts in anger with Harimohini, "Look here, I don't mind your staying in this house as long as you like, and we'll look after you too, with pleasure, but let me tell you, once for all, that we can't have you keeping your idol here" (Tagore 292). It is a good tactic to drive someone you do not like away from home. You speak sweet things but hurt one's faith.

Brahmo Samaj is not tolerant and liberal enough on the intimacy between a boy and girl either. Lolita runs home away with Binoy even though she is supposed to perform in front of the magistrate. Lolita's denial of performing to please the English magistrate is not only criticized by the Brahmo people but also her virginity and faith are questioned because she has come home with a boy who is not a member of their Samaj or the family. Panu Babu (Haran Babu) bursts out in anger with Paresh Babu, Lolita's father, "Is it imaginary that your daughter, Lolita came away alone on the steamer with Binoy Babu" (Tagore 293)? The people who preach liberalism blame a father for everything wrong done by his children. The decision is taken by a girl who has grown up enough to do so and is well educated as per the contemporary standards of society, but a father is blamed for everything wrong done by his children. When Sucharita reminds him to calm down and behave himself while talking to his senior, Paresh Babu, Panu Babu bursts out further in fury:

I never discuss anything excitedly. I always have a due sense of responsibility for whatever I may say; so you need have no qualms on that score. What I said was not meant personally. I spoke on behalf of Brahmo Samaj, and because it would have been wrong for me to remain silent. Unless you had been blind, you would have seen, from the one circumstance of Lolita travelling alone with Binoy Babu, . . . It is not only that will give you cause to repent, but what is more, it will bring discredit on the Samaj. (310)

This is the reality about the people who plead themselves to be liberal. They claim that they have taken responsibility for reforming society and fighting orthodoxy. A purely personal matter is discussed as a matter of respect and disrespect for the Samaj as a whole, and the father is blamed for what his child has done on her own will. Lolita has done nothing wrong but revolted against the slavery practiced by Brahmo people in the service of the magistrate to please him.

The Brahmo families do not send their daughters to school, where they are taught by non-Brahmo teachers. Sucharita has begun living with her aunt and observing Hindu practices. When Lolita and Sucharita desire to educate the neighboring girls at her home, they find it difficult to find the pupils.

Sitting in her silent classroom, Lolita started at every footstep, hoping against hope that it was some pupil turning up at last, but no one came. When thus it came on to two o'clock she felt sure that something had gone wrong, so she went off to house of a girl who lived quite close. There she found her pupil on the

brink of tears. "Mother would not let me go." She cried. "It upsets the house so, explained the mother herself, without making it all clear what there was so upsetting about it. (Tagore 320)

It is the common sentiment of the people, whether they are orthodox Hindus or they are so-called liberal Brahmos, who think they have revolted against the orthodoxy of Hindu observances and practices and believe that sending a daughter to a school upsets the family. Education is taken as the main cause of disturbance in the family. "At the next house she went to, she heard another reason. "Sucharita has become orthodox," they blurted out. She observes caste; she worships idols which are kept in the house" (320). It is a lame excuse that the parents do not send their daughters to school because one of the teachers observes caste and worships idols. What is the connection between education and caste or idols?

In fact, it is not either because the education upsets the family or because the caste observance of Sucharita obstructs the parents from sending their daughters to the school. The main reason is that the leader of the Brahma Samaj does not want the parents to send the girls to the school that the girls initiated. "Panu Babu is up in arms against this school of yours" (Tagore 321). Sudhir, one of the strict adherents of Brahma doctrine, lets Lolita know the fact. Panu Babu wants to punish Lolita by harassing her in her endeavors only because she has decided not to perform at the magistrate's house, and Sucharita has refused to marry him. Panu Babu wants every decision taken in the Brahma Samaj and its members with his pre-permission or in his orders.

Lolita raises questions about the Samaj itself when she comes to understand the attitude of its leader: "My punishment for the steamer incident, I see! There is no way, then, of atoning for indiscretions in our Samaj-, is that the idea? So, I am to be shut out from all good work in our own community! That's the kind of method you have adopted for my moral uplift and that of the Samaj, is it?" (Tagore 321). It clearly explains how narrow-minded the people who call themselves unorthodox and modern are. Lolita is a girl with independent thought and bold enough to declare herself, "The proper remedy for evil is to fight against it" (322). If everyone submits and surrenders to evil, it has enough space to make it more extensive and all-encompassing. People should have the courage to fight it if they want it to be corrected. The Brahmos do not even like other people mixing with them. It is exemplified by all that has happened to these girls. Panu Babu has done it all to punish the girls only because they have mixed with Binoy, especially Lolita, at which she questions, "Father, is Binoy Babu not worthy of mixing with us" (324)? She is forced to ask this question because the Brahmos do not regard other people to be human beings than as members of their cult.

Bordsundari, mistress Baroda, does not want her daughters to mix and have anything done with Binoy because he is not a Brahma. She calls Binoy to her house and makes him understand, in rather a roundabout way, that he should meet and mix with her daughter if he is not ready to belong to "Hindu society" (Tagore 327). "Only a short time ago Binoy had been to Paresh Babu's family an outsider, and now again he stood there an outsider" (327); there should have been no difference for him and he should have no qualms about it but he feels awful because he is in love, unknowingly, with Lolita, he, therefore, feels "like a fish without water" (327), because he has left Gora and Anandamoyi and could not get Lolita. Lolita, however, wants Binoy to mix with them and help them in the school, which puts Binoy in

confusion, "was Lolita entirely ignorant of the fact that Bordasundari had forbidden him to mix with them anymore and that there was a regular agitation against them going on in their Samaj" (Tagore 333)? Lolita revolts against the unnecessary and illogical prohibition prescribed by the 'Samaj'.

The Brahmos do not entertain Binoy mixing with these Brahma girls because they fear that he could induce one of them into marriage. Panu Babu is the one who is the most terrified by it and leaves no means to break up Lolita's friendship, or so- to say, mixing up with Binoy. He has made one of Lolita's friends, named Shailabala, write a letter to Lolita which reads:

My mind has been much disturbed by many rumours which I have heard concerning you all . . . But the day before yesterday I had letter from someone (whose name I will not mention) which contained news about you which dumbfounded me. In fact, I should find it almost impossible to believe if it were not for the trustworthy character of the one who wrote it. Is it possible that you are contemplating marriage with some Hindu young man? If this is true... (337).

Indeed, Panu Babu has made Shailabala write that letter to Lolita, who confidently replies, "But let me assure you that there are certain well-known whom would fill me with apprehension, and I know one or two young Hindus to whom it would be a matter of pride for any Brahma girl to be married..." (Tagore 338). In fact, it is not a particular sect or Samaj that should decide someone's marriage, nor should there be any prescriptions made about who is worthy of getting married. People have different characters personally and it is never sure that every Hindu is bad and every non-Hindu is always good. Moreover, marriage is a private affair. In the name of certain religious beliefs, such as sectarianism, people forget the fact that a man is but a man.

The Brahmos, especially Haran (Panu) Babu, leave no stone unturned to stop the supposed marriage between Lolita and Binoy. He never wants to lose a Brahma girl by getting married to a Hindu boy. He tries his best to stop her from the matter, makes Bordasundari stop her by hook or crook, uses the pamphlets of the Samaj having printed the articles and news to dissuade the people against it, makes her friends write letters against it but fails in dissuading Lolita from her decision to be taken by herself. She is tried by all the means, but she declares her opinion, "No, liberty for me means freedom from the slavery of falsehood, and from the attacks of meanness where I see nothing wrong or contrary to my religion why should the Brahma Samaj interfere, and put obstacles in my way" (Tagore 344)? In real terms, liberty is freedom from what you do not enjoy.

Panu Babu is so strict about the observances that Brahma girls should follow that Lolita regards him not as a benevolent religious leader and preacher but as a "goal superintendent of the Samaj" (Tagore 345). Even Paresh Babu is anxious about whether his daughter "will be able to bear the brunt of this storm" (348). It is not only Lolita whom the Brahmos hassle by threatening her in different ways; Binoy is also the one they have tried to dissuade him from marrying Lolita. He finds a letter awaiting him at his home in which "It was pointed out that not only would Binoy himself be unhappy in the match, but it would be a disaster for Lolita also" (Tagore 349). They try anyhow to dissuade him; they even write about the physical weakness that Lolita suffers. "If, however, Binoy still persisted instead of these warnings in contemplating the marriage, it would be well for him to consider the fact that Lolita's chest

was weak and the doctors had even suspected phthisis (Tagore 349). They try every falsehood to dissuade both Lolita and Binoy from their marriage. This letter has negative consequences compared to what they had hoped for; instead of being dissuaded from the marriage, Binoy starts loving Lolita more and decides firmly to marry her. “But since such a letter had been sent to him, it seemed as if it was regarded as certainty in Brahma Samaj circles, and it pained him excessively to think how the members of her society must be leaping abuse on Lolita on this score” (Tagore 349). He does not only feel pain on Lolita’s behalf but also shame on the Brahmos. What a low level of treatment they have shown regarding a girl marrying her love.

Haran Babu even personally visits Binoy in this regard and tries to dissuade him, “Is it right for you who are a Hindu, and who cannot leave the Hindu society to come and go Paresh Babu’s home in such a manner as to give rise to talk about his daughters” (Tagore 351)? Binoy is not ready to be dissuaded so easily. He answers Panu Babu very flatly:

Look here, Panu Babu, complained Binoy, “I can’t accept all responsibility for what the people of any society choose to fabricate from any particular occurrence that depends upon the nature of the people themselves to a large extent. If it is possible for the members of your Brahma Samaj to talk Paresh Babu’s daughter in such a way as to create scandal that is a matter of shame for your samaj rather than for them. (Tagore 351)

Brahma Samaj, Haran Babu, especially, cannot tolerate Lolita going away with Binoy in marriage, and he thinks everyone has a right to discuss such a matter.

Walking with an outsider is a great crime for Lolita to have committed. If Panu Babu thinks that way, Binoy asks, “If you are going to place on equality some purely external event with a fault of the inner life, then what need was there for you to leave the Hindu society and become a Brahma” (Tagore 351)? This is the reality with many people who have left Hindu society blaming for its strictness and orthodox social behaviors, but they practice cruelly there where Hindu society is blamed for practicing it. Again, it is not a matter of concern in which society you are, but your attitude matters more. There are many Hindus who are more tolerant and more liberal than others. Panu Babu cannot dissuade Binoy and he loses the discussion on the ground of logic but warns Binoy before he departs, “I don’t want to say much to you. I have one last word to say, and it is that from now you must keep away for there, for if you don’t it will be very wrong of you” (Tagore 352). He restricts Binoy from visiting his ideal person, Paresh Babu, and he has no permission to enter the house under any pretext or excuse. He is regarded as a criminal who has caused insult, humiliation, and scandal in the family because of his mixing with Lolita and having proposed to marry her. Tagore is unhappy with society, which raises questions about nothing it has to do; it does not understand the language of love and humanity, no matter how liberal it claims itself to be. He adds here when he feels pity on the victims of society:

Alas! Alas! What a tremendous hindrance in the way of truth does the thing which is called society raise! There was no true obstacle to the union if Lolita and Binoy. God, the inner lord of both their hearts, knew how ready Binoy was to sacrifice the whole of his life for her welfare and happiness was it not he who

had drawn Binoy so close to her from the very first? There was no obstacle in His eternal decrees. Was the god who was worshipped in the Brahma Samaj by people like Panu Babu some different Being? Was he not the Ruler of human hearts? (Tagore 352-3)

These differences put people in doubt. Some people interpret God for their benefit, and there are prohibitions created by the people, the masters, and leaders of society, not the Lord God Himself. God understands the language of hearts, but we human beings make it some by putting our minds in it, using worthless logic.

Over time, during the discussion about the marriage between Binoy and Lolita, Binoy proposes to become a Brahma since, according to Harimohini, he does not observe any Hindu customs. Binoy feels a little hurt at this remark and puts his behalf forth in himself and his religion, “The very day I come to regard Hinduism as consisting of prohibitions about eating and a lot of other meaningless rules and regulations, I shall become, if not a Brahma, then a Christian, a Mussalman or something of that sort but I have not yet such a lack of faith in Hinduism” (395). He does not get ready to enter the Brahma Samaj just because he does not observe all the Hindu practices strictly, nor is he ready to do so because he could marry Lolita quickly.

Finally, Lolita and Binoy decide to marry each other. The Brahma Samaj makes it difficult for Lolita to remain quiet, and Binoy realizes that the whole discussion and wrangle would be over once they get married. Binoy’s family denies flatly participating in either wedding ceremony, so does Lolita’s, except her father. Anandmoyi is there to manage everything for them and bless the couple. However, before they get married, Binoy does not demand Lolita to sacrifice her faith. They have a dialogue:

“I could not bear the ignominy of feeling you accepted me by stooping to an act which would lower yourself in your own eyes. What I want is that you should remain where you are now without wavering. “You also,” asserted Binoy, “will not have to stir from the place which you occupy now. If love is unable to acknowledge differences, then why are there differences anywhere in this world?” (429).

They talk for a long while and conclude that difference is natural because God has created different people in body, shape, build, thought, and action and “What they decided was that they forgot they were Hindu or Brahma and only remembered that they were two human souls. This thought was like a steady and unflickering flame in their hearts” (429). The thought of humanity is the one that does not flicker and encompasses all the human beings together. “Thirthing-as-othering” is practiced even by those so-called liberal Brahmos. The people who have revolted against the Hindu orthodox practices have been more orthodox than the Hindus. They do not cast out; if not, she is outcasted, Sucharita, because she begins to live with her aunt and follow Hindu rituals. They also forsake Lolita only because she chooses to marry Binoy for her love out of their Samaj. Brahma Samaj has also developed into a close circle of certain people, which no one can peep into.

The ultimate truth for humankind, however, is that one belongs to all the fellow beings. If God is the true creator of humankind and the world, he must not have any intention to divide them, and he would never have meant one to look down on the other. Gora makes us understand and realize the ultimate truth when he observes:

I asked that anything that had been false or impure, which had enveloped my life from childhood, might be completely destroyed and I might be born anew! God did not listen to my prayer in exactly the way which I had intended- He has put into my hands this own truth! I could never have even dreamed that he would wipe out all my impurity in so through a manner. (Tagore 568)

One becomes impure so long as one has impure thoughts and practices in real life. One feels oneself impure so long as one belongs to a society in which people are separated in the name of purity and impurity of caste, guided by artificial norms. But once one gets free from the clutch of caste differentiation, there is no question of one being impure because all the men created by God are pure in themselves.

Once one gets free from the thought of purity and impurity, which is pleaded in the caste-based society, there is no fear of being contaminated by touching another humankind or accepting any food from others; as Gora says, "Today I have become so pure that I can never be afraid of contamination even in the house of the lowest of castes . . ." (Tagore 568-9). There is no fear of one being contaminated when one forsakes the thoughts (norms and values) that regard a man as pure and the other as impure within the same human body and with the same red blood.

Sucharita, who was brought up and educated in a Brahmo family and has remained a strong believer and a dedicated member of the society, changes her mind, being distasteful of the discriminatory practices in the Brahmo Samaj among the members of the Hindus and having come into the influence of Gora and his thoughts; has been much attracted to Hinduism. She remarks, when Panu (Haran) Babu inquires about her stand, "The lord of my heart knows about my religion and don't propose to discuss it with anyone. But you can be certain of one thing, namely, that I am a Hindu" (Tagore 469). Sucharita has changed her mind by having experienced the narrow-mindedness of the people who drive and control the Brahmo Samaj, especially by seeing their contempt against Hinduism and its followers and the discrimination they practice against ones who desire to educate the local girl children. She has experienced that even Brahmo ideology has been explained for the benefit of one sect and on a personal whim.

Gora now belongs to no caste, which means he belongs to all the castes, all the castes, all the human beings, and he is now a person common to all, not an appendage of a certain sect or caste. He regards Paresh Babu, who has already freed from these caste bonds, and is free:

It is you who have the *mantram* of that freedom," explained Gora, "and that is why to-day you find no place in any society, make me your disciple! To-day give me the *mantram* of that Deity who belongs to all. Hindu, Mussalman, Christian and Brahmo alike the doors to whose temple are never closed to any person of any caste. Whatever- . . ." (569).

Finally, Gora takes Sucharita with him and having made obeisance to Paresh Babu, goes to his mother, Anandamoyi, and exclaims, “Mother, you are my mother!” The mother whom I have been wandering about in search of who was all the time sitting in my room, at home, you have no caste, you make no distinctions and have no hatred-you are only the image of our welfare!” (Tagore 570). Through his central character, Gora, and his knowledge, Tagore has made us understand that the caste differences and traditional practices within castes and any discrimination exercised in any other name or form are all but hindrances to making us human beings. These differences are unnecessary and futile; the religion of humanity is always superior to any religion we think is superior and we follow.

Conclusion

In *Gora*, Rabindranath Tagore presents a nuanced critique of the Brahmo Samaj, exposing the subtle and overt forms of discrimination within this reformist movement. Despite its progressive ideals aimed at challenging traditional Hindu orthodoxy, the Brahmo Samaj is depicted as grappling with its own contradictions, particularly in matters of caste and identity. Through the novel *Gora*, Tagore highlights the tension between ideological purity and social prejudices, demonstrating how even reformist movements can fall prey to exclusionary, discriminatory practices. The novel thus questions the limits of reform, urging a deeper understanding of true equality beyond superficial changes in ritual and practice. Ultimately, Tagore calls for a more inclusive, humanistic approach to social reform that transcends rigid caste, religion, and community structures.

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Gynocentric Perspectives: Struggle for Womanhood in Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*

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Abstract

This article discusses on the issues raised in Kathy Acker's novel, *Empire of the Senseless* and analyzes them from gynocentric perspective. It critiques on the issues of women who suffer of gender discrimination, misbehavior of the people and a senseless treatment of the society. It investigates to the causes and consequences of state biased policies, rules, regulations and fucking games which victimize to the women. Acker's novel, *Empire of the Senseless* resists them through presence of Abhor and Thivai, experienced and tested characters in the narratives of terrorists that is analyzed in this article. Thivai, is a pirate who enjoys attacking the ships, fucking women, eating flesh, drinking blood and Abhor is his intermittent lover. Abhor is a mysterious character who looks as a half-human, partly monster and also like a robot woman. Acker in this experimental novel reveals the conditions of the insulted and injured. She challenges to the evil practices of the masculine-structured society for which she exposes the protesting characters like Abhor and Thivai. This article is prepared in gynocentric study method with an objective of exploring the women centered activities and suffering of them. Loop holes in the previous researches seem in defining the gender roles and so this article has a point of departure from the conventional concept of gender-based ideologies and the social-sexual practices. This researcher has used the theoretical lens of Judith Butler and Helene Cixous while writing this article.

