

**Self Beyond the Mask in John Knowles' *A Separate Peace***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi**

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**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **Self Beyond the Mask in John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Self Beyond the Mask in John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*** submitted to St. Mary's college (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Abarna M. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled *Self Beyond the Mask in John Knowles' A Separate Peace* analyses the study of relationship between friends.

The first chapter deals with the general characteristics of literature, about the life of the author John Knowles, his contribution to literature, his honours and finally a short introduction to the novel.

The second chapter deals with the thematic analysis of the development of protagonist throughout the novel.

The third chapter depicts the journey of innocence to self-centredness of the protagonist which made the novel to develop the story further.

The fourth chapter concentrates on the author's efficient use of style and techniques in this novel.

The final chapter sums up all the key premises dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the presentation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Literature is a treasure house of knowledge both worldly and the other-worldly. Literature is as old as human language and as new as tomorrow's sunrise. Study of Literature is the study of man's struggles and aspiration. American literature is undoubtedly the richest and most dynamic which can illuminate and mirror our problems. American literature is a work of art written and translated in English language. The Americans were identified with the mother country. American Literature is a significant stream, under the discipline of literature. In all essential particulars, they follow the style thus inherent in their natures and confirmed by habit and study. The word "America" means a "dream" for many. Many American writers have represented their country faithfully. The two most prolific branches of literature in America are journalism and educational works.

According to French philosopher, Literature aim to supply the immediate demand which is more imperative and prevailing than in monarchical lands. An intelligent foreigner, observed the predominance of these two departments who would arrive at the just conclusion. The universality of education and a general, though superficial intellectual activity in the mass of the people were the twofold great mental distinction of the nation. There is, however, still another phase of our literary condition equally significant. The popularity of domestic reading is a species of books intended for the family, and designed to teach science, religion, morality, the love of nature, and other desirable acquisitions.

The disillusionment following upon the war was also expressed in American writings. American eloquence, although not unknown in the professional spheres of colonial life, developed with originality and richness at the epoch of the revolution.

The fame of American eloquence is in part tradition. There is no branch of literature that can be cultivated in a republic with more advantage to the reader, and satisfaction to the author, than History. There are relations, however, both to the past and future, which render American history the most suggestive episode in the annals of the world, and give it a universal as well as special dignity. Human progress has a link between two great cycles; the ark that, floating safely on the ocean-tide of humanity, preserves those elements of national freedom which are the vital hope of the world.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century context has come to assume across the world a striking similarity in both form and content, irrespective of the disparate, geographical, political, social, and cultural situations. American Literature was pamphlets and writings extolling the benefits of the colonies to both European and Colonist audience. Legitimate theatre had become decidedly more sophisticated in the United States, as it had in Europe. The stars of this era, such as Ethel Barrymore and John Drew, were often seen as even more important than the show itself. In 1915, actors were being lured away from the theatre and to the silver screen, and vaudeville was beginning to face stiff competition. American novelists were expanding fiction to encompass both low and high life and sometimes connected to the naturalist school of realism. The years between the World Wars were years of extremes. Eugene O'Neill's plays were the high point for serious dramatic plays leading up to the outbreak of war in Europe. His first Pulitzer Prize was awarded for *Beyond the Horizon* in 1920. Two more Pulitzers were awarded to O'Neill for *Anna Christie* (1922) and *Strange Interlude* (1928). After World War II, American theater came into its own several American playwrights, such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, became world-renowned.



The American novel took on a dizzying number of forms after World War II. Realist, met fictional, postmodern, absurdist, autobiographical, short, long, fragmentary, feminist, stream of consciousness-these and dozens more labels can be applied to the vast output of American novelists. Little holds them together beyond their chronological proximity and engagement with contemporary American society. In the early decades of the contemporary period, American drama was dominated by three men: Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee. Miller's *Death of a salesman* (1949) questioned the American Dream through the destruction of its main character, while Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) excavated his characters' dreams and frustrations. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) rendered what might have been a being domestic situation into something vicious and cruel. By the 1970s the face of American drama had began to change, and it continued to diversify into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

John Knowles, a graduate of Phillips Exeter and Yale, wrote seven novels, a book on travel, and a collection of short stories won both critical and popular success with his first novel, *A Separate Peace*. Knowles was born in 16 September 1926, in Fairmount, West Virginia. He went to public schools in the small town of a coal-mining region, during his childhood. He became a student at Philips Exeter Academy, at the age of fifteen, a well-known boarding school in New Hampshire, not unlike Devon, and the fictional school he writes about in *A Separate Peace*. He did not immediately proceed to college, after his graduated from Exeter in 1945. He became a student at Yale University after completing several months in the U.S. Army Air Force's Aviation Cadet Program. In 1949, he obtained his bachelor's degree from Yale.

Knowles travelled to Europe after his graduation and worked as a journalist, he was considered as a freelance writer. In 1957 after his return to United States from Europe, he took a position as an associated editor at Holiday magazine. He began to write several short stories, which eventually became the foundation for his first novel. He was a recipient of the William Faulkner Award and the Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He lectured widely to university audiences. His most appealing qualities were his descriptive technique and experience which he brings out in his writing. To indicate the environmental shaping of his protagonists' personalities, he uses place description frequently. Knowles was interested in the self-knowledge derived from his protagonists' continual attempts to integrate the two elements of the American Character, savagery and cautious Protestantism, into a reasonable whole. Knowles died in 2001 at the age of seventy five.

Thornton Wilder was a playwright, who encouraged John Knowles to write about his most vivid memories which was reflected in his first novel *A Separate Peace*, on his years at Philips Exeter Academy. He was survived by two sisters, Dorothy Maxwell, of Oro Valley, Ariz., and Marjorie Johnson, of Dallas; and a brother, James, of San Francisco. Knowles quit his job as a journalist after his success in publishing his first novel. John Knowles wrote this book as a gratitude and love to Bea and Jim. Set at a boys' boarding school in New England during the early years of World War II, *A Separate Peace* is a harrowing and luminous parable of the dark side of adolescence. It follows the friendship of the serious, intellectual Gene and the athletic, charismatic Phineas and their relationship take a moment to terrible consequences while they faced a tragic turn. *A Separate Peace* is timeless in its description of adolescence during a period when the entire country was losing its innocence, published more than fifty years ago and a best seller for decades, striking



in its depiction of coming-of-age and the struggle to understand human nature. It is a crowning achievement and an undisputed American classic.

*A Separate Peace* sold over nine million copies. It was one of the most widely read American novels after World War II. This was considered as a most lyrical work, describing in rich, evocative language the idyllic lives of school boys during the first years of American involvement in World War, based on Knowles's stories "Phineas" and "A Turn in the Sun". In 1971, Jonathan Yardley said that Mr. Knowles was "foundering -writing with characteristic grace and intelligence, but groping uncertainly for new subjects and themes." It was considered as a genuine work of art, also nominated for the national book award. There are several praises for *A Separate Peace*, M.L. Stedman, author of *The Light Between Oceans* quoted "Unforgettable...A deeply moving coming-of-age story, set against the backdrop of war... [that] explores what it means to have a true friend, and to be a true friend; how some friendships mold us, stamp us, for better or worse, on the fledgling's path to the adult world."

Kathryn Kramer, author of *Missing History: The Covert Education of a Child of the Great Books* praises that she is tempted to say that *A Separate Peace* is wasted on the young. There is so much that one may not notice when they first read this book. John Knowles is an extraordinary writer. He knows exactly the right moment to deliver an unforgettable line. When one is no longer a teenager-they realize that this is as much a war novel as it is a novel about adolescence. Yet without this deep back story, Knowles couldn't have created in the story of Finny and Gene our abiding archetype of boarding school ranks, and the standard against which all boarding school novels will always be measured. One may envy the exalted freedom when they are young and old, these boys enjoy before the war bears down on them. The

Observer considers this book as a model of restraint, deeply felt and beautifully written work. *In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote said that it was a quietly vital and cleanly written novel that moves, page by page, toward a most interesting target. New York World-Telegram and Sun said that this work is a gem of controlled eloquence, while Saturday Review quoted this work as an "Artistry of a high order."

John Knowles's *A Separate Peace*, and, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, both interpret the lives of adolescent boys journeying through their conflicts and inner confusion to reach the level of maturity. With the help of literary elements such as plot, setting, character, development, conflicts, irony, symbolism, theme, and point of view, both Knowles and Salinger discern the literal ways a typical teenager grows up. The novels took the setting in an all boys' school. It is considered to be an altogether gentler, more quietly brilliant book...Reading this novel will feel like unearthing a forgotten gem commend by The Independent.

Aubrey Menen was an English writer of Irish and Indian parentage who was primarily a satirist. He was also a drama critic, theatre director, advertising agency executive, and an alumnus of University College London, considered this work as a best written, best designed, and most moving novel at his time. He comments that beginning with a tiny incident among ordinary boys, it ends by being as deep and as big as evil itself.

Lionel Shriver is an American journalist and an author who lived in the United Kingdom. She is best known for her novel *We Need to Talk About Kelvin*, won the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2005. She expressed her view as, a novel that made such a deep impression on her at sixteen that she can still conjure the atmosphere in her fifties: of yearning, infatuation mingled indistinguishably with envy, and remorse.



William Golding *Lord of the Flies* was a classic story to read. This placed in the right situations and circumstances, all human beings are capable of revealing a darker side of them—a side that almost everyone is afraid to show. Until nature forces them to face a dark side no one will admit it. *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding emphasize man's savagery through their characters, themes, and plots. All men have hidden savagery, at first, then something triggers the savagery, and they complete the transformation. In this book *A Separate Peace* Knowles brings out the key of acceptance to finding peace where as in *Lord of the Flies* the protagonist tries to maintain peace and avoid any calamity on the island.