Keywords: Sexual Identity, Conventional Notions, Piracy, Victimization, Resistance, Transgression

Introduction

This article explores an experimental element of the struggle for womanhood noted in Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*. Article discusses on the traditional practices of the gender biased activities and unfolds the issues that how conventional notions of gender discriminations problematized in the formation of sexual identity. However, all the males are not as dangerous as the female perceive but they are suffering of the masculinity. Feminist ideologies guided male are even kind hearted and they seek for the female freedom. Abhor disguises as a monster or a robot and opposes the masculine practices, and their fucking activities which her mother and grandmothers were experiencing. She collects some narratives of the insulted and injured, and speaks about the traditional notions of male practices on sexual violence as experienced by her grandmother. She speaks, "Alexander loved my grandmother by hating her. He loved her by wanting to kill her: to carry her out of the slum which is prostitution" (*Empire of the Senseless*, 4-5). Central character of the novel, Abhor critiques to the practices of male dominance and female victimization. Acker, in her novel brings myth and mystery to challenge the ideology-based politics through which male are blamed as an enemy of the women.

Male are perceived as rapists who are using the women as a means of pleasurable play things. They are politicizing over the woman's body and using them in the fucking games. It is blamed that the male is ruling over the female bodies and practicing the sexual activities, however it is not easy to reveal the reality of the gender victimization. Abor disguises as a robot and struggles for her identity in the male structured society. Acker through Abhor challenges the politics of gender violence in which Abhor stands as a protesting character who seems as a combination of half male and half female mechanisms. It shows that all the males are not dangerous but the danger is of masculinity and so the female have to fight against the system. Some of the males are kind hearted and guided by the feminist ideologies who try to seek for the female freedom.

Masculine society tries to rule over the women's body. They exercise to make the women their puppets and name them as a whore. Abhor speaks through Thivai about her grandmother, "She wasn't going to prostitute her whole life. As my grandmother got older, she got more stubborn and determined" (3-4). Thivai's gender performativity centers to the male-female dichotomy of Abhor that is exposed in Acker's novel. She emphasizes to the roles of her female characters, their voices and versions who struggle for womanhood. They try to be recognized from their gynocentric values, however they do not want to deconstruct the total structures of the society and Abhor continues her fucking relationships with Thivai. In Kathy's *Empire*, she challenged the structural belief of gender ideology about ways of arranging the power in society according to the social construct.

This article also shades light on fragmented narrative structure, gender ideology, and male politics with an alternative perspective that digs out the class struggles and gender issues inherent in the novel. Gender simply means the characteristics of male and female that are socially constructed. The norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, and relationships with each other. Gender-based ideology is understood as a tool to understand a person's attitudes to know how the roles of male and female should be perceived in a society. The perceptions are made in the communities according to sex but it is better to observe the society from class-based perspectives and its history as observes Karl Marx. He says, "this continent opened up a hundred years ago. What continent? The continent of the end of the capitalistic or teleological world. In the nineteenth-century Western world the people who ventured into this new continent were the militants of revolutionary class struggle" (Qtd. in Acker 4). Marx mean to say that the conventional gender role ideologies bring classes in the society by classifying them into different groups on the basis of gender division. This article, thus, analyzes to the gender roles exposed in Acker's novel and critiques the *Empire of the Senseless* from a different perspective.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Kathy Acker, an American Novelist's *Empire of the Senseless* reflects to the then discriminatory practices of the society which devalues the women's identity and take them as a second-class citizen. The practice of the then society is also known as a punk culture. Acker is well known about the punk culture and so her literary works seem to be influenced by the culture. About the kind of punk cultural, in this context, Chris Kraus, author of Acker's literary biography, in his book, *After Kathy Ackera Literary Biography*, mentions "The punk aesthetic influenced her literary style" (7). In the field of aesthetic expression through arts, culture and

artwork-based literature, Acker is wildly recognized for transgressive writing where she explores the issues of childhood activities, sexuality-based reveals and the male-female dichotomies. Abhor and Thivai are two central characters of the novel who are telling the reality of the society and their memories based on the experiences. They are not only the parts of love match; they are fighting against a politically repressive activity that enslaved the social system by politicizing the issues unnecessarily. They try to break the structure of society that is designed to differentiate the gender ideology for male and female.

Feminist struggle continued in masculine society is exposed to capture a picture of the women's condition. They suffered to save their identities, however they fought and resisted the monstrous attacks and ill treatments. This condition is exposed through Abhor's statement spoken by Thivai:

Neither black beast nor human beasts could break through the throng of human filth. . . . The poor can reply to the crime of society, to their economic deprivation retardation primitivism lunacy boredom hopelessness, only by collective crime or war. One from collective crime takes is marriage. I think that because I perceived what marriage was for my grandmother and because I love her. (Acker 6-7)

Alexander's killing attempts to Abhor's grandmother and cops' arrest with abuse to both; Abhor's grandmother and Alexander is similar to Abhor's rape at the hands of her father. Her father's portrayal of masculinity brings a fragmented statement. Acker through Abhor wants to break such "patriarchal notion of the society" (Valerie 52). She speaks for women's identities and fights for reformation of the canon to establish the gender equality. In this regard, Luce Irigaray's work "The Power of Discourse," is relevant to quote, "is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman be the subject or the object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal" (78). The practiced notion of the male hegemony is theorized from masculinized perspective and it is making an experiment in the women's body. It is jammed within a machinery frame which imprisons the women within "fucking games" (*Bodies of Work*, 62). The narratives present the grave images of the then society. The narratives advocate for justice to the women. Irigaray argues to unify women to fight against discriminatory ideologies developed against women rights and their identities.

Acker's clever control over the character's roles marks to trick as an exposition of the social as well as socio-political disruptions. The pre-determined ideology-based system has to be gear up by breaking the jam of the male structured institutionalization. In the context of that disrupting ideology developed in the society, Helene Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa" writes, "[. . .] writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" (249). The masculine supremacy hegemonizes over the female body and practices the fucking games. Acker through Abhor challenges the masculine brutality which her father practices and terrorizes her. Cixous advocates for a resistance against the tyrannical activities of the male who are trying to make their body as their playground. The body politics of the male structured society is opposed by Cixous.

Abhor's clever treatments to the male-female dichotomies through Thivai explanations challenge to the wrong practices of the society. She wants to challenge to the masculism but not to the male. She rejects the biased practices of the society whereas the women are valued as second-class citizen but she seems in the favor of joint ventures who do not reject the women's identity issues. Performances of the male guided society which make the female victim are the subjects for public discourses that Acker cleverly explores in her novel as a journalistic report of the travel account. She introduces to Sinbad as a sailor, story teller and a terrorist in dual roles; sometimes as a narrator and often as a listener. Sinbad creates a discourse about Shah Zamam's role who explains about patriarchy practices as a sex sickness. Sinbad, the Sailor explains:

Shah Zamam, the King of Samarcand, and King Shahryar were brothers. When they realized that all women are sex maniacs, they decided they had to control women. This was the beginning of patriarchy. In order to control women, Zamam murdered his wife and her lover who was black, and his cook. Sexuality and negritude are allied. King Shahryar murdered his wife and all her friends, then fucked and murdered one woman every day for three years. (152)

Acker's statement about patriarchal notions in *Empire of the Senseless* historicizes the female victimization. Shah Zamam and Shahryar murdered their wives in the name of saving their husbandry. They forgot their responsibility of protecting their wives and rather they murdered them to keep away from the sexual connections with others. It shows a picture of the male hegemony and their control over the women's body. Male practices to control over the women's sexuality right is researchable and so King Shahryar and Shah Zamam's power exercises are questionable. Their activities are masculinity centered victimization of the women and their women hood who murder their wives to control the women activities. Thus, gender victimization notion of social construction is clearly argued in Acker's novel. Acker rebels the myth and mystery that she observed in the "patriarchal mindset" (Carolyn J. 281). Gender issues in Acker's novel are transmitted. They are fragmented and so gender identities are subjects of Acker's narratives. Acker raises some strong issues of gender identities and their roles as commonly practiced process which needs to be refined and reframed.

Abhor struggles for womanhood and wants to establish her identity as 'human identity' rather than a woman version because the differences in gender role in the contemporary society is at the peak that "invites violence" (Rachel 34). Female in Acker's time were suppressed in a way of gender construction. "Acker rejects the identity politics and she does not hate the male but she rejects the masculinity practices who reject the femininity and create a gender violence" (Ellen G. 22). In this way, Acker through Abhor represents as a savior of female subjectivity. The idea of materialism as a female representative construct's feminist beauty connected to women in a cultural sphere where clothing and ethicizing marketable endeavors. In this reference, Barrett, Michèle, and Mary McIntosh. in "Christine Delphy: Towards a Materialist Feminism?" argue:

Women are the subordinates within families. As such, women constitute a separate oppressed class, based on their oppression as women, regardless of the

socioeconomic class to which they belong. Marriage is a labor contract that ties women to unpaid domestic labor, commonly trivialized as “housework,” not considered important enough to be seriously analyzed as a topic, or a problem, in its own right. (98)

They critique on patriarchal mindsets that is treating women only as a pleasing instrument for sexual activities and the household works. They take marrying and bearing as an acceptance of unpaid slavery and they need to unite to challenge the system. Acker’s central character Abhor challenges the boundaries by disguising herself as a monster or a robot to ironize to the “blurs of gender discourses” (Shulamith 53). About the constructed definitions of gender roles, another critic, Carolene Bynum in her article, “Why All the fuss About the Body? A Medievalist’s Perspective.” writes, “there is no clear set of structures, behaviors, events, objects, experiences, words, and moments to which the body currently refers”(5). Carolene Bynum’s argument questions to the structured spirit of the society and designed roles of the characters. Acker through such character questions to the identity politics in her novel which shows her awareness on ‘crisis’ of the women body.

Empire of the Senseless also reveals the reality of an authoritarian power exercises of American CIA and their ideology politics seen in capitalism through which they want to control the society. Abhor and Thivai, the major characters of the novel are seeking for love, peace and prosperity establishment in the world. They are searching for an alternative method to stop the masculine tricks of fucking games who take “women as a means of their sexual pleasure” (Elizabeth Bell and Blaeure Daniel 104). The gender identities are exposed to compare and contrast the roles of the men and women in the society. Acker’s novel, in this regard, can be studied and analyzed well through performativity perspective.

Performativity is a perspective, which analyses the social as well as gender issues. It studies about an individual experience which can be altered through cultural performances. Judith Butler, a performance theorist and a social critic projects performativity as a part of oriented root culture that gives a lesson to balance the social and gender activities. Butler makes an analysis from cultural study parts of the social activities. Butler as influenced by Austin regarding gender performativity in her book *Gender Trouble* argues, “. . . gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again” (272). Gender study, according to Butler, is a part of performance performed in day to day activities in relation to the gender-based activities and cultural performances. It is performed in an individual’s life, especially over the women’s body of the male structured society. The act of performativity is scripted through the line of gender politics and the game is played over the oppressed female.

The constructed identity politics of the male-female debate creates a masculine hegemony and it takes women as an inferior object who habituate the women to be constantly sheltered under the shadow of the male. The scripted act is constructed in a society to suppress females. Regarding this issue, Butler further opines, “Categories of true sex, discrete gender, and specific sexuality...a political shaping takes the very morphology and boundary of the sexed body as the ground, surface or site of cultural inscription” (163-64). Butler clarifies that the gender performance tries to oppose the culturally biased activities and social evils. The

debates on body politics refuse the forcefully constructed and set up rules. Cultural set ups produce boundaries in change which is essential to break through the newness in the socio-cultural practices. Therefore, performativity is the acceptance of newness that is revealed through Abhor in Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*.

Methods and Materials

This article is prepared in qualitative research method. Comparative study is made between gender formation and an identity politics to know about gender discrimination. The study materials are Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless*, studied as a primary text and the relevant reviews to authenticate an analysis. Judith Butler and Helene Cixous's theoretical lenses are applied while analyzing the issues on struggle for womanhood that is discussed from gynocentric perspective. While writing this article, this researcher studied and analyzed Kathy Acker's novel from multiple angles in alternative approaches. To analyze the issues, he consulted library materials, online resources and the collected reviews as analyzing tools and techniques. Therefore, this is a qualitative research article prepared with the help of different tools and techniques available in the collected materials.

Results and Discussions

Acker's *Empire of the Senseless* is written in a journalistic form. It is divided into three parts; they are "Elegy for the World of the Fathers", "Alone" and "Pirate Night". Abhor and Thivai, both characters have collected memories and so they tell their own stories on the basis of their experiences, however the narratives are created from each-other's perspectives and explored saying either 'Abhor speaks through Thivai' or 'Thivai speaks'. The novel captures some mysterious pictures of Abhor who looks like half man and half woman. She disguises as a monster or a robot to fight against the gender discrimination and reveals the ills in a horrific way. She reveals the mystery of rape by her father through the narratives of a male character, Thivai. Her way of expression discloses the secrecy that she wants to hide the reality that she suffered from the sense of healing in the trauma. The horrible act performed by the male in a patriarchal society is narrated by males themselves. This kind of alternative narration tries to depict the vivid picture of dominance over females and Thivai's narration makes it easy to understand Abhor's horrific experiences that make Kathy Acker easy to provide justice to the victim. The social practice of the male hegemonized society is exposed in an alternative perspective.

It discusses on the issues of gender transmission that was practiced in Acker's time. Burning issues of gender identities and their roles in the society are reflected realities. They show the social problems of the past and reflect to the present time which is revealed in this novel through robotic and fictional characters. Abhor in the novel transgresses the representation of the traditional concept of femininity. In *Empire of the senseless*, the construction of the robotic body of Abhor tries to validate male-female dichotomies. Acker makes it clear that Abhor as a part of robot states to an extension of rational, technological, or hegemonic control. In her novel, Acker does not reveal clearly who constructs her. Abhor desperately runs from being used as a machine, or from having her body incorporated into any

man-made institutions and she speaks through Thivai. Abhor's mysterious presence is still a challenge to the constructed principles. Traditional practices and their set minds give space to the capitalistic culture and male hegemony. Performativity conceptualization gives space to repetitiveness that is exposed in Acker's novel.

Abhor's challenge to the masculine society as a woman activist representative raises women voices against conventionally constructed narratives. They want to control themselves over their bodies; not from the masculine practices. Regarding this issue Acker tries to depict the gender ideology through performance of gender. She tries to start a movement against body politics and women suffering. In the chapter "Raise Us From the Dead," Acker's telling of Thivai and Abhor's story of the consciousness of the body and languages of the body and its inseparability are different, "The sky faded to blood, to the color of blood. In my imagination we were always fucking: the black whip crawls across her back. A red cock rises" (33-34). The description of Abhor's body isn't taken as a human being, it is rather replaced by a robot. It is partly monster and partly a machine, however it looks like a combination of the male and female. Male-female side of the narrative has a close connection to her sexuality and gender ideology. Thivai's relationship and close connection with Abhor in the first might have been started because of his desire for sex. In the due course of love sex and marriage his love is not only for her bodily beauties but it is because of her intelligence. His desire for fucking her is different from a simple objectification of the body politics and so his desire is linked to the materialistic body. Her body is mysteriously confusing but it is inseparable from feelings. Another way of differentiating their relationship from many literary love stories is noting than that of the longing for sex. The desire is signified by bodies and the performances. Bodies are not usually read as the key to empathy and feeling in these earlier depictions of love as they are exemplified in the historical documentations.

This novel presents the female body as objectified by set up gender roles. As the women are dominated by the traditional masculine practices, they reply to Thivai's robotic father whether to be validated questioning to his activities. Thivai further validates this point where he is advocating his young son about how to treat the women. "Daddy (Robot): That's right, son. You're too fucked to fuck. That's what being inhuman means. Now: do you think you're able to walk? A man has to walk in order to fuck. Do you know why, son? Do you know why? Because THAT'S WHO A MAN IS. A man is someone who goes after everyone and everything he wants. Men do not need permission" (155). Here concept of sexuality in the male ideology of gender performance is depicted through the schooling of his son by Thivai's father shows the tradition of male-centric society where they claim themselves superior among male-female dichotomies. Feminist movements made it clear for our understanding that sexual politics preceded rule constructions and they governed the gender politics.

The dominance of women by men, in the private sphere of the home as well as the public sphere, suggests the need to rethink "political ideologies" also. Killing of the wives by Shah Zamam and Shahryar in the name of saving them from blacks and would be lovers are terrifying examples of women's sufferings and victimization. Unnecessary control over the women's body forced them to rethink from gynocentric perspective. They need to speak for womanhood and their equality in the social and socio-cultural sectors. Their identity, social position, and rights must be identified clearly. This article thus discusses on the issues of women who are insulted and injured. After the realization of Abhor, as she constantly was

being used by males, she starts to hate all men, she realizes that the whole world is men's bloody fantasies. She hates the notion of male ideology. The male control of religion, culture, language, and knowledge limits the power in which the gender role has been politicized. Therefore, the performativity of gender identity in Acker's *Empire* is constructed in a patriarchal notion to oppress females. Thus, in the novel through the construction of alternative gender perspective as a part of women and a part of construction process, Abhor departs from the conventional notion of the human body constructed as male and female. Acker leaves the boundaries between human-made and woman born politics played over the women's body.

Empire of the Senseless transgresses the set of rules and regulations of the patriarchal traditional mindset that was constituted to define gender ideology. The central character Abhor and Thivai show their point of departure from conventional myths regarding gender identity by constructing new myths in the novel. They try to reject such socially constructed norms, especially as being female. Abhor has a sense of awareness in extreme exploitation of the society practiced on the basis of gender. She reveals the points of discrimination in this novel where the rules were constructed by masculine culture for their benefit. This can be observed from the first chapter "Rape by her father" to the last one "Black Heat." Being a female, Acker through Abhor tries to depict the brutality what she experiences and exposes in her own life. From being physically torn and raped by her father to being abused by police and authority, the female gender role has been presented in the novel as a part of inferiority complex. Acker's central character Abhor wants to alter her gender identity and so she disguises as half-man and half woman. Alteration of gender identity is presented in the novel as the construction of gender identity with the constructed and crucified body of Abhor.

Conclusion

The novel, *Empire of the Senseless* highlights issues of identity politics as constructed in society from the perspectives of gender role. Acker through the Abhor's fragmented gender identity in the novel tries to redefine the gender ideology role of females which according to Acker could not justify through conventional mindset. The sense of freedom has been suppressed for female in the senseless empire. The accepted phenomenon of the sexual difference of male and female is defined according to birth that is rejected here with the resistance of human-made construction. The gender ideology with this alternation further validates the concept of gender as culturally and socially constructed phenomena. This alternation of gender in the novel proves that gender is constructed and that is idealized through action of one's performance rather than cultural construction. Therefore, this article concludes raising the issue of gender discrimination whereas the women have to fight for womanhood. They need to advocate for an equality and an identity establishment and so this article is written from gynocentric perspective.

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Call to African Americans to cherish their past in *The Piano lesson* by August Willson

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Abstract

The primary aim of this article is to analyse the dialogical differences of the characters in the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Piano Lesson* (1990) by August Wilson, the “theatre’s poet of Black America,” from his series of ten plays called the Pittsburgh or Century Cycle, through the lens of ‘Polyphony’, a concept from Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of ‘Dialogism’. Wilson honoured the lives and voices of Black men and women, using dialogue to reflect their rich cultural heritage and personal struggles (Davis, 2017). This article argues that *The Piano Lesson* is not merely a historical reflection of African American heritage but a portrayal of the 19th-century African American struggle to preserve their cultural identity in the modern world. It highlights how this identity, symbolised through invaluable objects, can be erased if not passed down through generations. The idea of holding symbolic items as part of cultural identity is not new in the African American context. Alice Walker, in her work *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983), emphasises the need to look deeper or adopt a different perspective to recognize African American artistic expressions. Similarly, Wilson captures the tension within the African American community to hold onto these cultural symbols and issues a call to cherish them, warning that they could otherwise be lost or taken away. As Boy Willie says to Berniece, “Hey Berniece ... If you and Maretha don't keep playing on that Piano ... ain't no telling ... me and Sutter both liable to be back.” (Wilson, *The Piano Lesson*, Act 2, Scene 5).

Keywords: African-Americans, Piano Lesson, August Willson, Dialogism, Bakhtin, White Supremacy, Materialistic Dream

Introduction

August Wilson was a renowned African American playwright and poet, who wrote a cycle of ten plays; each of them was designed to deal with a decade of African Americans’ life in the twentieth century. *The Piano Lesson* is Wilson's fourth play, which won the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play is set in Pittsburgh in 1936, i.e., it is concerned with the fourth decade of the life of African Americans.

In 1987 the play was staged at the Yale Repertory Theatre and later on Broadway. Originally, as August Wilson explained in an interview with the New York Times, the idea of the play was inspired by a painting titled ‘Piano Lesson’ by Romare Bearden, who is considered as one of the most important African American artists of the twentieth century (Biography, 2018). Wilson explained that the piano initially provided him with “a link to the past, to Africa, to who these people are. And then the question became, what do you do with your legacy? How do you best put it to use?” Each play is set in a different decade and collectively became known

as the American Century Cycle. "Put them all together," Wilson once said, "and you have a history. (Morales, 1994, p. 105). He often explained that he instead got his education from the four B's: the blues, the art of painter Romare Bearden, the writing of poet Amiri Baraka and writer/poet Jorge Luis Borges. "The foundation of my playwriting is poetry," Wilson said. (Paris Review, 1999). The plays share many features, notably their settings and their focuses on the lives and culture of African Americans.

All but one of the plays (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*) are set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Wilson grew up. For this reason, they are also known as the Pittsburgh Cycle. References in *The Piano Lesson* to once-actual places in the Hill District include Eddie's Restaurant at Wylie and Kirkpatrick, where Doaker suggests Boy Willie and Lymon go for a meal; the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House, the school where Maretha is learning to play piano; and the Rhumba Theater on Fullerton Street, where Lymon wants to go to "the pictures."

While slavery existed in the Northern United States up through the mid-19th century, the most iconic and enduring image of it is based within the Southern plantation. Planters began settling the delta of the Yazoo River in Mississippi—known as the "Mississippi delta"—in 1820. Stretching westward to the Mississippi River, the delta was low-lying land and flooded often. The white planters employed hundreds of slaves on huge cotton plantations—some spreading across more than one county. Sunflower County, where August Wilson situated Robert Sutter's plantation, lies in the middle of the Mississippi delta.

The playwright's use of dialogues in the play are prominent; they talk in depth about the characters. August Wilson said that his inspiration of writing comes from a dialogue he heard or spoken by him. Then he develops the play. (60 minutes Archive, 2020). Here the title reflects the major conflict in the play of the siblings' brother, Willie Boy, and a sister, Berniece, which centres around the family's heirloom, a piano that carries the history of their ancestors during the slavery.

Methodology

The methodological approach, Dialogism, is given by Michael Bakhtin. He was one of the most important theorists of discourse in the twentieth century. Dialogic or dialogism, according to Bakhtin, means the process in which meaning is evolved out of interactions among the author, the work and the reader or listener. Also these elements are affected by the contexts in which they are placed, namely by social and political forces.

According to Bakhtin, Dialogism has polyphony (multiple voices), in the text not only the author but every character in the text has a voice. No situation is dealt with in isolation, everything is related and is a response to previous things that happened. To understand a text, you need to understand the historical, Cultural Context of the text in which it is written in. Bakhtin further developed this theory of polyphony, or "dialogics," in *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (1975; *The Dialogic Imagination*), in which he postulated that, rather than being static, language evolves dynamically and is affected by and affects the culture that produces and uses it.

The word “polyphonic” is a musical term, referring to simultaneous lines of independent melody making a whole. In a novel, polyphony is in most cases metaphorical, as is the term “voice”. According to David Lodge, a polyphonic novel is a “novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice” (Lodge 1990: 86). Polyphony is nothing new. Mikhail Bakhtin coined the phrase “the polyphonic novel” in his 1934 paper “Discourse of the Novel”. Polyphony is, he argues, a feature of narrative, which includes a diversity of points of view and voices. The author does not place his own narrative voice between the character and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert. Dostoevsky’s ‘dialogical principle’ is counterposed to the ‘monologism’ (single-thought discourse; also termed ‘homophony’ – single-voice) characteristic of traditional writing and thought. In monologism, one transcendental perspective or consciousness integrates the entire field, and thus integrates all the signifying practices, ideologies, values and desires that are deemed significant. Anything irrelevant to this perspective is deemed superfluous or irrelevant in general. Dialogism in contrast recognises the multiplicity of perspectives and voices. It is also referred to as ‘double-voiced’ or ‘multi-voiced’. It is a ‘principle’ which can become the main referent of a particular aesthetic field. Each character has their own final word, but it relates to and interacts with those of other characters. Discourse does not logically unfold (as in analytical philosophy), but rather, interacts. This makes dialogical works a lot more ‘objective’ and ‘realistic’ than their monological counterparts, since they don’t subordinate reality to the ideology of the author.

The multiple voices seen in *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson are Robert Sutter, Berniece and Boy Willie. This paper examines how these voices represent different perspectives within the text and how August Willson gives a call to African-Americans to cherish their past if not Robert Sutter representing white supremacy or Boy Willie representing Materialistic dream will grab the piano which represents their Identity. August Wilson in the fourth lesson of The Pittsburgh Cycle presents multiple perspectives centred around a single object—the piano. Berniece views the piano as a silent memory, a symbol of family heritage that should be preserved, contrasting sharply with Boy Willie's materialistic perspective, seeing it as a means to secure his own freedom. These divergent views reflect the broader themes of identity and memory for which the theory of polyphony fits seamlessly here, as the multiple voices in *The Piano Lesson* Offer layered meanings, culminating in a call to the African American community, emphasising the complexity of identity and heritage.

Literature Review

Nahro Maulood and Sherzad Barzani, scholars at the Salahaddin University - Erbil, in the paper of 2020 titled “Trauma in August Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson*” explores the theme of trauma. The author argues that the play portrays the intergenerational trauma experienced by African Americans, arising from slavery and racism. The piano, a central symbol, represents the family's history, cultural heritage, and emotional pain. How characters are shaped by oppression and trauma.

Tackach, James and Emilie Benoit, Roger Williams University, 2008 in their work titled as "August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and the Limits of Law." The authors argue that the play reveals the limitations of law in addressing the complex historical and cultural experiences of African Americans and talks about how Wilson features a debate between an African American brother and sister over the ownership of a family heirloom that represents the Charles family's slave heritage. Ownership questions like the one presented in *The Piano Lesson* can usually be resolved in the courts, but Wilson's play suggests that the law might be unable to resolve property disputes so problematically entangled with the legacy of slavery. How Wilson offers, instead, a non-legal resolution to the piano debate presented in his play. Law is shown to be inadequate in resolving family conflicts and cultural disputes.

Arpita Mithra, Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, 2021 titled her work as, *August Wilson: The Unrestrained Voice of Black America*. The work addresses pressing issues such as diaspora, racism, segregation, slavery, love, relationships, human struggles, spirituality, life, and death. Through the works of Wilson how he showcased black life on stage, protesting racial subjugation and emphasising the importance of African Americans connecting with their origin, ancestry, history, and African spirituality to preserve their cultural heritage and thrive.

Michelle M. Sotero, a scholar at the University of Nevada, in an article in 2006 entitled "A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research," hypothesizes that "historical trauma theory" is a relatively new concept. The premise of this theory is that "populations historically subjected to long-term, mass trauma—colonialism, slavery, war, genocide—exhibit a higher prevalence of disease even several generations after the original trauma occurred" (p. 93). According to Sotero the descendants of nations who are affected by historical trauma exhibit various symptoms of PTSD.

These are popular perspectives on *The Piano Lesson* Which spoke about Racism, Slavery and cultural significance but doesn't talk about the importance of perspectives through dialogues and what the characters represent.

Analysis

Representing white supremacy in Robert Sutter

Wilson initially did not give importance to black dialogues but later understanding its importance said that Dialogues are the inspiration for his writings. Then he gave importance to and started writing only in Black's dialogues understanding its expressions and culture. (60 minutes Archive). We don't see any dialogues for Robert Sutter but perspective is seen as Bakhtin says polyphony is not only of many voices but also of different perspectives. Robert Sutter was the slave owner who owned the family of Boy Willie. He traded Berniece and her child Boy Charles for a Piano from Joel Noland as a wedding present to his wife Ophelia. As time went by Ophelia wistful Berniece and the Little boy, the doctors said she was wasting away. Then he called Boy Willie (husband of Berniece) who was a woodworker to carve his wife and child instead he carves his Whole life story.

Robert Sutter the slave owner, his perspective represents white supremacy as we don't see voice for him. His paternalistic belief tries to decide the future of the slaves by selling them, they had no right of their own; they were traded as objects for an object signifying that whites

know what is best for black people. Children of the enslaved mother were also slaves; they were not free. They had no right to stay with their family. The slaveholders were not required to provide a stable family life for their slaves. Families might be broken up for any reason, such as the owner's financial needs. One slave trader reported he was often sold a woman slave while the seller would keep her husband and children. Such impermanence and emotional trauma coupled with the total dependence of slaves on their owners cast a long shadow on African American family life. White supremacy represents lack of empathy for black emotions. This shows Sutter's ownership and control, his claim to the piano which symbolises African American cultural heritage, this shows his belief of white ownership and control over black people and exploitation of tangible cultural artefact (Piano).

Doaker: Them white fellows around there used to come up to Mr. Sutter and get him to make all kinds of things for them. Then they'd pay Mr. Sutter a nice price. See, everything my grandpa Made Mr. Sutter owned because he owned him.

White supremacy not only owned them as slaves but their talent too. Willie Boy who was a good wood worker was owned by Mr. Sutter, all the carvings he did were sold by Mr. Sutter. He earned a good sum out of a slaves' talent. Robert Sutter represents white supremacy on African American slaves because he owned them and whatever talent they have is also owned by Robert Sutter.

As Willie is said to carve Berniece and Charles he not only carves all his family but their past too. Sutter was mad at this but the carvings on the piano made Ophelia better and she continued playing the Piano till her last breath. The three brothers Boy Charles, the winning boy and Doaker decide to take away the Piano. Charles said, "It was the story of our whole family and as long as Sutter had it ...he had us. Say we were still in slavery." Enslaved workers were not paid. Generally speaking, they had very limited freedom. The slave owner decided where they would live, what work they would do, and who they would marry or have children with—if they were allowed to do so at all.

One day they took away the piano but Boy Charles stayed back. When Sutter was back home and saw the piano was missing. someone went and burnt Charles' house but he was not there, he went down and caught the 3:57 yellow Dog. Sutter found him in the boxcar and set the boxcar afire and killed everybody. White supremacy killed them brutally when they tried to find their identity and resist authority. Here Piano represents the African American identity, when they tried to get back their identity they were killed. This shows the white dominance and how they tried to eradicate their past, the harsh treatment. When they tried to gain ownership they were burnt. Piano being their identity, until it was with Sutter he owned them as his slaves. This shows Sutters use of power and violence to maintain control, attempt of white supremacy to Erase black history. Robert Sutter's ghost embodies the voice of slavery, oppression, representing the legacy of slavery and racism, supernatural power haunting the family's present symbolising the continuity of the Impact of historical trauma and white supremacy. Joseph Clay, a Savannah merchant, described the role of slavery in 1784, saying, "The Negro business is a great object with us. It is to the trade of this country as the soul is to the body, and without it no house can gain proper stability."

Racism against African Americans dates back to the colonial era. As the importation of slaves was outlawed, smuggling continued. The domestic trade of human beings continued to be a major economic activity. It represents white supremacy, a belief that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate Other races.

Representing Boy Willie as American dream

Boy Willie: Me and Lymon selling watermelons. We got a truck out there. Got a whole truckload of watermelons. We brought them up here to sell.

Lymon: That's All Boy Willie talked about the whole trip up here. I got tired of hearing him talk about the piano.

Boy Willie's voice represents Materialistic dreams. He drove all the way from Pittsburgh to Mississippi to sell watermelons and make money. His primary motivation is to earn money. He wants to sell piano, make more money and buy the land belonging to the Sutter family where Charles' family were enslaved.

Boy Willie: Sutter's brother selling the land. He says he's gonna sell it to me. That's why I came up here. I got one part of it. Sell them watermelons and get me another part. Get Berniece to sell that Piano and I'll have the third part.

Though the piano represents their identity, Boy Willie does not care about it and wants to sell it and make a profit of money to live a settled life which fulfils his dream. He does not care about anything rather than money. This shows his focus on financial gain and material wealth. Boy Willie's readiness to sell the piano which is their identity and their family cultural heritage shows how Materialistic dreams can make their cultural heritage into a commodity. His focus on piano's economic value reduced the cultural significance to a mere commodity.

Boy Willie represents the American dream from rags to riches, a Materialistic world. The American dream is defined as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position" (Adam, 1931). But it turned out to be Materialistic and Boy Willie resonates with the idea of the American dream, he sees no value to piano as it just exists without any use.

The "Dream of a Democracy of Goods", whereby everyone had access to the same products regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or class, thereby challenging the aristocratic norms of the rest of the world where only the rich or well-connected were granted access to luxury (Ownby (1999) identifies four American Dreams that the new consumer culture of the early 20th century addressed). According to the Dream, this includes the opportunity for one's children to grow up and receive a good education and career without artificial barriers. It is the

opportunity to make individual choices without the prior restrictions that limit people according to their class, caste, religion, race, or ethnicity.

Boy Willie: What I want to bring a child into this world for? Why I wanna bring somebody else into all this for?

Boy Willie is in the illusion of being happy if he owned a land and be Prosper, which is a Materialistic dream. Him prioritising profit over heritage shows how materialistic dreams can shape individual values. F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his 1925 classic, *The Great Gatsby*, satirise or ridicule materialism in the chase for the American dream. Pursuit of wealth and status: A character like Jay Gatsby in "The Great Gatsby" embodies the materialistic American Dream, obsessively pursuing wealth and status to win over Daisy Buchanan. The value of cultural heritage and their identity is realised by Boy Willie at the end of the play when Berniece starts playing on it.

Representing Berniece as Helpless character

Doaker: you know she won't touch that piano. I ain't never known her to touch it since Mama Old died. That's over seven years now. She say it got blood on it. She got Maretha playing on it though say Maretha can go on and do everything she can't do. Got her in an extra school down at the Irene Kauffman settlement house. She want Maretha to grow up to and be a school teacher say she good enough she can teach on the piano.

Avery: You got to put all that behind you, Berniece.

Berniece: I got Maretha playing on it. She don't know nothing about it. Let her go on and be a schoolteacher or something. She don't have to carry all of that with her. She got a chance I didn't have. I ain't gonna burden her with that piano.

Berniece Comes from a traumatic experience of their family past, she says that When her mama died she shut the top on that piano and never opened it since she was only playing it for her. When her daddy died it seemed like all her mother's life went into that piano. She used to have her playing on it come in and teach her. Had Miss Eula say when she played it she could hear my daddy talking to her. I used to think them pictures came alive and walked through the house. Some- time late at night she could hear her mama talking to them. She doesn't play that piano because she doesn't want to wake them spirits. They never be walking around in this house. But presently she is having a job and she is trying to hold onto that Piano. She Is carrying the burden of the past, doesn't open her mouth to share her trauma and accept the past. She doesn't want to pass on this burden to Maretha; that is why she Is quite. Boy Willie tells Maretha to ask your mom about carvings on the piano, Berniece denies to say, this shows the plight of present African-Americans.

She represents the voice of African American cultural heritage. She never agrees to sell the piano no matter what this embodies the family history and legacy. She seeks to preserve the cultural heritage and its stories. She is the transition between new generation and old

generation but she never Opens her mouth to tell Maretha about their past. She lets Maretha play the piano. She even appoints a teacher for her but she herself never plays the piano. Even though she saw the Sutter ghost many times, never talks about the ghost to Maretha.

Berniece: Boy Willie. I done told you a hundred times I ain't selling that piano.

Boy Willie: I'm trying to get me some land, woman. I need that piano to get me some money so I can buy Sutter's land.

Berniece: Money can't buy what that piano cost. You can't sell your soul for money.

Boy Willie: I ain't talking about all that, woman. I ain't talking about selling my soul. I'm talking about trading that piece of wood for some land. Get something under your feet.

Berniece says selling the piano means selling their soul this shows how she is very much attached to piano as it not only represents their identity but also the Pain and suffering their families went through which is represented by the carvings on the piano. Boy Willie threatens Berniece with selling the piano, representing the helpless character caught between preserving cultural heritage and Materialistic gain.

There are loud sounds heard from upstairs as Boy Willie begins to wrestle with Sutter's Ghost. It is a life-and-death struggle fraught with perils and faultless terror. Boy Willie is thrown down the stairs. AVERY is stunned into silence, BOY WILLIE picks himself up and dashes back upstairs.

When there was a duel between Sutter's ghost and Boy Willie, this is when Berniece plays the piano, asks help from her ancestors and everything settles.

Boy Willie: Hey Berniece.... If you and Maretha don't keep playing on that Piano...ain't no telling ...me and Sutter both liable to be back.

Berniece is not talking about the past which is why Robert sutter representing white supremacy or Boy Willie representing American dream will try to grab the piano their Identity. At the end she plays the piano. This is the call given by August Willson to every African American to talk about their traumatic past to their children and cherish their past. This mirrors African-American lives and it gives a new insight to leave the burden of the past and to cherish it.

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Plight of Women in the Novel *Pinjar*

Manoj Kumar Singh

Abstract

Pinjar by Amrita Pritam is a Punjabi novel translated into English by Khushwant Singh, a prominent author of Partition Literature. It describes the scenario of a woman named Pooro, the main female protagonist of the novel when there was partition of India and Pakistan. She belongs to a Hindu family but is kidnapped by a Muslim boy named Rashida. This amalgamation of two religions is undoubtedly the outcome of the novel *Pinjar*. Amrita Pritam is a recipient of the Jnanpith Award-India's most prestigious literary prize for collection of poems. Her novel *Pinjar*, published in 1950, is a traumatic episode of women who suffered at the time of partition of India and Pakistan. The paper presents Pooro's predicament when she is abducted by Rashida and this is the point from where her tragic trip starts. The paper is an attempt to analyse a contemplative trauma, sexual savagery against women and self-estrangement during the partition of the two countries.