Based on his earlier short story, "Phineas", *A Separate Peace* was Knowles first published novel and became his best-known work. It explores morality, patriotism and loss of innocence through its narrator, Gene. The novel takes place in 1940's shortly after the United States had declared its involvement in World War II; America had troops in Europe and the Pacific. The war brought out enormous levels of patriotism in all Americans. Educational opportunities were limited for minorities and women. Public schools were fine, but most of the wealthy sent their boys to private schools. These are the historical context takes place in this novel.

*A Separate Peace* was adapted for a film in 1972, directed by Larry Peerce. It was adapted by John Knowles and Fred Segal, from the former's best-selling novel of the same name. It was released on September 27, starred Parker Stevenson, who would later rise to fame as Frank Hardy on *The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Mysteries* and as "Craig Pomeroy" on *Baywatch*.

Some of Knowles books are *Indian Summer* (1966), in which Harold "Cleet" Kin solving discovers that he prefers the freedom of his simple life in the Midwest to a high-paying job in his New England hometown. *The Paragon* (1971), centers on

Louis Colfax, a student at Yale plagued by a sense of inner emptiness. His later work includes *A Stolen Past* (1983), and *The Private Life of Axie Reed* (1986). In *A Vein of Riches* (1978), Knowles portrayed the Cather wood family-coal barons who exploit the labour of West Virginia miners in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. *Peace Breaks Out* (1981), *Double Vision: American Thoughts Abroad Spreading Fires* (1964) and *Phineas* (1968), a collection of short stories.

*A Separate Peace* is considered to be the best of all Knowles works. World War II is an obvious external conflict occurring in the background, but the main conflict is the inner battle that the protagonist, Gene, is fighting with himself. The narrator is a character within the story. The story is told by Gene, who is the main character, meaning the story is told in the first person point of view. He is thoughtful and intelligent, with a competitive nature and a tendency to brood. Knowles descriptions of the fictional "Devon School" in *A Separate Peace* largely based, physically, on the Exeter campus. As Gene narrates the story of his childhood relationship with Finny and Finny's subsequent death due to complications related to Gene's malevolent actions, Knowles utilizes a pessimistic tone. *A Separate Peace* has a dark tone throughout the novel because of the back and forth feelings that Gene has about Finny.

Ernest Hemingway was an American novelist, short story writer and journalist. He had a strong influence on 20<sup>th</sup> century fiction. Hemingway produced most of his work between the mid-1920s and the mid-1950s, and won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. He published seven novels, six-short story collections, and two non-fiction works. Three of his novel, four short story collections, and three non-fiction works were published posthumously. Many of his works are considered classics of American literature. In 1918, he was seriously wounded and returned



home. His wartime experiences formed the basis for his novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). He said, "the world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry." in *A Farewell to Arms*.

The title *A Separate Peace* is taken from Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*:

I was glad to be alone. I had the paper...about the war. I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace.

Knowles' title has many symbolic inferences. The most important perhaps is signified by Gene's narration as he reflects back on that time when he and the other boys were sixteen and away at school alone together. In some ways a separate peace was achieved in the characters lives related to youth; to guilt; to the war; to life and death; to growing up; and to peace of mind.

At the beginning of the novel, Finny has made up a peaceful world of his own and he invites his friend Gene to come and occupy it with him. At this point, Gene can only find peace through his relationship with Finny. By the end of the book, however, he has sort of found himself, through dealing with the effects of hurting Finny and has figured out how live with himself. So now he is separate from Finny and is at peace. Gene and Finny need to achieve a separate peace and thus the title became significant, both have separate talents. Gene is academically talented while Finny is athletically talented. Their friendship is despite; Gene is threatened by Finny's abilities. The characters become codependent after Finny's accident. Gene begins to pursue athletics because Finny can't and Finny trains Gene in order to live vicariously through Gene's involvement in sports. Consequently, their characters do not develop a separate sense of identity. Knowles submitted his completed novel to

American publishers, but the manuscript was rejected, found a British publisher, Secker and Warburg, for his work. Thus this novel appeared in 1959 and quickly earned the praise of British Reviewers. American Critics were acclaiming the novel as well, when the New York edition came out in 1960. The fall of innocence to maturity level plays a vital role in this novel.

## Chapter Two

### Thematic Study Analysis

The novel *A Separate Peace* has numerous themes. The theme of maturity can be viewed as a growing realization of the war. The students realize that they have to enlist themselves in world war "as men". The novel progresses the private and interior identity crisis of World War II. The summer of 1942 represents a time of paradise at Devon where everyone is at peace and simply enjoying their life. During the winter session, teachers of Devon realize that the students are just on their way of serving the army. "Innocence, must be killed to give birth to experience" is a phrase which says a lot about this time in the novel. Teachers understand that the students must stop acting like children and sacrifice their state of maturity during the summer. Teachers had given the students more freedom to gain knowledge as adults. Men can survive in wars while children cannot survive. The students enlist themselves to serve for the army after they realize it within a short period of time.