Keywords: Partition, Amalgamation, Recipient, Traumatic Episode, Predicament, Sexual Savagery, Estrangement

Introduction:

Pritam's *Pinjar* is a novel based on sociological background. It identifies the plight of women during partition period of India and Pakistan. The partition period portrays the predicament of women suffering from sexual violence, introspecting trauma, and estrangement. They were exposed to physical assault, proselytism, forced marriage to their abductors, life of slavery and so on. The entire novel rotates on the central character of the novel named Pooro, an ideal and obedient Hindu girl. She belongs to a happy and prosperous family having two sisters, a brother, parents and avunculi. As she is grown up with natural beauty, her parents decide to engage her to a wealthy man, Ram Chand, a handsome boy of Rattoval. The proposal of her marriage to Ram Chand is accepted by her heart and soul. Ram Chand is happy to find the dual kinship at a time, that his sister, Lajo is engaged to Pooro's brother, Trilok. It appears a sweet relationship between the two families.

The entire scene changes with the changing of time. Pooro is now a girl of someone's eyes. She is kidnapped by a Muslim boy named Rashida. The mishap of this incident is, of course, tragic. Rashid does it as an ancestral revenge because Pooro's uncle had committed such an odious act with Rashida's family members earlier. Rashida is an innocent boy but he is compelled to do such a mean act. The entry of Pooro in Rashida's house is totally strange. She feels her life getting into hot water. She is called Hamida in Rashida's family which she does not like at all. When she is compelled her marriage to Rashida, Pooro recalls her wedding to Ram Chand. She says:

She would have bathed in oil and massaged with a stick of turmeric; her arms would have been loaded with red ivory bangles, and tasselled strings of cowrie-shells would have been tied to her wrists. She would have worn a dress of pure silk; she would have ridden to Ram Chand's home in a palanquin; she would have been the world's most beautiful bribe... and then. "My parents must have had a terrible time."¹

The day is not far away when she escapes from Rashida's house and reaches her parents but in vain. They do not accept her. It is a heart-rending scene for them. They think that Pooro may have lost her chastity and so they feel unable to show their face in the society. Pooro is drained out by her mother saying:

"Who will marry you now? You have lost your religion and birth right, daughter, it would have been better if you had died at birth! If you dare to help you, we will be wiped out without a trace of blood left behind to tell of our fate."²

Pooro's life now comes under the scanner. Thinking over and over again, she returns to Rashida. She realises to cry over the spilt milk. This is the point where the novelist shows the plight of women in the conservative contemporary society. Her new name Hamida makes her loss of identity in her mind. It seems that the lifeless soul of Pooro exists in the body of Hamida. Her skeleton is ready for Hamida having no positive feelings and emotions. In Pritam's pens, "She was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name."³ She clearly says that Pooro is the example of thousands of women who suffered at the time of partition. Plight of women at the time of partition gives lessons to the fair sex commonly. They think their safety before and behind. Pooro, now Hamida feels fortunate to find Kammo, a little Hindu girl of the same village where she lives with Rashida. Both Pooro and Kammo share sweet relationship with each other. But Pooro is surprised at her when she knows the miserable condition of the little girl. Kammo's mother is dead and her father marries to another lady. She is Kammo's step mother who does not want Kammo's relation with a Muslim girl, Hamida. Pooro again faces the crux of problem. She feels her life fulfilled with fearful traumas.

The next scene seen by Pooro is a lunatic middle aged woman who is a vagabond. Due to lack of sense, she does not cover her body with cloths. Other women of the village, when see, cover her body with cloths. The male society of the partition time was so cruel that this lunatic woman is also rapped by an unknown man and she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby-boy in a field. This is another tragic scene Pooro sees and finds the lunatic lassie dead there. Being sympathetic, she covers the baby in her veil and takes him to home. But this baby at Rashida's home gives Pooro a thrust by the society for some time. The mother of the baby is Hindu. So, some people of Hindu religion come to Rashida claiming the baby as Hindu and they support Hamida to look after him carefully. Pooro accepts him as her son. To see the situation, "Rashida was overcome with emotion. He had won over the Hindu girl. The gamble had paid off. Pooro was no longer the girl he had abducted and made his mistress – not a woman he had brought in as a housekeeper. She was Hamida, the mother of his son."⁴ This is a burning

example of the society of the partition time when mean-minded men lived just to use the fair sex for their sexual need only.

Pritam's *Pinjar* is replete with the tragic saga of partition. In the chain of tragedy, Pooro's picture is seen on a grass root level. The tragic story of Lajo is also a bagger's description. Lajo is Pooro's sister-in-law. It appears complicated relationships with Pooro and others. Pooro's brother Trilok gets married to Ram Chand's sister, Lajo. This is what the partition of India and Pakistan takes place. People start leaving their houses to save their wives and daughters from abduction as well. Lajo is also rapped by a Muslim man who has already plundered the house of Ram Chand. When Pooro sees Ram Chand, her former fiancé, at refugee camp, she knows the abduction of Lajo by a Muslim man. But she tells him to heave a sigh of relief, that is, she will try to release Lajo sooner or later. It so happens. Pooro starts a frantic search and finds Lajo with the help of Rashida. She finds her looking like a skeleton. Their meeting is like a mild stone. Rashida's consideration and co-operation make Pooro believe in him as a well-wisher. They bring Lajo to Lahore where Trilok and Ram Chand arrive to receive Lajo. This is the time for Pooro to get the last chance to go to India with family because Ram Chand is ready to accept her now, but Pooro rejects the offer thinking it beat about the bush. She compromises herself with Rashida saying:

“Whether one is a Hindu girl or a Muslim one whoever reaches her destination she carried my soul also.”⁵

Last but not the least, the novel, *Pinjar* keeps a high profile to the readers towards the episodes of women's suffering from sexual violence, introspecting trauma and estrangement during the partition of India and Pakistan. The entire novel is a tragic conflict of the community of the fair sex of the two countries.

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Eco critical Reading of Temsula Ao's *Tombstone in My Garden*

V Rushika

Abstract

This paper provides an Eco critical analysis of Temsula Ao's *Tombstone in My Garden*, exploring the intricate relationship between humans and the environment through the lens of ecocriticism. It critiques anthropocentrism, highlighting the commodification of nature for human desires, which leads to the exploitation and manipulation of the natural world. Central themes include the inherent value of nature, the emotional agency of non-human entities, and the consequences of prioritizing human ambitions over ecological well-being. Through a close reading of stories like Snow-Green and the talking tree, the analysis demonstrates how Ao's narrative advocates for a more respectful and symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment, urging a reevaluation of humanity's impact on the ecosystem.

Key Words: Ecocriticism, Nature, Anthropocentrism, Interconnectedness, Environment

Introduction:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' (Cheryll Glotfelty). 'ecocriticism' or 'green studies', both terms are used to denote a critical approach which began in the USA in the late 1980s, and in the UK in the early 1990s, and since it is still an 'emergent' movement. In the USA the acknowledged founder is Cheryll Glotfelty, co-editor with Harold Fromm of a key collection of helpful and definitive essays entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (University of Georgia Press, 1996). In 1992 she was also the co-founder of ASLE (pronounced 'Az-lee', the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment). ASLE has its own 'house journal', called ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment), which started in 1993, so American ecocriticism was already a burgeoning academic movement by the early 1990s, beginning to establish its professional infrastructure of designated journals and an official corporate body. Ecocriticism as a concept first arose in the late 1970s, at meetings of the WLA (the Western Literature Association, a body whose field of interest is the literature of the American West). (P.Barry. p.160)

Eco-Critical Analysis of Snow Green:

Greg Garrard's critiques anthropocentrism, highlighting the consequences of prioritizing human desires over the well-being of nature.

A more serious objection is that cornucopians take little or no account of the non-human environment except insofar as it impacts upon human wealth or

welfare. Nature is only valued in terms of its usefulness to us. Many environmentalists argue that we need to develop a value system which takes the intrinsic or inherent value of nature as its starting point. (Garrard, p. 18)

she became obsessed with the idea of winning the first prize in the annual flower show organized by the Ladies Club and had thus callously orders this exquisite beauty's dislocation from her natural habitat. (p.58)

The mistress's decision to move Snow-Green into an ornate pot for a flower show reflects a commodification of nature, treating her as a trophy rather than a living being and this commodification leads to Snow-Green's emotional distress and refusal to bloom.

I am going to call her Snow-Green and enter her in next year's flower show. I am sure I'll win the first prize. (p.59)

The ornate pot symbolizes confinement, as Snow-Green feels "condemned to a prison" away from her natural environment. The pot serves as a metaphor for the artificial constraints imposed on natural growth, reinforcing the idea that true beauty lies in freedom.

In, Glotfelty and Fromm emphasize the importance of recognizing non-human entities as active participants in narratives. They argue that literature should reflect the agency of nature, which is evident in Snow-Green's emotional state and her resistance to human intervention

Just as feminist critics examine language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist critics from a class-conscious perspective, ecocritics take an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. xix).

the ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of perception, and literary scholars can contribute to the solution by rethinking the ways we represent the relationship between humans and the environment' (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. xxi).

She refused to open her petals and buds remained closed way past the show days. It was as if the Snow-Green had absconded and only her outer shell stood defiant in the showy pot. (p.60)

Snow-Green's emotional state is evident in her refusal to bloom and her perceived protest against being moved to an ornate pot for the flower show. This resistance symbolizes her struggle against human intervention, reflecting her desire to remain in her natural environment where she thrived. Her emotional turmoil, as described in the text, illustrates that she is not merely a passive object but an active participant with feelings, showcasing the agency of nature that Glotfelty and Fromm emphasize.

He was sure if restored to her original environment, Snow-Green would once again be the queen of lilies by the next season. But the frustrated woman refused

to send lily back to her flowerbed and instead had her put her remote corner of the garden. (p.61)

When Snow-Green, the beloved lily, is kept in a remote corner of the garden instead of being returned to her original flowerbed, it reveals a stark contrast between human ambition and nature's needs. Despite Odi's confident assurance that Snow-Green would bloom beautifully if given her old spot back, the woman's refusal to move her reflects a troubling prioritization of her competition goals over the plant's happiness. This decision speaks volumes about how we sometimes value our own desires more than the well-being of the living things around us.

The old gardener then knew that Snow-Green had heard him and the mistress arguing about entering her in the flower show and that she was behaving in this manner as a show of protest. (p.61)

The narrative reveals how Snow-Green responds to being treated as a mere object for human enjoyment. The old gardener realizes that Snow-Green's reluctance to bloom and her apparent protest are ways of expressing her discomfort and dissatisfaction. This humanization of Snow-Green—her protest and her desire for her natural environment—reminds us that nature, too, has its own feelings and needs, deserving of our empathy and respect.

He shuddered to think of what he would do if something happened to her, whom he had raised and nurtured like own daughter. (p.62)

The gardener's profound connection with Snow-Green illustrates the kind of caring relationship we should strive for with the natural world. This emotional bond shows that nature is not just an abstract concept but a living presence that we have a responsibility to care for.

It is simply to show that silly woman that she cannot treat everyone and everything around her so callously. (p.63)

The gardener's frustration with the woman's callous treatment of Snow-Green is a call to action. His desire to show the woman that nature should not be manipulated for personal gain highlights a broader message: that we must treat the environment with the respect and consideration it deserves, rather than viewing it as a tool for our own ends

We too have feelings; we too know where we belong. I refuse to be put on display in some strange place for humans to gawk and gape at me. I feel constricted in this pot. I want to feel the fresh Earth me. I want to chat with my friends in the open garden, laugh with them and be myself. Here where you have put me, I almost feel dead. (p.64)

The ornate pot symbolizes confinement, as Snow-Green feels "condemned to a prison" away from her natural environment. The pot serves as a metaphor for the artificial constraints imposed on natural growth, reinforcing the idea that true beauty lies in freedom.

Analysis of The Talking Tree:

Cheryl Glotfelty explains that humans have been destroying the nature through our actions.

...the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems. We are there. (p.19)

One day he had asked his grandfather, in whose belly he was now sheltered, why it was so big. Big Father replied, 'Because they tend you from a young age to make you grow tall and straight and then one day come with axes and even noisy saws to cut you down'. 'Why?' he had asked.' Because they build themselves beautiful houses with timber from our bodies. (p.75)

This showcases the damage done by the humans against planets basic life support systems. It also underscores the concept of Greg Garrard's critiques anthropocentrism, highlighting the consequences of prioritizing human desires over the well-being of nature.

A more serious objection is that cornucopians take little or no account of the non-human environment except insofar as it impacts upon human wealth or welfare. Nature is only valued in terms of its usefulness to us. (Garrard, p. 18)

Look', one was shouting, 'this was my best specimen; I was going to use it for my new house. And this one, I had promised to give it to my brother. Look at them now; what am I going to do? I think I'll put some fuel on the whole lot and burn them to hell. (p.76)

The text highlights how cruel mankind is toward nature and how selfish they can be if they don't gain anything from the nature.

The tree the man pointed to first was the one the little one was cowering within and he began to cry silently. The other human tried to pacify his companion and said, 'Look. We can't do anything today. So let's go back now and come back tomorrow with all the equipment and cut these pathetic specimens into firewood. At least that way, we'll recover some of our investment.'

This line personifies the little tree, giving it emotional depth and highlighting its vulnerability in the face of human threats. It also reflects the utilitarian view of nature held by the humans, emphasizing their intent to exploit the trees for profit, which underscores the destructive impact of human actions on the environment. The reference to the "fallen grandfather tree" suggests a familial connection among trees, emphasizing the interconnectedness of life within the forest ecosystem.

... It was certainly not for birds to build nests and raise families. It was certainly not for trees snuggle up to the big ones and listen to fascinating stories. And it was certainly not to give shade and shelter to weary travellers. Humans grew

these trees to only cut them down and make all sorts of pleasure! As he enumerated all these he was growing angrier by the minute.

In this passage, ecocriticism highlights the conflict between human exploitation of nature and the intrinsic value of trees as living entities within their ecosystem. The little tree's anger and sadness reflect a deep awareness of the interconnectedness of life, emphasizing that humans' intentions are often destructive rather than nurturing. This critique of anthropocentrism underscores the need for a more respectful and symbiotic relationship with nature, advocating for the protection of the environment and its inhabitants against human greed and negligence.

This elephant was first employed by the humans for pulling huge trees from the deep forests. But when he and his fellow elephants began to be treated badly, he attacked the overseer one day and escaped into a remote jungle. (p.78)

The narrative reflects the consequences of human actions on the ecosystem through the depiction of deforestation and the exploitation of animals, such as the elephant used for logging. The destruction of the forest not only displaces wildlife but also disrupts the natural balance, leading to a wasteland that affects all living beings.

... It was then that the red ants got to work. As the humans began to jump about, yelping and trying to remove the ants from their bodies, the baboons started their chorus of almost obscene sounding yells and yodels. The hapless humans looked at each other and, as if on a pre-determined cue, began to run towards the exit. It was now the turn of the bigger animals, led by the big elephant, to give them chase. They did not hurry but from time to time let out their various calls to put the fear of god into the intruders. When the last of the machines brought by the humans departed, all the animals collapsed not only because of exhaustion but also on account of laughing remembering the comic reactions of the vile humans. When the ants attacked them and the humiliating departure of the usurpers of the forest. (p.83)

This passage can be analysed through an Eco critical lens by highlighting the chaotic consequences of human intrusion into the natural world. The humans' panic in response to the red ants symbolizes the disruption of their perceived control over nature, illustrating the vulnerability of humans when faced with the wild. Additionally, the animals' laughter at the humans' misfortune serves as a form of resistance, reclaiming agency and underscoring the idea that nature can retaliate against those who exploit it, ultimately advocating for a more respectful coexistence with the environment.

How so?' the stranger 'Because he can talk.' asked. The old man replied, 'What? And how? Does he know your language? have you learnt the language of trees?' The villager answered in a solemn tone: 'Neither, but since we live in the same space, we don't need any language to communicate; we have learnt from nature that we need only its spirit to make us intelligible to each other.

That is how our great grandfathers heard his warnings, whether it was enemies, wild animals or big thunder-storms. And that is why this tree has lived for so long and it will live longer than all humans because he is our protector. (p.86).

This reveals a profound understanding of the interconnectedness between humans and nature. The villager's assertion that communication transcends language emphasizes a deep, intuitive relationship with the environment, suggesting that true understanding comes from living in harmony with nature rather than through verbal language. Furthermore, the reverence for the tree as a protector and the warning to the stranger highlight the importance of respecting natural entities, advocating for a worldview that recognizes the wisdom and agency of the natural world, which often surpasses human comprehension.

Some inquisitive visitors wanted to ask the photographer to explain the significance of the title and reveal the identity of the painter because there was no signature; only the word, 'Unknown' could be seen faintly blending with the russet tinge of the earth front which the mighty trunk emerged. In their initial scramble to reach vantage point to view this unusual exhibit, in search of the clue to the artist's identity but by then the loud protest of the earlier scene was replaced by a kind of reverential silence induced by the presence of odd beauty of nature which seemed to be telling a different story to an invisible audience. (p.88)

The above passage reflects the tension between human curiosity and the mystery of nature, as embodied by the "Unknown" artist and the tree exhibit. The visitors' desire to uncover the Identity of the painter symbolizes humanity's tendency to seek ownership and understanding of nature, often overlooking its intrinsic value and the stories it holds. The shift from loud protest to reverential silence suggests a moment of recognition and respect for the natural world, encouraging a deeper appreciation for the unknown and the interconnectedness of all living things, rather than a mere quest for knowledge or control.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Temsula Ao's *Tombstone in My Garden* serves as a poignant reminder of the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world, urging readers to recognize the significance of coexistence. Through its Eco-critical lens, the narrative critiques anthropocentrism and highlights the harmful effects of human exploitation on the environment. It also calls for a fundamental shift in how we perceive and value nature. By highlighting nature's agency and its intrinsic worth, the text advocates for a more nurturing and respectful relationship with the environment, emphasizing the need to preserve our ecosystems for future generations' well-being.

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Hamlet and The Libertine: 15th, 16th and 17th Century Literature and Philosophy

William John Titus Bishop

Abstract:

Its bearings are Lacanian, beginning with a reading of Hamlet through Lacan's eyes, a study in unconscious desire, and, more expansively, a sort of test case of "how the human unconscious functions" by a reading of the Shakespeare play. The paper then turns to a very different sort of historicist approach, placing the phenomenon of libertinism in dialogue with Calvinism: I argue this is also said to have connections with Lacanian ideas of cognitive dissonance in so far as binary oppositions are considered mutually exclusive. Rochester is then offered as exemplifying unconscious desire and you take literary critics Zwicker and Wintle to task for allocating him too simply to the class of "Libertine". I then turn to the categorizing habits of editors which encourage this kind of identification. The conclusion of the paper is that Rochester has been largely miscategorised as a libertine. The conclusion is demonstrated by a psychoanalytic and historicist reading.

Key Words: John Wilmot, Hamlet, Jacques Lacan, William Shakespeare, Poetry, Literary Theory, Historicism

That one is well in evil, or in other words, that the feminine does not draw one upward, is due to nothing more than a philological remark: that one is well in the good [qu'on est bien dans le bien], rests on a word play not possible in the German language: Mein fuhlt sich wohl im Guten.. John Wilmot was, without stating it explicitly and in spite of himself, writing what Kant would come to define as an 'ethics' [ethik]. This will be, which is to say nothing more than it has always already been, my argument throughout this essay. Always already [toujours deja] because, necessarily, as Jacques Derrida states, writing a paper means 'never arriving, never to arrive, even so that I don't arrive' at the place where I have always already been, [Quitte à ne pas arriver. Quitte, dit-elle, à ne pas arriver. Quitte pour ce que je n'arrives pas], for when we know where we are going, 'we never take another step to get there'.

To establish this, it is necessary to describe the intrinsic relationship between Wilmot's ethical pronouncements qua text, and Wilmot's ethical pronouncements as they are experienced psychologically, that is to say how they produce an affect in the reader. This relationship is touched upon by Jacques Lacan in his 1989 essay 'Kant with Sade' in which he states, when discussing Kant's conception of the moral law, that the subject 'encounters a law' that is 'obtained from a voice in the conscience, and which, in articulating itself as a maxim, proposes the order of a purely practical reason, or of a will.' That is to say, a categorical imperative is experienced as an auditory hallucination. Lacan, I would argue is not using the term 'hallucination' in the specialist psychoanalytic sense, rather he is using the word in the same way Roland Barthes does when he describes a photograph. For Barthes, 'the photograph is an extended, loaded evidence — as if it caricatured not the figure of what it represents (quite

the converse) but its very existence' ... the Photograph then becomes a hallucination, so to speak, a modest, shared hallucination.' Thus reading Wilmot in this way will allow for an understanding of his poetry as being concerned with not only making ethical pronouncements, but furthermore with how those pronouncements will affect the reader psychologically.

Reading the Unconscious

I have never said that the unconscious was an assemblage of words, but that the unconscious is precisely structured. I don't think there is such an English word but it is necessary to have this term, as we are talking about structure and the unconscious is structured as a language. It is a thinking with words, with thoughts that escape your vigilance, your state of watchfulness. I will show how The Second Earl of Rochester's poetry is to be read as an expression of the subjective unconscious, that is to say, how his poems are examples not only expressions of a particular subject, but of how the subject is constructed in language, and in particular, how the subject's desire is expressed in his work. Jacques Lacan, in his reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, demonstrates how subjectivity and desire are expressed in a text.

'As a sort of come-on', Lacan asserts in his 1977 lecture, 'I announced that I would speak about that piece of bait known as Ophelia.' Here Lacan is introducing the theme of desire in Shakespeare's play, and in particular the object or 'bait' which causes desire in the subject, which for Lacan, is Hamlet himself. As Lacan states, 'the principal subject of the play is beyond all doubt Prince Hamlet. The play is the drama of an individual subjectivity, and the hero is always present on stage, more than in any other play.' (p.14) Lacan goes on to explain how the play delineates what he has termed the subject of the unconscious, or the Other, written with an upper-case letter (A in French or O in English) manifests its desire 'in the very perspective of this subject, Prince Hamlet' (p.13). This desire, of the m(O)ther, is essentially manifested in the fact that, confronted on one hand with an exalted object -his father -and on the other with the object Claudius, Hamlet does not choose.' Here Lacan is arguing that the evergreen question of why Hamlet does not carry out the instruction of the ghost of his dead father at the opening of the play is not a matter of, as Ernest Jones has it, positing Hamlet with an Oedipus complex or maintaining 'that Hamlet, for temperamental reasons, was fundamentally incapable of decisive action of any kind.' Moreover it is not even a question of looking to the text for Hamlet's putting on of 'an antic disposition' as evidence of, as Vischer has it a 'melancholic disposition' Rather Hamlet simply chooses not to act. Hamlet himself manifests the desire of the Other by his inaction and in doing so puts 'the time out of joint', that is to say appears to keep the audience waiting. Thus Lacan reads Hamlet's subjectivity, and his unconscious desire into Shakespeare's text.

For Lacan, Hamlet's actions in the play demonstrate his unconscious desire. His conscious desire can be read according to his relationship to Ophelia. Ophelia is for Lacan, the 'object cause of desire' (l'object petit a, or in English, (o)ther with a lower case O), that is to say, not that which is desired, but that which causes desire for a particular subject. As Lacan asserts, 'Ophelia's place in the play is on the level of the letter a (o)' (p.14) in a fantasy constructed by Polonius.

Hamlet is not drawn out by Ophelia, and I would argue, his much debated putting on of an antic disposition serves as a deterrent, but a deterrent from what? Hamlet, I would argue,

following Lacan et al, perceives the position of Ophelia as a 'bait' for action rather than inaction and does not confide anything in her, she serves as an object tout coeur, evidenced no more strongly than by Hamlet's request: 'Lady, shall I lie in your lap?' (3,2,102). Thus to understand Hamlet's desire in the play it is therefore necessary to understand what it is the object petit a might be a replacement for, that is to say what Hamlet is perceived as lacking by Polonius. The object of lack is termed by Lacan as the phallus, and for the audience this lack is a lack of decisiveness. As I have shown earlier in the essay Hamlet's lack of decisiveness is simply the act of choosing not to do something, as confusing as this choice may be. Thus Hamlet's subjective unconscious desire can be read into Shakespeare's text, as an example of how the human unconscious functions, because we think with words. Moreover, Hamlet's experience of time, particularly with regards to his father's murder is crucial to understanding how subjectivity is expressed in the play. He mentions the passage of time to Ophelia in Act 3, stating that in his recollection, 'my father died within these two hours' (3,2,114-115) and Ophelia states that 'tis twice two months, my lord.' (3,2,117) Hamlet's perception of time is different from Ophelia who is describing the logical passage of four months whereas for Hamlet the event of his father's murder still feel recent. Thus the play is also a demonstration of the psyche's understanding of time. Ophelia advises her brother Laertes is to 'recks not his own rede', '(unlike) a puffed and reckless libertine'. I will show moreover, that Rochester is much less a libertine than Ophelia fears Laertes is.

Rochester's writing as uncharacteristic of a Libertine as evidenced by his philosophy

Through an understanding of the literary text as an example of unconscious expression of desire, it then becomes clear not only that Rochester's is uncharacteristic of libertinism, that is to say how Rochester's poetry is firstly unlike that of a libertine, rather than to assume that the term 'libertinism' defines the poetry. Moreover, if the experience of the passage of time is understood in the Lacanian sense of occurring in the unconscious, then it can be argued that the philosophical concerns of both Calvinists and the Libertines are not mutually exclusive. It is thus necessary to show how the poetry defines the literary movement. As Paul Cavaille states, 'we should use both of these terms in the plural since historiography has established diachronic distinctions and has drawn very clear dividing lines among the "spiritual libertinism" of the sixteenth century stigmatized by Calvin, the "philosophical" or "erudite" libertinism of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, Cavaille asserts, 'the attempt at a definition is basically an a posteriori rationalization of a category that was originally established on disputable grounds.' (p.13) For Cavaille, Libertines were defined in the negative, that is to say in terms of what they were not 'they were not thinkers worthy of the name, nor were they real philosophers capable of proposing alternative systems to the ones they criticized.' (p.15) Crucial to this definition is I would argue, the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.

In 1567 John Knox, founder of the Scottish church, published a pamphlet in favour of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Cavaille shows that Knox's pamphlet was an argument against an Anabaptist pamphlet also published that year, entitled *Careless by Necessity* 'against which Knox answers the accusation that his necessarian doctrine inspires people to lead a "carefree and libertine" life, inducing them not to work, to visit brothels, to drink, and to play,' Knox warns, as Richard G. Kyle states 'his brethren in Scotland against radical or Anabaptist

tendencies rather than a clear discernible movement.’ In particular, ‘he railed against three sectarian inclinations: a Christological heresy, which he called Arianism and the denial of predestination.’ Thus Libertinism is placed in binary opposition to Calvinism, and this opposition is premised not on the refutation of the Anabaptists to allow sacrament of baptism on the condition of a freely given expression of faith, but on the definition of predestination as a doctrine which is logically exclusive of the idea that libertinism in ideals and behaviour may be a result of the same doctrine. That is to say, de facto, Calvinism is not to be placed in opposition to Libertinism, rather the practical application of the principle of necessity in the understanding of predestination in the Calvinist doctrines is. Thus in order to understand how the concept of necessity, and in particular the concept that if an event is pre-ordained it must necessarily occur if and only if God is omniscient, is what is at issue in the debate between the Calvinists and the other schools of Christian thought - in which is included Libertinism, Anabaptism, Arminianism and numerous others - should theoretically make the Calvinist / Libertine binary possible, it is necessary to show how the conceptual opposition is a result of a psychological intolerance of cognitive dissonance.

By defining Libertinism in the negative, as I showed earlier in the essay is characteristic of Calvinist thought, Knox is expressing what affect theorists after Freud have called ‘negative state cognitive dissonance’. Although logically compatible, the way Libertinism and Calvinism are defined as opposing doctrines would cause a dissonance in conception, or a discomfort in the thinker in attempting to entertain both doctrines simultaneously in thought. Furthermore, what is not specifically mentioned by Knox in his pamphlet or Cavaille in his description of the various forms of Libertinism, is the subjective experience of time which is so crucial in an understanding of a text like Hamlet. It is precisely this experience of time which is crucial, I will argue, to understanding Rochester’s place amongst the other Libertine poets. On an unconscious psychological level, the resolution of cognitive dissonance is produced in the way described by Lacan in his third published seminar.

Reading the unconscious in Rochester’s philosophy

Lacan discusses the most basic binary opposition, that of day and night. He describes how the phrase ‘the peace of the evening’ is made meaningful because it describes the separation of time in terms of a presence. For Lacan, ‘it’s precisely when we are not listening for it, when it’s outside our field and suddenly hits us from behind, that it assumes its full value, surprised as we are by this more or less endophasic, more or less inspired, expression that comes to us like a murmur from without, a manifestation of discourse insofar as it barely belongs to us, which comes as an echo of what it is that is all of a sudden significant for us in this presence, an utterance such that we don’t know whether it comes from without or from within. Thus the creation of a dichotomy is marked by a presence, which is signified by the phrase ‘the peace of the evening’ and that phrase also resolves the cognitive dissonance associated with the binary. This resolution is the result of a linguistic phrase, which produces an affect and shows the unconscious operating like a language. It is therefore necessary to observe how Rochester’s poetry, although forming part of the Libertine genre and therefore involving itself in what is essentially a theological debate, is also an expression of unconscious desire.

In his discussion of Rochester's poetry Stephen Zwicker states, rather perfunctorily, that it is 'perhaps a fitting conclusion to a life lived with such abandon in a whirlwind of gossip and rumour – that false authorship, or dispersed authorship, or multiple or collaborative authorship, or no authorship at all (and who authors gossip) should have come to define Lord Rochester.' This passage is again reminiscent of Polonius in Hamlet, who lists, not without humour, 'tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene undividable, or poem unlimited' as types of play. Jacques Lacan, in his study of the exact same topic, namely the performance of subjectivity, plays upon the word 'Wiederholung – let me remind you once again of the etymological reference that I gave you, *holen* (to haul) of its connotation of something tiring, exhausting,' as Lacan states, 'to haul, to draw' plays on the idea of 'drawing lots' and specifically drawing 'the one obligatory card - if there is only one card in the pack, you cannot draw another.' (p.97) So in Zwicker there is same exhausting haul of again drawing the only card of Rochester criticism, which I shall outline below, before suggesting that the pack may have another, that is to say, Rochester's works themselves have not been exhausted by haul of the critics.

Jeremy Treglown, in his 1982 collection of essays on Rochester lists 'two main approaches' to the study of the works of John Wilmot.(1) 'First there are attempts to characterize Rochester's poetry as a whole' in comparison to the writing of his contemporaries, 'the second approach' is concerned with the ideological aspects of Rochester's life and writing. I will argue that neither of these approaches has given an appreciation of the extent to which Rochester's poetry is still read as evidence of his own politics and morality; as Sarah Wintle states in her reading of his works 'Rochester was simply a libertine'. A full appreciation of Rochester's oeuvre involves reading his texts without one particular characterization, and focusing on the text as an unconscious expression of a particular philosophy. To demonstrate this, I will examine first the editions of Rochester's poetry by David Vieth, David Farley-Hills and Keith Walker.

Rochester and the Critical Tradition

Farley-Hills 1978 edition of Rochester's poetry first places the poems in their seventeenth century context and then divides them into love poetry, burlesque and lampoon and satire. Farley-Hills characterizes seventeenth century poetry as 'poems made out of other poems' using as an example the way Rochester's Satyr against Mankind 'borrows occasionally from Boileau's eighth satire' (p.10) thus already there is a characterization of Rochester's work as fitting into a specific mode or genre. More specifically, Farley-Hills goes on to say, 'some of Rochester's poems are parodies' citing Quarle's 'religious poem' beginning 'Why doest thou shade thy lovely face' as an example of how 'by a few deft changes of words and a re-ordering of stanzas' (p.11) the poem becomes a love poem. By characterizing Rochester's work in this way, Farley-Hills claims to be 'not looking for sources, but describing a tradition.' However, there is also within Rochester's Poetry not merely contextualization, but an anxiety of exactly how that contextualization should take place. Hills states, in brackets, when describing Rochester's parodies, '(if it is Rochester's)'. Thus here a question is raised of how to contextualize Rochester's poems within a tradition; whether or not they are part of that tradition just because they parody and lampoon it, or if these poems can even be attributed to Rochester

himself. If it is the case that they cannot be easily attributed to Wilmot because they parody, and that the tradition itself is to parody, then presenting a categorization of Rochester's poems at all seems arbitrary on the part of Hills. That is not to say that categorizing the poems is unnecessary, more that these editions demonstrate that the poems do not lend themselves to categorization, and if categorization is possible, it is by a design that isn't Rochester's. Keith Walker's 1984 edition entitled *Rochester's Poems* again begins by stating how complicated it can be to characterize Rochester's oeuvre. Walker states that 'Rochester authorized the publication of only three works' and that 'some have denied these works to be his'. This leads Walker to state that 'the case of the texts of Rochester' is to be considered 'unique', he concludes that 'there is no single body of texts that an editor can base an edition on.' Nevertheless he groups the poems into 'Juvenilia', 'Love Poems', 'Translations', Prologues and Epilogues' and Satires and Lampoons. His justification for these groupings is that it differs from Vieth's chronological ordering of the poems, because a generic categorization is more instructional and that 'very few of Rochester's lyrics can actually be dated'. However, the generic groupings themselves are again arbitrary on the part of the editor. The only unifying characteristic of the verses Walker terms 'love poems' is that they mention a relationship between a man and a woman, without an understanding of what Rochester's own conception of love might be. Thus Rochester's conception of love is attributed to him by these editors' construction of what Walker calls the 'Rochester Canon' (p.xii).

Rochester, love and the unconscious

An example of this is to be found in Sarah Wintle's *Libertinism and Sexual Politics* in which Rochester's own sexual politics are discussed in terms of two poems *The Fall and Signior Dildo*. Both these poems are contained, in Walker's edition in the Love poems grouping, and it is unclear as to whether Wintle is attributing Rochester's sexual politics to the poems because the poems express that attitude or simply because they have previously been grouped together as poems by Rochester on the subject of love. Although she contextualizes Rochester's attitude towards sexuality in its restoration context of 'Aristotle's general tendency to produce dualities in which one element is superior and the other inferior' (p.138) and characterizes parts of his philosophy as Hobbesian, she still draws on poems which are considered and grouped into certain categories by the aforementioned editors. Thus there is a tendency in the existing criticism and editing of Rochester's oeuvre whereby Rochester's own views and philosophies on subjects such as female sexuality and love are determined more by the editors and critics than by the works themselves. There are, however, I would argue, a number of Rochester's works which naturally escape this tendency to rely so heavily on producing a picture of the Second Earl. Rochester was, as Nicholas Fischer asserts, 'particularly recognized during his lifetime as a writer of songs'. A number of Rochester's songs would have been written 'for sung performance'. (p.66) Six of Rochester's poems appeared during his lifetime in *A New Chronical of the Choicest Songs* dated 1676 and in *The Last and Best Edition of New Songs*, dated 1677. Evidence that these verses were prepared for song is suggested, as Fischer states, by the fact that the printer of the verses would have been aware that the two verse eight-line structure of these poems 'fits with an eight-line tune.' Thus Rochester's verses would have been set to music and this implies an audience 'apart from the various collected editions of his

poetry.’ It also implies a different way of characterizing Rochester, which draws the focus of critics away from the tendency to group together his poems and attribute characteristics to him thereafter and re-focuses critical attention on his craftsmanship.

An example of this would be Rochester’s use of music in his play *The Valentinian*, which is included in neither Walker’s, Farley-Hill’s nor Vieth’s editions of Rochester. As Fischer states ‘musical settings’ were ‘made of the songs in his play’ the songs contained in the play were thus given a ‘theatrical’ (p.vii) as well as social context. This allows for the possibility that Rochester was not only providing lyrics for existing song collections, in line with contemporaries such as Dryden but that he was using music as part of his play-writing. Furthermore, re-considering Rochester as a composer, would involve a re-evaluation of the way the music itself affects the listener, and therefore draws any understanding of the poems away from the simply the verses themselves, allowing for a re-consideration of how Rochester was producing meaning. Thus the field of Rochester texts and criticism does not fully explore the semantic possibilities of his work, rather relying too heavily on editorial and critical construction of the poet’s character through their own characterizations of his works.

Harold Love’s *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, though including ‘Stage orations’ and ‘Dramatic Works’ as categorizations of the poetry of the Second Earl still groups the works into a plethora of categories and in doing so defines the works themselves. His reasoning involves following Tonson’s 1691 edition of Rochester, in which ‘poems were formed into groups and these groups placed in an order which moved by stages from the private to the public world, from the intimate utterance to another individual to the text openly proclaimed in a public space’ (p.xlv). What is innovative here is ‘the insertion of a separate section’ of ‘libertine verse written as a kind of consciousness raising exercise for the wits of Rochester’s own circle’ (p.xlv). These verses include *Tumbridge Wells*, which is one of Rochester’s more explicitly sexual poems, suggesting the possibility that even within the editor groupings there is demonstrated a reading of Rochester’s own use of sexualized imagery which is not purely for affect, rather there may be an underlying purpose. That is not to say that through editing a different picture from the one formed by the aforementioned editors is definitive rather that it is quite possible, and furthermore quite rational, to suggest a reading of Rochester that is different from those of his critics and on the very grounds, Wilmot is most criticized. For Love in his edition is suggesting that in *Tumbridge Wells* at least, Rochester’s obscenity satirizes his contemporaries, in particular those within his own coterie circle, namely Mulgrave and Scroope. It would be necessary therefore to examine more closely the poems in which Rochester’s language is most explicit in order to ascertain the extent to which they can be read as satires not just of his contemporaries themselves, but of their own linguistic excesses. However, it is not enough, I would argue, merely to present a reading of Rochester as satirist to revoke any accusation of Epicureanism. The writings which led Rochester himself to request, as Love asserts, that ‘his writings were burned, shortly before his death in July 1680’ (p.xxx) have survived long enough for modern critics to find within them evidence to support the restoration gossip that surrounded him, despite even his wishes. Therefore, it will be necessary to read Rochester’s language again according to a different method in order to fully refocus critical attention. An exemplar of such a method is Brian Cumming’s study of Restoration literary culture, which I will discuss before showing another such method from an essay by Germaine Greer.