The novel takes an ironic twist with the students' beliefs of war to become a soldier for army most of them become excited. They do not yet know the real dangers of the outside of the barriers of Devon. Leper was the one who become the first to join the war thinks that he will gain more time in the forest afterwards, but returns emotionally shattered. Gene almost shares a single identity as Upper Middle boy at Devon with Finny also suffer from the same mental state as Leper. He runs away screaming, "Shut up; it has nothing to do with me so shut up!" (151) at this point Gene realizes some truth about the war. Gene matures through the pressures of the war in the background; it is his turn to enlist because it is reality and he has to face it and that he cannot run from it. The world war was actually generates the buried



emotions of the boys. The emotional development of the students at Devon serves as a background. Gene, Finny, and Brinker become competitive in their own ways; Gene compares his academic standards with Finny's natural talents for sports while Brinker feels insecure about his popularity due to Finny.

The ability to fix inner conflicts seems to sadly result in either death like Finny or mental illness like Leper. Finny couldn't face certain feelings. He ends up becoming upset at mock trial and dies in the second accident. On the other hand, Leper enlists stems from his inability to bear the prolonged waiting period to demonstrate important properties of the war. He believed that it would bring him out from his loneliness. Gene goes through a more painful process by remaining in the Devon to fight for his salvation within himself.

The conflict that he feels inside regarding the relationship with Finny becomes the source of his final development. Throughout the novel, Gene is forced to examine his own feelings over and over again because of the accident he had committed against Finny's fall. When Gene realizes that he has to be responsible for his actions; the repeated painful examination of his feelings and guilt result in growth. By the end of the novel Gene reaches his peak of maturity. His act of courage to go to Finny and admit his guilt is evidence that he has finally grown. Finny's trust in Gene's innocence is evident when Finny says, "But I do believe – it's important after all for me to believe you. Christ, I've got to believe you, at least. I know you better than anybody." (163) Gene gains maturity and becomes an adult after Finny dies, as he realizes that his own enemy was not Finny but his ignorant heart.

The theme of maturity is related to the theme of jealousy between the two friends Finny and Gene. They seem to be incredibly close, almost like brothers, and



while this closeness makes them seem inseparable, they could separate, with the first step being Gene becoming jealous of Finny to be his friend. Gene feels jealousy because he is not popular like Finny, who was an athletic player; while Finny feels Gene is a good student. "Phineas in those days almost always moved in groups the size of a hockey team." (15) Gene tries to hide his feeling of jealousy towards Finny, but he still gets excited when Finny gets in trouble even though he was his best friend. Gene,

I panicked. In his haste that morning Finny had not unexpectedly used a tie for a belt. But this morning the first tie at hand had been the Devon school tie. This time he wasn't going to get away with it. I could feel myself becoming unexpectedly excited at that. (27)

Gene's feelings are genuine, but his feelings toward Finny have been ruined by jealousy.

"You always win at sports." This "you" was collective. Everyone always won at sports. When you played a game you won, in the same way as when you sat down to a meal you ate it. It inevitably and naturally followed. Finny never permitted himself to realize that when you won they lost. That would have destroyed the perfect beauty which was sport. Nothing bad ever happened in sports; they were the absolute good. (35)

Finny addresses Gene that he is his "best Pal", silence occurs between the two when Gene agrees the statement of Finny. Finny states that,

I hope you're having a pretty good time here. I know I kind of dragged you away at the point of a gun, but after all you can't come to shore with just anybody and you can't come by yourself, and at this teen-age period in life the proper person is your best pal (48).

Gene remains silent when Finny address him as a best pal, this shows a little jealousy of Gene. Once in this novel life of Gene was saved by Finny while they climbed the tree. But Gene's mixed feeling towards Finny cause him to blame for "dying" almost in the tree. Gene have some "internal gratitude" towards Finny when his life was saved by Finny, but jealousy takes place to resent Finny, making him look like the bad guy.

Gene's jealousy of Finny corrupts their friendship and leads Gene to "jounce" Finny out of the tree. Some of Gene's jealous feelings toward Finny are casual, such as his desire for Finny's carefree charm. Others are more deeply rooted, so that even Gene doesn't understand their origin. Gene's jealousy only wanes after Finny's injury destroys the traits about Finny that Gene most envied. Gene feels jealous once Finny was clearly stated,

Its high, somewhat stiff collar against my neck, the wide cuffs touching my wrists, the rich material against my skin excited a sense of strangeness and distinction; I felt like some nobleman, some Spanish grandee.(62).

Gene simply wants to look like Finny and he wants to experience a little bit of his life, like a nobleman and like a Spanish grandee. Ultimately, Gene's jealousy deepens into a hatred for his good friend, the destructive quality of his jealousy leads him to negative consequences.