If poisonous minerals, and if that tree
 Whose fruit threw death on else immortal us, If lecherous goats, if serpents
 envious
 Cannot be damned, alas, why should I be? Why should intent or reason, born in
 me, Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous?
 And Mercy being easy, and glorious
 To God; in his stern wrath, why threatens he? But who am I, that dare dispute
 with thee O God? Oh! of thine only worthy blood,
 And my tears, make a heavenly Lethean flood, And drown in it my sin's black
 memory;
 That thou remember them, some claim as debt, I think it mercy, if thou wilt
 forget.

In a reading of the above Holy Sonnet Cummings shows how throughout the poem 'the state of sin bodies forth in syntax.' (p.399) Donne's 'wracked speech acts' (p.399), the contorted grammar and constant self-questioning in lines such as 'why should intent or reason, born in me/Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous' (ll.5-6) are for Cummings a syntactical embodiment of the state of sin. This method of reading, whereby the subjectivity of the poet is read not so much in the semantics of the language but in the way that language is constructed is equally applicable to Rochester's poetry.

Furthermore, if, as Jacques Lacan asserts, there is indeed a difference between a statement and how that statement is performed, that is to say that subjectivity can be read in the performance of the utterance itself, even if the word themselves are 'meaningless, then a reading of Rochester's most gossip worthy poetry can be made which places that particular poet's subjectivity not within the references of the language, but in the sense of the ways in which that language is used. This allows for a critical re-evaluation of not only the poetry itself, but the ways in which the poetry has been misrepresented not only by restoration editors and publishers, but by modern critics alike.

Soe foolish, and soe false, as Common Fame. It calls the Courtier Knave, the
 plaine Man rude,
 Haughty the grave, and the delightfull Lewd.
 Impertinent the briske, Morosse the sad, Meane the Familiar, the Reserv'd one
 Mad. Poor helplesse Woman, is not favour'd more She's a slye Hipocryte, or
 Publique Whore.
 Then who the Devill, wou'd give this -- to be free From th'Innocent Reproach
 of Infamy?
 These things consider'd, make me (in despight Of idle Rumour,) keepe at home,
 and write.

The above lines are taken from Rochester's *To Lord Mulgrave and Lord Scroope*, both of whom were amongst Rochester's coterie circle. As Marianne Thormählen shows Rochester, Scroope and Mulgrave addressed a number of poems to each other and circulated certain works

amongst themselves, and in doing so levelled accusations against each other's characters, Scroope stating at one point in their friendship that he is 'capable of maltreating and betraying his friends for the sake of salvaging a joke.' Keith Walker describes how this group of poems 'has its origins in the tensions that existed in the early 1670's between 'Court Wits' writing 'largely for their own satisfaction and amusement' but not without 'an increasingly political dimension' which developed after the Duke of Buckingham allied himself with the Marquis of Halifax' (p.110) and Lord Rochester with Buckingham, leading opponents to the King. Thus, there is evidence of a highly politicized coterie circle amongst whom Rochester circulated a number of his poems. This suggests that only a small number of readers intended were intended to peruse these poems, even if these readers were of no small political importance. If the intention of an author can be discerned from the audience in which his or her poems are received, then Rochester's intention was nothing other than sustaining his standing in society. In order to read the place of the author's subjectivity in this poem it is moreover necessary, as I have suggested is evident in Cummings and Lacan, to read closely the verse itself.

Rochester begins the verse by stating 'Soe foolish, and soe false', is 'Common Fame' (l.92). Here the alliteration of 'foolish', 'false' and 'fame' further emphasizes the effect of the word 'common' thus showing the desire of the poet to underplay the possibility of self-aggrandizement. Fame even turns 'Poore helplesse woman' (l.98) into a 'Hypocryte' and 'Whore' (l.93). The softening of the possible effects of fame are here juxtaposed with the strong facts of the adjectives used to describe femininity, thus suggesting that it is the desire of the poet not to critique women, but rather to use the strength of the feminine imagery to further express his disdain of celebrity. In spite of any ill rumour against him, Rochester would rather remain in privacy and compose poetry than risk infamy. The rhetorical question in lines 101-2 invokes the 'Devill' with the affect that not only is the answer to the question obvious, but in doing so suggesting a contrast between the devil of fame and Rochester's preferred course of action; to 'keepe at home, and write' (l.103). Thus within a poem intended for a coterie and political audience, Rochester manages to produce a discussion of moral standards, the strength of the verse being in the imagery used rather than in any criticism of his fellow courtiers. Thus it can be shown that not only must Rochester's poetry be re-evaluated in the way it is edited, but also in the way it is read by critics and its intended purpose.

Rochester and the ethics of love

In her 1999 essay 'Doomed to Sincerity' Germaine Greer shows that the Second Earl can be understood in a very different light. She asserts that 'for Rochester's half-niece Anne Wharton, writing immediately after his death in 1680 at the age of 33, the poet was the guide who would have led her 'right in wisdom's way': He civilised the rude and taught the young, made fools grow wise, such artful music hung upon his useful, kind, instructing tongue. Greer further asserts that 'Rochester's modern editors and biographers are well aware of Wharton's elegy, but they are not interested in the personage it describes', as I have shown earlier in this essay. Wharton was brought up alongside Rochester and, though she was twelve years younger, 'knew Rochester rather better than we or any other better and more complete idea of his personality can be found by the reports of those closest to him. Greer describes how Wharton 'was to see her uncle become vastly famous, not as Marvell's 'best satirist and in the right vein' or

Shaftesbury's 'worthy', but as a rake of the most rapacious and an infidel of blackest dye, rescued on his deathbed from certain damnation by the man she would come to know for an unprincipled humbug, Gilbert Burnet.' Moreover, Greer asserts, Wharton 'must have known that the role Burnet cast for himself in *Some Passages in the Life and Death of the Earl of Rochester* was a lie' (p.9). Furthermore, Greer suggests that Rochester's entire death bed confession was taken advantage of by Burnet. Rochester's steward having 'written to Sir Ralph Verney that Rochester was wonderfully altered and preparing himself for death with admirable patience and piety weeks before Burnet showed up at his bedside, hot to capitalise on the sad end of a courtier, to the decided advantage of the Old Cause and his own career.' (p.11) Greer's version of Rochester is very different to the vast majority of his critics. He was fated, she states 'to have stick to him all the pornographic and profane verse that emanated from the court of Charles II'. What Greer is suggesting here is not character defamation deliberately on the part of Charles' court but rather that the scholarly reception of Rochester's poetry has been focused disproportionately 'Abstruse pornography' Greer states has always had a special appeal for scholars, or rather did have, as long as they were unmated males living a collegiate existence.' (p.10) However, although Greer's argument does in fact show that there is more to the Earl's character than can be gleaned from the poems, it relies on a certain conception of masculinity. 'Most scholars' she states 'are still loth to give up their fringed-out version of Rochester' because of their relationship, or lack of one, with a partner. This is a rather sweeping generalisation, which suggests that interest in Rochester's works is from a decidedly un-academic motivation. Although Greer does show why trying to understand a personality from the poetry of that person is limited in scope, her argument is based on the idea that single males might be blinkered into reading Rochester in a certain way.

I would argue, furthermore, that Greer is in fact making the very same argument as the critics themselves - that the critics are just as interested in the profane as Rochester is. It would be my assertion that any attempt to characterize a subject from their works is going, in some sense, to be based on the person making that characterisation. Thus Rochester's libertinism is as much a creation of his critics and his public as it is of Rochester himself. Ultimately his own ethics, as I have demonstrated in this essay, are of his own creation.

End Notes

- (1) - *The Spirit of Wit* (London: Blackwell, 1982), p.vi

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Disidentification Performances in Telugu Film Songs

N N Sree Vaibhavi

Abstract

Globalization has transformed Telugu Film in particular as an effective experimental social medium for filmmakers to communicate real social challenges with audience from child abuse to Dissociative Identity Disorder. Evolution of Queer roles in Telugu Film, their dynamic with Popular culture contributes to the way it impacts consumers of Telugu Film. Cinematic Representation of Queer roles helps to shape perceptions, attitudes of Film audience towards the marginalized communities as the socio-cultural narrative in Telugu Films have the potential to promote inclusion. Effects of Film Comedy, Themes, Tropes on its consumer's world view and consciousness needs attention in Telugu states. As many Queer consumers of Telugu Film refer to the frame opposing themselves as an objective of the content and evaluate it by asserting Queer individuals in such discourse. Indian Films have stereotyped Queer roles by reinforcing the Gender Norms society considers acceptable based on the idea of Masculinity and Femininity. Portrayal of Gender stereotypes in media and film have both negative and positive effects on its audience. The Third Gender also called Hijra, LGBTQAI+ being marginalized as a community to face bias and intolerance in society. Addressing the current need to unlearn misconceptions around the Human Body, Sex education prevalent through ages and to build a Holistic Inclusive space for representation of Queer Community in Film. The research methodology adopted for the study's assessment is 'Content analysis'. To examine the stories of LGBT characters that appear in Telugu Films. Following that, a more constrained plot analysis was conducted in which Telugu films with LGBT-related topics were examined and analyzed. Telugu Cinema and its LGBT representation in films currently is due to the culmination of LGBT rights movement in India. Cross dressing/Transvestite was the major form of representation in Telugu Cinema.

Keywords: Identity, Disidentification, Gender, Telugu Film songs.

Introduction

Queer characters are rarely central to the narrative, often relegated to comic relief and side roles in Indian Cinema. Most studies on queer roles in Indian cinema focus on Hindi Cinema, regional Tamil Cinema and others, leaving regional cinema like Telugu Cinema. Many queer characters in Telugu cinema are often portrayed in stereotypes, reinforcing harmful tropes. There is a gap in analyzing changes that signify broader trends towards more positive and realistic depictions. Telugu films portrayed strong feminine characters from Indian epics that challenged such stereotypes of Satyabhama, Sita, Hidimbi and many more. The first female superstar of Telugu cinema P. Bhanumathi also considered as the first female director with her debut directorial *Chandirani* (1953) portrayed a warrior women fighting with tigers and combats with men challenging preconceived gender norms of the era. In *Stree Sahasam* (1951) princess Manohari (Anjali Devi) builds a palace all by herself.

Gender fluidity and Queer characterisation were only evident in Telugu films through mythological narratives, cross dressing and roles of Hijras. Through the stories of Brihannala, Shikhandi and transformations of Ghatotkach, Lord Vishnu, Ardhanarishwara by deities Shiva and Parvati. The earliest of them being N. T. Rama Roa's critically acclaimed *Narthanashala* (1963).

Gender fluidity

It refers to an idea that gender expression and identity can change over time or based on the situation are evidently explored in Indian Epics. Telugu films based on this narrative are *Maya bazar* (1957) Ghatotkacha assumes the form of Sasirekha in Dwaraka by impersonating the opposite gender as an art of performance through feminine mannerisms and expressions. He wreaks havoc on her wedding to Lakshmana kumara by scaring him. *Maya Machindra* (1975) as Lord Vishnu takes the avatara of Jagan Mohini (woman) to deceive the demons and secure the divine drink of immortality. Queer communities in Telugu films often stem from beliefs of gender. Stereotyping and misrepresenting LGBTQAI characters by reinforcing the existing bias and societal perceptions to limit them.

Film and entertainment in the Indian Context draw their inspiration from the oral narrations of Indian mythology. Elaborate narration, song, music, costume and dance are a norm in presentation. Telugu cinema took this further and nurtured it to reach its present unique identity. Songs, dance entertain and convey a deep rooted message to its audience. Identity of self, reference to popular culture, access to modern advancements with nuanced cultural relativity enhance the lyrical melody, rhyme in Telugu songs.

Telugu cinema often lack agency and LGBTQAI community are not given a voice to express their own narratives. Instead, they are typically portrayed as side characters whose lives and experiences are secondary to the main (usually heterosexual) characters. These subplots are only included in the narrative to create laughter and aversion towards the community adding no significance or justice to the sub plot.

I (2015)

Osma Jasmine, Diya's (Amy Jackson) stylist is presented as a very attractive woman in the introduction shot. Upon realizing that she is a Transwoman Lingesan (Vikram) and a friend started singing Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu mocking her gender. Osma disagrees with the humiliation and decides to leave and Diya convinces Lingesan by telling Osma's professional accomplishments. Yet she transforms Lingesan (Vikram) into "Lee", who later becomes a successful model for her friendship.

Nuvvila (2009)

When Mahesh (Havish) ends his relationship with his girlfriend Madhavi (Sarayu) and announces that he hates girls, his father is shocked and assumes his son is gay. As Mahesh goes to work the next day as a waiter in Pizza express, flirts with other female customers to take revenge on his ex-girlfriend. He discovers an anonymous love letter asking him to meet at a

bus stop by ending the note with a love confession and imprint of lipstick. He reaches the venue with a rose but to his surprise Mahesh receives a text message asking him to leave the rose there by Shailu. He waits for Shailu, then follows the stranger who took the flower but fails in his attempt to meet his secret lover. The next day he receives a video message from Shailu to meet around 10 in '12B' bus (a special bus for women) and to help him, his secret lover will be wearing a black dress. After a conversation with his friends, Mahesh decides to dress as a woman and learn about Shailu. He flirts with the bus conductor who objectifies his effeminate walking and talking style, a thief enters the running bus as police are chasing him and threatens to harm Mahesh dressed as a woman.

As the chase continues, the bus conductor pleads with the Police Ranjith Kumar to save the "Super figure sir, please save her sir, don't waste her sir". To his disappointment two oranges fall out of Mahesh's outfit and he flees the scene, his identity is revealed Shailu waves him a bye from the window seat wearing a black headpiece covering the entire face. The conductor blurts out to the police "What would have been my fate, If I committed to the lady". Mahesh's quest to find his secret lover continues and Shailu sends him a series of hints and inviting him to Roxy disco. Where Mahesh announces his desperation to meet Shailu in front of the audience, it is revealed that Shailu (Haleem Khan) is not a woman but a man dressed in traditional Purdah. Shailu introduces himself and calls Mahesh 'Superman' as the background music of *Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu* is played and Shailu is dressed in certain fashion and talks in effeminate voice, mannerisms.

Later it is revealed that Shailu is Shailesh an actor and a friend of Madhavi who plotted against Mahesh to stalk him and harass him. A comic recurring background music hinting the song *Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu* is played every time Shailu enters the scene. This reflects a broader trend in Telugu Film's representation of LGBTQAI community opting for superficial and stereotypical depictions that fail to challenge societal norms (Gayatri, 2005). Shailu continues to stalk Mahesh even after all the resistance he shows and apologizes for rejecting as a heterosexual male out of sympathy. As Shailu interferes with Mahesh's first modeling assignment by making him uncomfortable to enact his dialogues, he loses the job and out of anger warns Shailesh for repercussions of harassing him. Mahesh and Shailu are arrested by police when they get to know that Mahesh asks Shailu to meet him once and physically beats Shailu. Ranjith Kumar recognises Mahesh as the same woman he met in the bus earlier and upon investigation assumes that Mahesh likes Shailu. During an argument as Ranjith Kumar warns them to behave, Shailu flirts with him, "Sir, you look very Manly when you are angry" constable asks him not to take such a compliment from a Gay. Mahesh's parents come to his rescue, after which Shailu flirts with the police inspector and gives him the number. Mahesh's parents recollect everything and assume he is Gay. Mahesh also has a nightmare about getting married to Shailu.

It is revealed that Shailu's ex-boyfriend Leela (Deva) whom he dated for three years is released from Central Jail when he meets Mahesh to warn him of taking Shailu back, while an exaggerated comic music is played in the background. Shailu confesses his love to Mahesh and promises to stay with him. Leela complains about his concerns, expenses he spent on Shailu to Mahesh's parents which further complicates his life. Leela makes a sacrifice and promises to unite Shailu with Mahesh by kidnapping him to get them married. Their vehicle causes a road accident where Ranjith Kumar arrests them and decides to help them get married. As Madhavi

gets to know that Shailu is a gay in reality, she follows their vehicle and rescues him from all the misunderstandings by confessing her love. Shailu feels betrayed and decides to marry Leela. Effeminacy, exaggerated behavior for comedic effect. Such Homophobic humor to dehumanize queer individuals in popular media perpetuating harmful stereotypes to normalize violence and discrimination against queer community by reducing them to punchlines that marginalize, stigmatize individuals (Gayatri, 2005).

Gunde Jaari gallanthayinde (2013)

Shruthi (Isha) and Madhu (Madhunandhan) meet up in a restaurant to talk about the confusions created by external factors in their relationship. Frustrated, Madhu blurts out that he doesn't like girls anymore, Ravi (Ravi) hears this and agrees with him, hinting that he also hates women deeply with an exaggerated effeminate voice and mannerism. As Ravi tries to sexually advance with Madhu, a cliché remix of the song Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu plays hinting the audience about Ravi's sexuality. Madhu rejects his seductive and sensuous gestures out of discomfort while Isha is laughing witnessing their conversation. Nithin comes to Madhu's rescue leading Ravi to the restroom, Ravi finds himself in a dilemma whether to enter the men's room or not. Yet he decides to follow Nithin, looking at which Nithin starts to remove his shirt buttons, biting his lips to seduce Ravi. Nithin throws himself in Ravi who is put in a questionable situation for choosing to act on his feelings or to control himself by staying loyal to Madhu. Rejecting Nithin in a moaning tone, to which he pleads with Ravi to satisfy his sexual appetite with Ravi's half manhood. The sound design in the background subjects that the act is being committed. Nithin and Madhu leave the place and continue to get back with Isha.

In the latter half of the cinema Ravi enters a shopping mall where the male security guard runs a security check at the entry. A sexually aroused Ravi goes for the same security check a second time to be 'satisfied' and as the security guard recognizes his antics, rejects his request with aversion and disgust. As Ravi enters the makeup section, his excitement looking at the structure of lipstick hints male erection, his comments on a muscular person walking beside suggesting the factors for desirability setting machismo as a standard for male gaze. Coincidentally Nithin, Madhu and Isha are in the same shopping mall and Nithin hides himself from Ravi. But Madhu tries to confront Nithin and Isha for having an affair and assumes they are together in a trial room. We learn that Ravi is in that trial room as he grabs hold of Madhu and attempts to molest him by tearing his clothes, kissing him, hurting him physically. As Madhu attempts to run away and gets out of the trial room, Shruthi leaves the mall with disgust. Such demeaning and horrifying portrayal of a community in the disguise of comic relief produces, circulates several misconceptions in the society. Ravi is showcased wearing Flashy, flamboyant, body hugging costumes and heavy makeup.

Romance (2013)

Protagonist Krishna (Prince) introduces Ajay and Vijay as best friends who can sacrifice and share anything for the sake of their friendship. Anu (Dimple Chopade) misunderstands them as Gays and rumour spreads in the college. When their friend Bobby (Sai Kumar) uploads a

video of Anu and her friends gossiping about it on YouTube. Both friends receive a call from 'All India Gays Union' President for a free membership, they decide to complain about her to the college Principal to seek justice. Principal orders her to prepare a solid proof to serve them justice and if she fails to do so, she won't be allowed to attend exams for the upcoming week. Krishna decides to help her in return for a favor and finds an online gay testing site "gaytesting.com" run by Dr Carrot a 'Gay testing specialist', contacts him to help them. Dr Carrot (Venu) enters into the classroom in a Red t-shirt as the comic background music continues and identifies Ajay, Vijay as the subjects to be considered for the act with no prior information, to the surprise of everyone. After a long applause Dr Carrot explains his method of testing which consists of five tests

- 1) "Mee iddari perlu okariki okaru cheppukondi " - (introduce yourself to each other)
They qualified the test as they neither reacted as 'effeminate men' nor were excited, shy to speak.
- 2) Dr Carrot shows them two pictures:
 - a. A picture of a Macho man
 - b. A picture of woman in swimwearThey passed the second test too, as they admired and felt the sexual attraction towards the women in swimwear. Dr Carrot further explains that gays would feel extremely attracted towards the Macho man's picture and drool over it.
- 3) Asks them to show their hands
Ajay and Vijay pass the third test too as Dr Carrot demonstrates that the middle finger and ring finger are of different lengths for heterosexual people but same length is observed for both the fingers if they are Gay.
- 4) Dr Carrot begins to sing and dance to Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu with effeminate voice, mannerisms. The task is to identify the movie in which this song was first featured in. Ajay and Vijay fail to give the correct answer and pass the fourth test. Dr Carrot further elaborates that mass audience of Telugu Films recognise songs such as kevvu keka, Class audience (Elite) prefer Akasam ammai aithe neela untunde, (Girl, you are the embodiment of heaven) songs whereas gays have to recognise the song and related themselves to the narrative. As Krishna questions the authenticity of the test by stating Ajay and Vijay are allegedly manipulating the answers. Dr Carrot introduces the final test to prove his hypothesis.
- 5) Dr Carrot asks everyone except Ajay, Vijay to leave the classroom. A tired and exhausted Dr Carrot comes out of the room and announces to everyone that Ajay, Vijay are not homosexuals, by addressing them as "24 carat men".

Upon Krishna's enquiry about the fifth test, Dr Carrot approaches him and reveals that he is Gay. Krishna settles the payment for the test with Dr Carrot and leaves the place. The fourth test refers to findings of a research published by Lippa (2003) on 2D:4D finger length ratios related to sexual orientation of men as the findings state that prenatal hormonal factors may be linked to men's sexual orientation across ethnic groups.

Adda (2013)

Abhi's (Sushanth) three friends decide to help Karthik by reuniting him with Jessie, an Intertextual reference to Yem Maya Chesave, exploit some cash from him, they accompany Karthik to Jessie's apartment but end up in a different flat. Here they meet a gay who is introduced as a predator of men by adding the remix background score version of Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu associated with exaggerated effeminate facial expressions and lip biting, hand on hip pose. He drags Sudhakar (Ramesh) on among the friends, introduces himself with the phrase "I am back", "Aye Raja" (Hello! My dear) and explains his intentions with a cricket analogy of "one good player is enough to have a good match" and physically assaults him. When Sudhakar meets his friends after the incident, injured and traumatized they initially sympathize with his situation.

Upon Karthik's offer of one lakh rupees as a reward to whoever unites him with Jessie, Sudhakar follows Jessie and discovers that she is in a relationship with some other person. Sudhakar convinces Karthik to move on and Karthik agrees after a duel with Jessie's now partner. Ravi with his friend's traps Sudhakar and his friends using their alcohol addiction as bait and brings them to a residence. As the news reporter on television alerts "few gay men are kidnapping boys and molesting them", Sudhakar's friends make fun of his trauma. Ravi and eight others reveal their ulterior motives and chase them. As they try to hide in a closet, two men appear inside the closet to their surprise. A pun on censor board is made as one states "censor board won't allow us to do it out of the closet". The chase continues as a remix version of Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu, Queer characters in Telugu films frequently depicted using harmful stereotypes as hypersexual or effeminate individuals to evoke humor through a sense of abnormality, thereby reinforcing negative social perceptions of the community. As the characterisation of queer roles deteriorated further as the following movies present them as sexual predators, stalkers and antagonists. Construction of Andrssexual desirability caused more damage to the reception of its spectator when it had the potential to change the social perceptions, break the stereotypes, create a more inclusive space.

Chinadhananikosam (2014)

Nandhini (Mishti Chakraborty) is being blackmailed by Nithin (Nithin) in return for helping her to reunite with Reddy Gaaru (Nassar), her grandfather with her mother in Barcelona. She seeks help from a friend, Rahul (Ali) to follow their car in order to help her. After a series of events a Gay couple Shailu (Ravi), Shalu (Madhunandhan) steals their car and goes into a Gay Pub. As the couple is introduced the background music of the song Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu begins as they start to talk with an exaggerated tone and stereotypical hand gestures. Upon getting rejected to enter into the pub Nithin and Rahul decide to imitate the stereotyped mannerisms of being gau. An Intertextual reference of Ali's character Nachami from Chirutha (2007) is presented when the female security guard recognises Rahul to be Nachami and allows them into the pub. Whereas inside the pub Shailu warns Shalu to stop admiring the waitress (indicating he is bisexual), to which Shalu replies that he is imagining "if she is this beautiful, how good looking at her brother might be". Shailu's reply to this is an over exaggerated "Wow" through the entire scene's background music continues. Rahul and Nithin decide to act as gays

and pursue them as their Homophobia drives them to the presumption that revealing their identities might be a threat - Predatory stereotype. A person identifies Rahul as Indian, plays an Indian song whose lyrics are

Jab hum Jawan hon'gay'e jaane kahan hon'gay'e
jab hum jawan hon'gay'e jaane kahan hon'gay'e
lekin jaha hon'gay'e waha fariyaad karen'gay'e
Tujhe yaad karen'gay'e

to which he dances as all the men in the bar surround him and he repeats the only recurring word from the song is 'Gay' and points towards everyone as they surround him aggressively. Nithin starts to dance on a song in which the lyrical text suggests that 'any person that suits that can match the heat (indicating sex) in his body, it can be any man even in a mask and he is ready (syee)' on the table. During the whole act Shailu and Shalu hold their hands and are presented as an inseparable couple who get attracted to Rahul and Nithin breaking their bond, perform dance on the music track that emphasizes on 'going crazy'. On the way out an elaborate shot depicting the caricature Effeminate walking style associated with other genders in Telugu Cinema is shown. All of them get into the car and Nithin tricks them into thinking it is under repair, asks them to help by pushing the car, Shalu interprets a helping hand as a sexual indication and touches Nithin in an inappropriate manner. Following this Rahul and Nithin gets the car back and flees the scene with Nandhini.

Disidentification

Disidentification involves a complex process where individuals neither fully assimilate nor entirely reject dominant cultural narratives. Instead, they reinterpret and transform such narratives to create new spaces of belonging and identity. It allows marginalized groups to subvert, challenge hegemonic structures from within. Using elements of the dominant culture simultaneously critiquing and altering them to serve their own needs, perspectives. Disidentification works on multiple levels as:

- A Process: It involves the simultaneous engagement with and critique of dominant ideologies.
- A Performance: It manifests through cultural productions, performances, and everyday practices that reframe and resist oppressive narratives.
- A Strategy: It serves as a practical tool for marginalized individuals to carve out space for themselves within a society that often seeks to erase or marginalize them.

This concept is particularly relevant in the fields of performance studies, cultural studies, and queer theory. As it highlights the ways in which identities are negotiated and expressed in response to social and political contexts.

Disidentification in Telugu film Songs: Disidentification engages with utilizing, resisting the social prejudices to norms and gives an argument with orthodoxies with cultural studies. A disidentification reading of “*Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu*” song from Chillarakottu Chittemma (1977) directed by Dasari Narayana Rao an adaptation of the famous play named the same by Dasam Gopalakrishnan reflects on conventional ideas about gender roles

Choodu pinnamma paadu pilladu
Paina paina padatha nantadu.
Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu.
Paina paina padatha nantadu
Binde thotee neella kedithe
Sandugasi saiga chesthardu
Vontareega vastha vunte
Amma vastha vunte.....
Eela vesi gola chesthadu
Inti chuttu thiruguthuntadu
Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu
Paina paina padatha nantadu
(Idhigo abaya soda okati iyi nayanaa)
Thalaki snanam Na thalaki snanam chestha vunte
Amma chestha vunte..... havva paadu
Goda yekki choostha vuntadu
Sandamama kinda nenu
Thadika sato chesukoni
Thala ki snanam chestha vunte
Goppa shikulu pedatha vuntadu
Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu
Paina paina padatha nantadu
Bavagaru namaskaram thamaru kosovali

Look, oh dear lady (aunt), naughty boy
 He always tries to fall on me
 Look, oh dear lady (aunt), naughty boy
 He always tries to fall on me
 When I go to fetch water with the pot
 He waits for opportunities to make mischievous gestures
 All alone, All alone
 Wanders around my house
 Look, oh dear lady, naughty boy When I shower under the moonlight
 Behind the hut, Naughty boy
 Climbs the wall to watch
 Setting up great tricks bothering me
 Look, oh dear lady, naughty boy
 He always tries to fall on me

Greetings brother in law, please sit.
(Listen to our problems). (Author's translation)

In the movie Madam Venkateswara Rao's Eunuch role gained popularity and the song was an immediate hit. The playful nature of the song and the depiction of the third gender roles for a subtle questioning and reimagining of gender norms. Central character of the song a Transgender played by M.V. Rao seeks help from the women around him to protect his community from the sexual harassment and subtle teasing they encounter from men in the society. He addresses the women as Pinnamma (Aunt) as a part of the same family and also a victim of similar problems socially. *Mise-en-scène*, he is dressed in a bright costume which is generally worn by South Indian girls prior to starting their menstruation, he adds a piece of cloth over his bust to create an illusion of sexual maturity and acts as a woman while he handles it. All along his negotiation for help and complaint the exaggerated effeminate expressions, mannerisms, voice and talking he performs as a woman of 1970s rural upbringing. He is uneducated, living with a group of Transgenders and sells flowers for a living in the village.

Such explorations on problems faced by marginalized communities in mainstream cultural narratives helps carve out a space for representing different identities. Interpretation of gender norms within certain normative boundaries as a form of cultural reappropriation, the characters are not merely passive recipients of these roles but actively engage with them to subvert the intended psychoanalytic readings.

In present times the song has been reimagined by Patrani Chidananda Sastry, a classical dancer and drag artist from Hyderabad, in a queer context. Sastry's reinterpretation, titled "Chudu Sexy Gurl," transforms the original song's transphobic elements into a celebration of gender expressions. This work is part of Sastry's broader effort to use traditional Telugu folk songs to raise awareness about queer issues and foster gender-sensitization (The New Indian Express) (Cinema Express).

This reinterpretation aligns with José Muñoz's concept of disidentification, where cultural elements are appropriated and transformed to subvert dominant narratives, creating space for marginalized identities. Sastry's approach demonstrates how traditional media can be repurposed to challenge and redefine societal norms around gender and sexuality, particularly within the context of Telugu cinema and culture.

Similarly, in *Burripalem Bullodu* (1979) Allu Ramalingayya, his companion, disguises and joins Hijras to protect themselves. They also perform in the evening with Hijras to the song and escape from the police.

These deceptive men follow us
When we blush, they stare intently
If we agree they start to mischievous,
if we reject they blame us of being cheap and unsatisfied
These cunning fox, keep watching us closely
Taddinaka taddinaka dhimmadhiya
Chammachaka chammachaka charadesi mogga (A Telugu children's rhyme)
If we call them as 'Sister' women get angry
If we address men as 'Brother in law' they are angry

What should we do without Sisters and brother in-laws
 One of us must be elected as a minister and fight for our rights, for a better future
 Dear people, History of our community has prominent figures
 In the battlefield Shikhandi brought an end to Bhishma
 Where is the value for Narthanashala without our dear brother Brihannala's story
 We are half women, not useless men
 We need commission's to protect us without any delay
 Our problems must be solved. (Author interpretation)

Telugu songs featuring narratives around the community, disidentification often refers to the way transgender individuals or characters navigate their sense of self in relation to societal norms and expectations. Disidentification in such songs involves distancing oneself from conventional gender roles, societal labels and referring to history for mythological characters that relate to their own identities. To further demand and negotiate for their rights and facilities, allot committees to research on their concerns and subjugation around such marginalized communities. Inclusion of children's rhymes to fill gaps in their lyrics is the consequence of their illiteracy, as Hijras are often abandoned by the society when they reach puberty, expressing their gender identity.

These songs feature lyrics or narratives where characters reject traditional gender norms and embrace their own identities, reflecting a journey of self-discovery and acceptance. By doing so, these songs contribute to broader discussions on gender identity and the struggle for authenticity within a societal framework that may not always be inclusive or understanding. They also explore themes of identity, gender, and self-acceptance, often addressing the challenges faced by transgender people in reconciling their true selves with societal perceptions.

Third Man (2014)

Protagonist meets a Hijra group who sing and narrate the troubles of being marginalized as a community in India

Hey dear! clap a loud, we are hijras, we are hijras
 we are a medicine to cheer your hearts, everyone is so dear to us,
 we give blessings to everyone, clap aloud.
 Day and night we struggle yet we have no family,
 we are generous, everyone from country's capital to city lanes loves us,
 we are welcome everywhere, you people have many aspirations and run behind wealth,
 We beg, dance and struggle everyday for food.
 We hide our tears and navigate through new challenges everyday winking for livelihood.
 we hide our deep rooted traumas in heart and

wake up everyday biting our lips on roads to lure men for livelihood
 all this struggle is to feed our little stomach, we bow to people who help us to
 fill it
 Claps are our strength and identity, we don't have caste and religion.
 we are abandoned by our parents because we are neither a woman or man
 we consider the world our family and mother earth is our home as we can never
 have one.
 We are queens of our own world and clap for a livelihood.
 We work relentlessly for little pocket money. (Authors interpretation)

Hijra Claps are distinct and peculiar to the community, with palms striking perpendicular to each other and fingers spread wide, creating a loud clap-vice. This style is a common hijra identifier in India as well as in other South Asian regions specially Hyderabad. Real hijras of Hyderabad were casted to provide that nuanced perspective and capture their emotions in this fictional world. The locations provide a relatable backdrop utilizing a balanced and natural lighting.

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Societal reflections

Misrepresentation of the queer community is associated with certain caricatures and image codes. Prominent examples are Mada Venkatesh Rao's filmography, his iconic role of a transgender from Chillara Chittemma (1977) and his performance, facial expressions in the song gained popularity through time. He helps Chittemma to overcome obstacles and objectification she faces in the village. Through their interactions and films narrative it is presented that the third gender community has their unique place in the society. Indifferent to films discussed above, the song and story of the film reflect problems women and third gender individuals faced in that era.

He played several similar roles in subsequent films and in few he raised, advocated about the societal bias the Hijra community in Telugu states face. One such example is his characters' interaction with the other transgender of his community as he says

In India people humiliate our community, as we don't fit into their perception of gender. Nowadays there are separate compartments for women and men, they don't allow us in either. Even in hospitals there are separate wards for either genders. Considering political aspects of the country, our names are also not included in the voter list. There male and female political leaders but there is no representation from our community in the state politics. We can win the elections and rule our country. If we want to step into politics, all the citizens of this country must cooperate with us. Only then can we make changes for the betterment of the society. I am desperately waiting for that day. Men and Women are associated with love and affection, God made us with both. Yet, I pray to god everyday wishing that he never makes another orphan like us and I wish he listens to my prayers.

As the monologue progresses a remixed version of the song *Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu* plays in the background, Mise-en-scène presents a group of young hijras listening to Mada's speech, dressed in vibrant colors of yellow, pink and red. Such elements of sound and image create caricatures around the queer roles in Telugu Films. The scene transitions into a chase sequence as he and his hijra companions try to catch hold of a young man, constantly objectifying him. M. V. Rao plays similar characters emphasizing similar stereotypes around queer characters in films like *Gharana Bullodu* (1995), *Naa Pilupe Prabhanjanam* (1986) etc.

Conclusion

Rereading, revisiting the old classics and questioning the ready-made synthesis, groupings we accept before any examination, those links whose validity we recognise from the outset, we must put out those forms and forces. Through which we usually connect the discourse of one with that of another, these must be driven out from their reign that is the darkness of society (lack of awareness). Instead of according them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept them noting that, in the first instance they concern only a population of a particular time. Question those divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar. Analyzing groups of statements which when first formulated were distributed, divided and characterized in a certain way (Foucault, 1976). While watching a cinema, spectators align themselves with someone else on screen and 'identification across identities' is the phenomenon that occurs. The precondition of conservativeness in sexuality and gender binary brought by the Heteronormative perspectives prevalent in Society.

Choodu pinnamma padu pilladu from the film *Chillarakottu Chittemma* (1977), *Maya dhari sachinollu* from the film *Burripalem Bullodu* (1979) were performances of disidentification to show resistance to heteronormative ideals of society. *Choodu pinnamma paadu pilladu* in particular is taken out of the context to demean the cinematic representation of queer roles in Telugu Films. Whereas it was picturized to negotiate with women of their

society and protect themselves from sexual predatoriness of men. Reoccurrence of the song in the Telugu Films to insinuate Queer community as the predators is to cater for the male gaze and promote Androsexual desirability (being attracted to masculine qualities regardless of their gender or sexual orientation).