Self-understanding explores the difficulties during adolescence explores in this novel. A difficult friendship with a fellow student and rival leads to a further confusion of identity when narrator enters adulthood in a time of war. The characters are forced to deal with their selves, actions, and personal identities. The novel discovers the teenage characters own identities as individuals. Gene struggles to express his own identity before his friend, Finny, who had broken the school record in swimming, his identity has no value they remain silent.

To keep silent about this amazing happening deepened the shock for me. It made Finny seem too unusual for – not friendship, but too unusual for rivalry. And there were few relationships among is at Devon not based on rivalry.(45)

When Gene alters his own identity to be more like Finny their friendship is threatened. Gene and Finny's identities seem to merge both are happy and close. When Gene is a senior at the school, he provokes at identifying himself through Finny. Gene's anger and opposition against Finny's personality separate himself from Finny. Gene identifies himself after his separation from Finny.

"I just fell," his eyes were vaguely on my face, "something jiggled and I fell over. I remember I turned around and looked at you, it was like I had all the time in the world. I thought I could reach out and get hold of you." I flinched violently away from him. "To drag me down too!" (65).

The threat of war and military service makes it necessary that each boy, Gene in particular, comes to know himself as an individual in order to shape his future.



*A Separate Peace* focused about the young man's struggle to achieve and maintain such a separate peace. The setting of this novel was in an America in the midst of war. The war becomes the biggest metaphor of the novel which happens to be the conflict of a sixteen year old boy. The victory of dark forces of human nature makes Gene realize that each person is alone with his enemy; the only significant wars are not made by external causes, but "by something ignorant in the human heart" (201). Thus, Finny states that World War II is an illusion that maintains a certain truth in light of the real war that occurs in the story.

Gene's refusal to recognize his own feelings of jealousy and insecurity as the real enemy arises a conflict in this novel. The only crucial elements worth preserving are his own survival and superiority when he plunged into a world of competition and hatred. This act of self-deception drives Gene to malicious thoughts and behavior which destroys his feelings of friendship towards Finny. Upon realizing his mistake and discovering that Finny does not share Gene's envy and hatred, Gene's isolation and self-loathing deepen and he intentionally cripples the one person who wants to be his friend. Gene discover that World War II is not the real scene of battle: "I was on active duty all my time at school: I killed my enemy there" (204).

Knowles documents everything that happened when adolescence confronts manhood and the fears that grow when change becomes a reality. The change happens to Gene, Brinker, and Leper when all become wounded by convincing themselves that the enemy, the cause of their fears, lay outside of themselves. Finny embodies the peace that Gene tries to achieve, his physical grace which is a reflection of the harmony within him. Gene's own insecurity, a reciprocal and non-competitive friendship becomes impossible to attain the harmony which he perceives in Phineas.

In *A Separate Peace* world war II is the background for all that happens at Devon School. Typical identity crisis complicates the World War II and forces to first and foremost in relation to the war. The boys are trying to define themselves against something in order to be men. The boys discuss the various branches of the military and whether or not to enlist or wait to be drafted. War is a key to the boys' childhood from the happy innocence of childhood to the harsh reality of real-world experience. But, Knowles also brings in an element of personal warfare amongst the boys which includes Gene's private war with Finny, who is largely unaware of the conflict. "The world, through his unleashed emotions, imprinted itself upon him, and he carries the stamp of that passing moment forever." (40). In history everyone has a moment which belongs particularly to them. It is the moment when Gene's emotions achieve their most powerful sway over him. Even after fifty years past, he will assume the world today.

Once in the novel the phrase "a separate peace" is mentioned while speaking of the Winter Carnival. It is discussed with the analyses of a title. Gene states that,

It was this liberation we had torn from the gray encroachments of 1943, the escape we had concocted, this afternoon of momentary, illusory, special and separate peace (136).

In 1942 and 1943 Devon is considered as a haven of peace and forgetfulness for Gene and his classmates. It is significant to term "separate peace" because it indicates that the peace achieved is not part of the surrounding reality, but a world of conflict, a world at war. Gene remembers the joy he had during the summer of 1942, when he returns to Devon. It was a time when a sixteen year-old could live without argument or rules, and forget about the encroaching reality of a world war.



Finny and Gene is imbalanced, but the two need each other as a friend and a companion. The harmony and confidence of Phineas covets Gene that he himself does not have. Finny rather offers Gene for share in the friendship; Gene destroys the peace that he was unable to find in himself.

Phineas becomes a metaphor for the peace that is lost when Gene is too afraid to discover the enemy within himself. He is the greatest sufferer of this novel. After Finny's fall from the tree, his harmony is damaged. The horrifying realization that the person he thought was his friend is responsible for his injury. Phineas died because of the hatred and insecurity around him. Gene lost the peace and friendship, the peace that is Finny, becomes so internalized that Gene no longer perceives Finny as separate from himself. It is evidenced by his feeling that Finny's funeral is his own.

*A Separate Peace* becomes tragedy when Gene's personal identity is so wrapped up in Finny that in order to become an individual with his own identity, he has destroyed Finny.