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~English Language Teaching~

English Teachers' Perceptions of Continuous Professional Development and Identity Formation

Renu Singh

Abstract

Continuous professional development of teachers adverts to the methods for assisting them in steady recharging of their knowledge base and honing their skills to conform to the emerging needs and changing circumstances of the teaching profession. This research paper has explored the interplay between continuous professional development and the evolving identity of English language teachers based on the descriptive research design under quantitative approach. The total number of 40 sample population of the study was randomly selected through the lottery procedure and a set of questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions was used to collect the data. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted descriptively. The findings reveal that English teachers are aware of the importance of continuous professional development, reflective practice, and the role of institutional support in shaping their identities and competencies. The contribution of the study is significant for the existing literature, teacher educators, researchers, and policy makers. Additionally, further research related implication is stated in terms of in-depth studies for enhancing professional development initiatives and effectiveness of teacher education programs in Nepal.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Development, Identity Formation English Language Teachers, Teacher Education, Community of Practice

Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) is a huge field because of the significance of the English language around the globe, and an English language teacher needs to keep refreshed with the progressions and innovations in their field. Professional development is crucial and a foundational component in teachers' development (Luke & McArdle, 2009) and to remain side by side with the quickly evolving field of ELT for being an effective foreign language teacher. Golding and Gray (2006), and Jasper (2006) enroll different reasons of a teacher's investment in a continuous professional development (CPD) program which include an interest in lifelong learning, a feeling of commitment, a felt need to improve teaching skills, an institutional necessity, as well as career progression. In the settings of English as a foreign language (EFL) or a second language (ESL), distinctive parts of change in perspectives of language teacher education (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001) have rendered CPD earnest for teachers, who are to a great extent influenced by traditional models of teaching (Lau, 2006). An English language teacher needs to oversee classroom activities effectively and to have a decent arrangement of knowledge and comprehension of many factors that control and administer the process of

learning and teaching in the classroom circumstances. The need to grow professionally as English language teachers requires a dynamic engagement in the learning process in which various development activities can be helpful for their self-development.

Professional development and continuous learning can be seen as continuous professional development for teachers, which is an essential part of education reform in that the more teachers are qualified and trained, the better their teaching skills, and the better the quality of education will be. This also implies to students to be furnished with better learning environments. Moreover, in Nepal, there are diverse programs of in-service training for teachers and head teachers that shows the significance of becoming professionally sound and empowered. Primarily, English teachers, both novice and experienced, need access to timely required trainings and professional development opportunities in any of the fields of English Education such as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), English Language Teaching (ELT), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), or any language teaching related area. Additionally, the need of professional development for English teachers is because language teaching has taken many turns in approaches and views of language teaching, curriculum, reading materials, and methods of assessment from past decades. This requires teachers to build up their teaching skills for the latest progressions and innovations and also to have the capacity to manage the new curriculum, and teach effectively and proficiently. Similarly, teachers' identity formation is also connected with their profession in the sense that their recognition as a highly motivated, dedicated and well known teacher brings in them a sort of confidence to do better.

Teacher identity formation is an emerging concept in which various factors are integrated such as demographic features including socio-cultural, economic and institutional dynamics (Danielewicz, 2014; Li, 2020). These interconnected aspects of teacher identity formation play a crucial role in shaping and sustaining effective teaching practices (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Barger, 2022) as "professional competence came to the fore being the best mediator to gain awareness of professional teacher identity" (Richards, 2021, p. 204). Additionally, teacher professional identity is multifaceted, evolving, dynamic and also based on intrinsic interpersonal relationships with associates (Leigh, 2019; Golzar, 2020). With this sense of interconnectedness among language teachers "develop their identity as language teaching professionals in collaboration with those of other practitioners and the wider field" (Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 20).

The confinements of the existing professional development programs and the follow-up or assessment methods might be one reason for the students' low proficiency in English. Essentially, students get benefitted from the teachers who are qualified and experienced as well as in the meantime dependably have a refreshed knowledge base. In this vein, the existing stereotype professional development programs need extensive revision in some areas. First, a portion of the training and professional development programs is not effectively sorted out, and does not meet the particular needs of schools and teachers. Second, professional development activities are dominated by the lecturing style where teachers are instructed and guided without being asked to effectively participate and bring in their experience. Third, teacher training and professional development need genuine follow-up and assessment (Alwan, 2001). Fourth, the utilization of teacher portfolios is mainly for assessment purposes needs to be maintained that allows the teachers to think about their teaching practices for further

improvement (Alwan, 2006). Thus, professional development is multifaceted and dynamic in nature that combines formal and informal learning experiences constructed within diverse learning contexts (Fullan, 1995).

The field of English language teaching (ELT) has witnessed significant changes over the past few decades, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and evolving educational paradigms. These changes have impacted not only the teaching methodologies but also the professional development and identity formation of English language teachers. As English language teachers (ELTs) navigate the complexities of their roles, their professional identities are continuously shaped by their experiences, interactions, and the professional development opportunities available to them (Richards, 2017; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Thus, this study is an attempt to find out English teachers' perceptions of continuous professional development and their identity formation.

The following research question was developed on the basis of the research objectives to collect the required data:

- What are the perceptions of English teachers of their continuous professional development and identity formation in terms of their understanding, opportunities provided to be empowered with required skills, and challenges they face?

Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature comprises of theoretical and empirical literature. The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in social constructivism, which posits that individuals construct their identities through interactions with others and their environments (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of ELT, this perspective highlights the importance of social interactions, reflective practices, and continuous learning in shaping teachers' professional identities.

Continuous professional development refers to the ongoing process by which teachers acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve their teaching practices and adapt to changes in their professional environments (Guskey, 2000). For ELTs, professional development can take various forms, including formal education, workshops, peer collaboration, reflective practice, and participation in professional learning communities. The following themes were reviewed under theoretical review:

Teacher Professionalism: Global Trend

Teacher professionalism has been a long-standing issue in the field of education. However, there is no straightforward definition of teacher professionalism (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012), different works have endeavored to distinguish the attributes and qualities of teaching professionals (Evans, 2008; Malm, 2009). Commonly, it can be defined as the term that reflects the ownership of professional knowledge, a professional mentality and self-governance (Wu, 2010). Teacher professionalism is cultivated through comprehensive teacher training programs, continuous professional development that includes conferences, seminars, workshops, research presentation (Cohen et al., 1993). Acquiring educational knowledge

through professional training represents a basic piece of teacher professionalism. Subsequently, professionalism should be developed through very much planned or licensed teacher training programs (Timperley et al., 2007). Besides, there are inquiry about findings arguing for the significance of professional training and experience to developing capable English language teachers. Education International (EI) and UNESCO (2019) have jointly developed a global framework of professional teaching standards that describes 10 standards across three domains (p. 2); teaching knowledge and understanding, teaching practice and professional relations (p. 6). The ten dimensional standard frameworks were produced as an instrument to assess and reflect professionalism among ELT teachers in particular.

Continuing Professional Development and Teacher Learning

Continuous professional development (CPD) is more collaborative and more self-directed and self-regulated ongoing learning (Darling-Hammond & Hyler 2020; Mentz, de Beer & Bailey, 2019; Peel, 2020) that promote teachers to intensively modify their classroom practices along with the need of time (Coombe & Khan, 2015; Kuchah & Shamim, 2018; Simpson, 2013). Consequently, teachers' professional development is an act of continuous process so the term continuous professional development (CPD) is acknowledged in various diverse modes, including short courses, degree upgrading courses, seminars/workshops, collaboration, school/classroom-based research, and organizations with colleges or outside specialists. Timperley et al. (2007) assure that the distinctive sorts of learning mode are developed through different methods of CPD, for example, listening/watching, being watched/receiving feedback, engaging with scholastic/professional readings and discussion. My experience as a teacher educator in an EFL setting proposes that seminars as a method of CPD have a tendency to be seen as teacher-dynamic and student responsive, where college teachers or teacher educators give forthright presentations, followed by remarks or inquiries from the gathering of people. Kennedy (2005, pp. 236-237) has mentioned following nine different models of CPD in her framework such as training, award-bearing, deficit, cascade, standards-based, coaching/mentoring model, community of practice, action research, and transformative.

Policy Review Related to Teachers' Professional Development in Nepal

The School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015 (Ministry of Education, 2009) has categorized teachers into four type; beginner, experienced, master and expert through promotion based on their experience and exposure of professional development programs. Moreover, National Center for Education Development (NCED, 2011) made it mandatory for all in-service teachers to attain 30-day training within five years under the Teacher Professional Development Implementation Guide (NCED, 2011). Additionally, NCED's Teacher Development Policy Guide (NCED, 2011) ensures that teachers will have access to specialized training, not one-size-fits-all type of training (p. 21). However, the teacher development policy guide is confined to teacher development based on the training oriented concept.

Professional Identity of Teachers

It is possible to consider that teachers spend years at schools offering their services. However, it is not straightforward since there are issues that remain totally invisible. Despite this, one's own schooling experiences guide some people to choose the profession of a teacher. Teacher education finally introduces several other issues involved in teaching, such as pedagogy, human development, psychology of learning and so on. Even though pedagogical studies and teacher training involve practicing teaching, it is only a scratch on the surface since it is simply impossible to grasp the overall role of the teacher without doing the job. There is a great deal of research about beginning teachers whose expectations of the work and themselves as teachers have been challenged or even completely overturned when encountering the work at school. The first year of teaching has been called 'a reality shock' or a period full of surprising challenges (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Because teacher professional identity is constructed on the basis of different competencies; language, teaching context, self-awareness, disciplinary knowledge, student learning, knowledge into practice and practice into knowledge, membership in communities of practice (Pennington & Richards, 2016), and teacher self-efficacy (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Every profession holds certain roles and representations that one needs to acquire in order to act as a qualified and successful member of the profession (Brown et al., 2007). When practicing one's profession one can neither ignore the roles nor exaggerate them. To be a plausible representative, one has to acquire the roles, social behavior, values and habits of a certain profession. Knowing a job description is an important issue because if it is left unspecific, it can cause role conflicts and discontent with oneself or distort one's professional identity. The language teachers' role can sometimes be misunderstood as they are considered only experts of the subject but this study considers them to be responsible for more. According to Mayer (1999), teacher education should concentrate more on building the inner image of being a teacher, i.e. identity and core beliefs rather than just providing ways of performing the roles of a teacher.

Relationship between Continuous Professional Development and Teacher Identity

Research suggests that continuous professional development and teacher identity are closely intertwined. Professional identity refers to notions and understandings related to how people think about themselves as professionals and also are specific about their professional choices, goals, norms and values (Fejes & Köpsén, 2014; Li & Qiu, 2016; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). Moreover, professional development not only enhances teachers' skills and knowledge but also contributes to the formation and evolution of their professional identities (Day, 2002). Additionally, according to Wenger (2010), teacher professional development is a form of social learning in which it "transforms who we are and what we can do" thus, "it is an experience of identity" (Wenger 1998, p. 125) that evolves professionally through communities of practices [CoP] (Wenger 1998). The theory of Cop is by product of socio-cultural paradigm that addresses teacher professional identity development collectively for improved teaching practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2010). Thus, as teachers engage in ongoing professional development activities, they reflect on their practices, beliefs, and values,

leading to a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This process of reflection and learning could result in a more coherent and positive teacher identity.

Challenges in Continuous Professional Development and Identity Formation

Despite the importance of ongoing professional development activities and identity formation, English language teachers face several challenges in these areas. These include limited access to professional development opportunities, time constraint, lack of institutional support, and the pressure to conform to standardized teaching practices. Additionally, the process of identity formation can be complex and stressful because teachers navigate conflicting expectations and roles (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Undoubtedly, construction of shared repertoires of practices through collective negotiation needs institutional validity for classroom practices (Lee & Shari, 2012). Eventually, teachers' professionalism is a combination of internal states and external activities that together influence profound success and outcome (Hanna et al., 2020; Sharma & Pandher, 2018).

Empirical Review

A qualitative study carried out by Gnawali (2013) entitled "English language teacher development through professional associations" with the objective to explore the strategies adopted by English language teachers for their professional development through teacher associations. The thematic analysis of the data collected using in-depth interviews found that EFL teachers' participations in conferences, workshops, webinars conducted by various teacher associations made them aware of professional activities such as organizing events, publishing research papers, running blogs, maintaining mailing lists, and providing opportunities for foreign exposure and higher studies. Similarly, Hartono (2016) carried out a qualitative study on "EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of Professional Development" with the objective to observe the perception of six EFL Indonesian university teachers on professional development and their experiences with it. The data were collected through interviews and they were analyzed thematically. It was found that teachers' active involvement in various professional development activities; pedagogical practices, attending professional programs and practices contributed to their professional learning. In the similar vein, Al-Issa (2020) carried out a mix method research study on "Professional Development in Context: Investigating In-service Development Programs for Syrian English Language Teachers". The study had the objectives to find out English teachers' in-service professional development programs during conflict in Syria and the effect of the programs on their professional skills. The data collected through a set of questionnaire and teachers' journal-logs were analyzed and interpreted statistically and descriptively found that EFL teachers' in-service professional development programs enabled them for effective teaching and learning. Dhungana et al. (2021) carried out a research study on "Context-responsive Approaches of / for Teachers' Professional Development: A Participatory Framework". The Participatory Action Research (PAR) design was used to explore context-responsive approaches of the basic-level teachers of a community school in rural Nepal. It was found that teachers' growing professional autonomy through cross-professional collaboration promoted their professional

agency to integrate curriculum and professional development programs, to practice student-centered pedagogy, and to take on leadership positions. Additionally, the study emphasizes on a participatory framework of and for teachers' professional development.

The above related empirical review brought me the insights that ongoing professional development is a key issue in teacher preparation and capacity building of teachers. Similarly, the reviewed previous studies are primarily based on teacher professional development, professional learning, and communities of practice (CoP) and were conducted with various research methods. Evidently, this study is different from the studies reviewed in terms of place as it has been carried in the rural Terai belt of Nepal that is one of the under-researched areas, the descriptive research method under positivist approach was adopted and findings were derived accordingly.

Methodology

The descriptive research method under the positivist view of research (Creswell, 2008) was adopted for this study. The sample population for the study was randomly selected from different community schools using the lottery procedure to ensure that every one had a chance to be selected for the study. The total number of the sample was 40 English teachers. A set of questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions was developed and screened through pilot testing with the students of pre-service teacher education program to ensure the validity of it. After the required modification in the set of questionnaire, it was distributed to English teachers of different community schools of Rautahata district, Nepal. They were contacted through the district education office and head-teachers. The preliminary part of the questionnaire was related to background information including demographic information. The inclusion of the background information was important to know about teachers' qualifications, experiences, or the levels they teach because that might affect their response and perceptions of continuous professional development and identity formation. Moreover, the items of the questionnaire addressed the issues related to their understanding and the activities; the teachers considered as interplay between professional development and identity formation. Additionally, the motivating and hindering factors, and the selection of the programs were also included. The collected data have been analyzed and interpreted descriptively under different themes.

Results and Discussion

The collected data were analyzed, and thematically organized in accordance with the research questions. Thus, the results of the study and the discussion on four different themes are presented in the following sections:

Feeling of Empowerment through Continuous Professional Development

This study is concerned with the continuous professional development and identity formation of English teachers in Nepal. It was found that teachers had a level of awareness and perceptions of continuous professional development (CPD) and professional identity (PI). Majority of teachers were found to be benefitted from the in-service trainings provided to them.

The knowledge and skills, they developed through trainings brought in them a strong feeling of empowerment. The trainings made them change their classroom practices being student centered and also promoted to develop well-planned lessons based on communicative approach to facilitate the course of English as a foreign language. Thus, teachers are highly aware of the benefits of the ongoing professional development activities that prepared them for constructive teaching (Bhattarai & Tudu, 2019) and also have high expectations from teacher professional development (TPD) programs (Pokhrel & Bhera, 2016). However, the concept of ongoing professional development and identity formation of English teachers is confined to a limited exposure of in-service trainings.

Collaboration in Communities of Practice

The teachers were asked the role of collaboration in communities of practice for their professional development and identity formation. Almost all teachers/participants were found to be benefitted through collaboration and negotiation for constructing a shared repertoire of improved practice (Lee & Shari, 2012) that has made them unite to shape their professional identity and development on their own efforts. As it has been earlier mentioned under policy review that in the context of Nepal, the capacity development of teachers is confined to in-service trainings, however, the teachers have already realized the lacking in the existing policy that brought in them a sense of collaboration, and interaction through community of practice; workshop, seminar, conference, and research sharing. Teachers' reflections on their practices bring transformation in the way of their learning and teaching (Ilisko et al., 2011). Thus, their efforts for establishing their professional identification and development are praiseworthy.

Technology Integration for Professional Development

In regard of technology integration for professional development, the teachers were found to be highly aware of its impact on their profession and identity construction. However, the degree of knowledge and skills of technology integration, they require is not sufficient (Singh, 2018). They have the understanding of its role and need according to time so that they managed to foster their knowledge and skills of innovative technology through workshops, self-trainings, and collegial supports. The technology integration training provided to them by the related authorities were brought them a basic skill of how to use computer which is not sufficient for their professional need and to promote active learning through technology. Essentially, they collaborate physically and sometimes virtually on weekends and during holidays for sharing problems and getting feedback. Even they attend webinars, international conferences organized virtually that show their profound dedication towards their professional development.

Lack of Effective Continuous Professional Development Programs

They were asked about the challenges they face in their profession in terms of institutional socialization, support, academic advancement through research, coping up with changing and challenging contexts related to course contents and students' needs along with time. The way they have been trained being in service and got experience through hands on practice help them

address the profession related issues on their own. From the time they started the profession and being experienced into it made them aware of many shortcomings such as lack of induction program for novice teachers, effective ongoing professional development programs, job satisfaction, promotion, incentive or reward, and research opportunities. Moreover, effective professional development for language teachers includes mentoring and coaching, reflection, and chances to apply theory and research into practice (Ilisko et al., 2011). In short, there are various opportunities and challenges connected to professional development activities for teachers in Nepal (Shrestha, 2018).

Addressing Challenges

To overcome the challenges associated with continuous professional development and identity formation of teachers, the following strategies can be employed:

- **Well-designed Continuous Professional Development Opportunities:** Schools and educational institutions should offer professional development opportunities at regular basis and are specifically designed to meet the needs of ELTs. This includes workshops, seminars, and courses that focus on language pedagogy, cultural competence, and the use of technology in language teaching.
- **Institutional Support:** School administrators should actively support teachers' professional development by providing the necessary resources, time, and encouragement. This includes creating a school culture that values continuous learning and professional growth.
- **Reflective Practice:** Teachers should be encouraged to engage in regular reflective practice as a means of deepening their understanding of their professional identities. This can be facilitated through peer collaboration, mentoring, and participation in professional learning communities.

Conclusion

The continuous professional development and identity formation of English language teachers (ELTs) are crucial components of their profession. This study has analyzed English teachers' perceptions of continuous professional development and identity formation and found that they are highly aware of the close relationship between these two aspects. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of continuous professional development in shaping teachers' identities and improving their teaching practices. Despite the challenges, the institutional investment for professional development and supporting identity formation is essential for creating dynamic and effective language teachers. Additionally, the existing policy gap in terms of professional development and identity formation of ELTs needs intensive revision to the date. For effective classroom practice, in-service training provided to novice and experienced teachers in general is not sufficient that needs to be continuous and also needs to be focused on reflective practices.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for educational practice. Firstly, community school stakeholders should promote a culture of continuous learning by providing ongoing professional development opportunities for ELTs. This is essential for enhancing teaching practices and supporting the formation of strong professional identities. Secondly, the importance of teacher identity formation should be recognized and should provide the necessary support for teachers to develop a clear sense of self as educators. This includes offering opportunities for reflective practice, peer collaboration, and induction. Finally, and most importantly, a collaborative school culture that values professional growth and shared learning is essential for supporting both ongoing professional development and identity formation. Thus, schools should encourage open communication, teamwork, and shared decision-making among teachers.

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