I did not cry then or ever about Finny. I did not cry even when I stood watching him being lowered into his family's strait-laced burial ground outside of Boston. I could not escape a feeling that this was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case.(194).

Through, this tragedy it makes the case that in the effort to define they grow into adults; people create false enemies out of true friends.

Gene and Finny play a vital role as friends in this novel. The theme of friendship is used throughout the book in interlacing the plot and giving it a nice twist. The joys and tragedies between the two move throughout the novel, their friendship is

an important part in this novel. There is a complex friendship share by Gene and Finny in this novel. Gene has a mixture of emotions toward Finny at different times. It is relatively simple for them to misunderstand one another. There are numerous instances occur, often having undesirable consequences:

Finny had deliberately set out to wreck my studies. That explained the nightly meetings of the Super Suicide Society, that explained his insistence that I share all his diversions. The way I believed that you're-my-best-friend blabber!(53).

Finny's genuine behavior and actions was misinterpreted by Gene, and consider them as competitors for glory. This misunderstanding leads Gene to do something which he is forever to regret. On the other hand, Finny does not understand that Gene's academic ability is not as easy as his athletic talent. He does not realize that Gene has to work hard for his success.

Gene's misjudgment of Finny occurs when Finny breaks a school record in swimming. Finny does this just for his own personal pleasure, while Gene consider that he does it to show off and call attention and glory to himself. The core element is the complexity of friendship in this book. Although Gene has reservations about being subservient to Finny's forceful, charming personality the boys have a warm and fulfilling relationship. There was a glorious adventure in the summer with the company of other boys. Finny challenges Gene and other boys to jump from the high tree branch into the river. At this point Gene's anger towards him grows into a nasty rivalry.

Gene is envious of Finny, who is the school's top athlete. Gene imagines a rivalry that prompts Finny to prevent Gene from becoming the school's top scholar.



From the first, the sports and games the boys play against each other as rivals, even "enemies". The rivalry between Gene and Finny is almost an existential one. In some way Gene cannot become his own person until he does something to overcome his equal, Finny, and separates himself from Finny's overwhelming presence and influence.

Fear abounds on multiple levels in *A Separate Peace*, associated with the various "wars" fought throughout the course of the novel. The wars occur between both military and personal. Adolescent fear of the future stems from fear of the self, as the novel's young men wonder whether they are capable of functioning in a world consumed by war and hatred. The theme of fear revolves around personal identity and, most prominently, fear of one's own character, of the crimes of which one may be capable. *A Separate Peace* is all about equal but opposite pairs: war and peace, winter and summer, safety and injury, life and death, and here we see joy and fear.

I felt fear's echo, and along with that I felt the unhinged, uncontrollable joy which had been its accompaniment and opposite face, joy which had broken out sometimes in those days like Northern Lights across black sky.(10)

Gene fears, more than Finny's athleticism or charm – his goodness of heart, his pureness of motive, states that:

Any fear I had ever had of the tree was nothing beside this. It wasn't my neck, but my understanding which was menaced. He had never been jealous of me for a second. Now I knew that there never was and never could have been any rivalry between us. I was not of the same quality as he. (59)



The themes in the novel referred the big ideas found in the story line. It is important to remember that pieces of writing often have more than one theme. Theme was a ribbon of thread which focuses on the main ideas in the work.

### Chapter Three

#### A Journey of Innocence to Self-Centeredness

Knowles' *A Separate Peace* shows that innocence can be lost in a number of ways but most of innocence is lost through knowledge. "All things truly wicked start from innocence" is a quote first said by Ernest Hemmingway. This quote is basically saying that innocence may start out as something seen as purity, in a person holding this attribute, but eventually leads to immoral and sinful events. The characters become increasingly aware of the nature of the world. The term "innocent" comes from Latin "in-nocere" which means "not to hurt". In literary terms it is the state of being not guilty of a crime or other wrong act. Likewise, *A Separate Peace* is about the innocence and naivety. Knowles' achievement was successfully imbued his characters, because of the characters and the setting retain both the vitality of truth and the psychological tension of symbolism. Psychoanalytic theory was functional in this novel. The term "Psychological" was also known as "Psychoanalytical" or "Freudian theory", this seems to encompass two almost contradictory critical theories. One focuses on the text itself without any outside authorities while the other focuses on the author of the text.

The psychoanalytic theory of literature is similar to the Formalist approach by examining conflicts, characters, dream sequences, and symbols helps us to understand the work. This novel explores different ways of telling a story, as well as the credibility of a person's memory as they look back on past events. Psychoanalytic literary criticism was influenced by the tradition of Sigmund Freud. This reading of psychoanalytic practiced since the early development of psychoanalysis itself, and has developed into a rich and mixed interpretive tradition.

The novel left without the survival of the Second World War as Gene and Finny enjoyed the summer peace of Devon School. The novel moves with the central fact of war. There are some three sets of interconnected symbols which move from innocence to adulthood. These things served as a backdrop against the novel which was developed by summer and winter and gave way to the peace and war only after Gene has discovered the evil of his own heart.

Naturalism as a literary movement became a part of the American scene. It is related to the developing sciences of the end of the century. For thirty years it was an important point for literary battle, a term of abuse used by its detractors. The naturalistic writers inclined toward determinism in viewing man, questioning the principle of free will. The more thoroughly naturalistic work was slow in becoming widely read in America, naturalism remains throughout the literature as a prominent force. For half a century and more, naturalism is a dominant bias of American Fiction. *A Separate Peace* is of naturalism genre, it details a plot comprising of relatable events, circumstances, and emotions.

The fall from innocence into awareness and thereby growing up is an inevitable part of life. It is throughout the change from adolescent to adult that one leaves being his innocence and other certain purities. This act of maturing was usually experience in ones life, after developing into a full-grown individual that one can begin to make intelligent choices on their own, learn from their experiences, and learn to accept their new outlook on life. A loss of innocence is skillfully developed in this novel. The story simply details a young man's entering the adult world as all children undergoes from loss of innocence.

Finny's fall is exactly like Adam and Eve's fall going from a fun and happy lifestyle to a more sinful one. Finny's fall affected Gene and Finny's friendship



towards him. Loss of innocence can completely ruin one's life. Devon's life started to change after Gene jounced the limb and Finny fell. The quote, "Ignorance is bliss" by Thomas Gray is a outwardly enough description of the lives of Gene, Finny and Leper until they are all roughly pushed out of their fantasy world and brought back to reality. One gets introduced to the novel after the arrival of Gene Forrester.

This novel from the main character, Gene Forrester gained new ideas and information that replaced his innocence. This made him believe that he was well again suited to live in his cruel reality of life. The most obvious archetypes throughout the novel were innocence and loss. The philosophy of everything must evolve or it will perish was shown through the characters of Finny, Gene and Leper. The young Gene stood indifferent and self-centered, by the tree that tests his true nature. "The tree was tremendous, an irate, steely black steeple beside the river. I damned if I'd climb it. The hell with it."(14). Gene's innocence in the opening represented a childlike happiness in compliance.

Gene's innocence was lost because of Finny, who forced him to break the rules and do things such as go to the beach which was far away by bicycle, banned completely out of all limits. Devon students were supposed to remain on campus at all times with the assist of Finny the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session was a success from the start.

Right after lunch there was a game of blitzball which took most of the afternoon, and right after dinner there was the meeting of the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session.(51).

The bond of Gene and Finny has been smooth between them when the two jumps into the river. Gene forgets that he follows Finny, without the adult rules which control human relationships, and lapses back into his distress for authority.

During the fall into his West Point Stride, Gene addresses "We'd better hurry or we'll be late for dinner." (18). Phineas doesn't really hate West Point in particular or ability in general, but just considered authority the necessary evil against which happiness was achieved by reaction. After a brief fight the two boys start again their walk. Gene then acknowledges that he has submitted to Finny. He said,

Finny trapped me again in his strongest trap, that is, I suddenly became his collaborator. As we walked rapidly along I abruptly resented the bell and my West Point stride and hurrying and conforming. Finny was right. (19)

The progress of the novel started after Gene's envy towards Finny. When both decided they would jump off the branch together at the same time. Gene purposefully pushed the branch causing Finny to fall from the branch to the ground while up on the tree, and break his leg.

Holding firmly to the trunk, I took a step toward him, and then my knees bent and I jounced the limb. Finny, his balance gone. Swung his head around to look at me for an instant with extreme interest, and then he tumbled sideways, broke through the little branches below and hit the bank with a sickening, unnatural thud." (59-60)

This is where Gene's true feelings were shown and his innocence is taken from him.

In Gene's mind, Finny wanted to be superior to Gene because Finny does extremely well at sports while Gene shined at schoolwork. Gene thought that he could finally be better than Finny, by jouncing the branch and make him fall. This may lead Finny to no longer participate in sports nor distract Gene from improving his education and completing his schoolwork. Gene lost his innocence, which caused

him to believe that there was no good in the world and that everybody was out to get him.

I was beginning to see that Phineas could get away with anything. I couldn't help envying him that a little, which was perfectly normal. There was no harm in envying even your best friend little." (25) and "This time he wasn't going to get away with it. I could feel myself becoming unexpectedly excited at that. (27) Gene thought "He had gotten away with everything. I felt a sudden stab of disappointment. That was because I just wanted to see some more excitement; that must have been it." (28)

This happens after Finny avoids punishment.

Gene believes that the world was all evil; he by no means did change from what he had done. Gene couldn't respond to Finny during a bicycle trip to the beach, when he deals with Gene as his best friend. He stated that, he nearly did. But something held him back. Perhaps he was stopped by that level of feeling, deeper than thought, which contains the truth. The outcome of this trip is to cause Gene to fail a trigonometry test and thereby to fetch his hatred of Finny into the open. The necessity of a personal war with adulthood and the loss of childhood innocence were associated in this novel.

Later in the book, Finny who is different from Gene have gone through a physical fall which led to his fall from innocence. As a childish young boy, he was gifted with athletic talent. His fall finally led to terrible things such as physically, mentally and emotionally. When Finny fell out of the tree, physically he lost a great deal of innocence.



Holding firmly to the trunk, I took a step toward him and then my knees bent and I jounced the limb. Finny, his balance gone, swung his head around to look at me for an instant with extreme interest, and then he tumbled sideways, broke through the little branches below and hit the bank with a sickening, unnatural thud. It was the first clumsy physical action I had ever seen him make. With unthinking sureness I moved out on the limb and jumped into the river, every trace of my fear of this forgotten (59-60).

Finny had not experienced evil in this way before. "Sports are finished for him, after an accident like that. Of course, Sports are finished. As a friend you ought to help him face that and accept it." (63) For a long period of time, Finny lost his ability to walk and was never able to play sports again. Finny thought he was nothing without sports because sports were his life.

I cried for Phineas and for myself and for this doctor who believed in facing things. Most of all I cried because of kindness, which I had not expected. (64)

The return of Phineas to Devon signals the reconstruction and renewal of Gene. Gene realizes that he was in need of him to him maintain his integrity, Gene get ridden with guilt about Finny's character is evident when he commands that,

Until now, in spite of everything, I had welcomed each new day as though it were a new life, where all past failures and problems were erased, and all future possibilities and joys open and available, to be achieved probably before night fell again. (105)

Gene finds right purpose and decides to live out his life at Devon with Finny, when

Phineas was shocked at the idea of my leaving. In some way he needed me. He needed me. I was the least trustworthy person he had ever met. I knew that; he knew or should know that too. I had ever told him. I had told him. But there was no mistaking the shield of remoteness in his face and voice. He wanted me around. The war then passed away from me. And dreams of enlistment and escape and a clean start lost their meaning for me.(108).

The peace returns to Devon and the war was forgotten with Gene's resolution. Finny told Gene that he did not believe the war was going on because he could not get into the military because of his leg. Finny in the conversation explains to Gene that, "They all gave me the same answer after they saw the medical report on me. The answer was no soap. We can't use you."(190) Finny for the first time accepts that his accident has altered his life significantly.

Gene knows that Finny was emotional and afraid, this lead Finny to death during an operation to repair his injuries. Gene said that, "it was just some ignorance inside him, some crazy thing inside him, something blind, that's all it was."(191) Dr. Stanpole sat down next to him and put his capable-looking hand on Gene's leg. He said quietly that "This is something I think boys of your generation are going to see a lot of and I will tell you now. Your friend is dead."(193). Utterly Finny, as a person is dead, but his passing away took away all of the things that he characteristically represented in his life.

Finny and Leper are comparable in some ways, but they are also radically dissimilar. Gliding through life, Finny break the rules. But Leper, on the other hand, would not trance of breaking the rules. He is too frightened. Leper is a follower while Finny is a definite leader, which is proved when he started the Super Suicide



Society of the Summer Session. Even their views on war are different, while Leper is more interested in snails, Finny before his fall was a best athlete at Devon. Finny suffers his blamelessness because of having to approach to grips with his disability and the mental realization that his best friend injured him greatly.

Leper's fall from innocence is established mostly through a mental and an emotional change. A quiet, peaceful, nature-loving boy shocked his classmates by becoming the first boy at Devon to enlist in the army. Leper remained innocent from the beginning of the novel. He did not know how to handle the bad situation in the world, and any sort of stress. When faced to jump off the tree he froze, he refused when tossed the ball in blitzball. Most importantly, he becomes "psychotic" and starts confused when he was in the army.

Leper represented innocence when joining for the army because his main reason was to enjoy skiing. Leper did not know how to handle the change that took place in him. He knew that "it was the army which had done it to him, and I and all of us were on the brink of the army words." (144). Leper could not handle it far away from his home, while he was in the army. His peers were looking for him in Devon, and his parents at home always had someone looking out for him. This demonstrated his philosophy. When living in the army life, Leper does not adapt himself to the changes of living. Therefore, this leads to loses of his sanity and his innocence within him.

Leper informs Gene that the army would have given him a Section eight discharge.

A Section Eight discharge is for the nuts in the service the psychos, the Funny Farm candidates. Now do you know what I'm talking about? They give you a Section Eight discharge, like a dishonorable discharge

only worse. You cannot get a job after that. Everybody wants to see your discharge, and when they see a Section Eight they look at you kind of funny.(144)

During this Leper explains that it is for the psychos in the army. The discharge is worse than a dishonorable discharge, and that he would never get a job if he had received the discharge. As Leper keep describing the hallucinations in more depth and detail. Gene gets upset and begs him to stop. When Leper doesn't, Gene takes off, back to Devon.

Would they bother you if you did, if you happened to keep imagining a man's head on a woman's body, or if sometimes the arm of a chair turned into a human arm if you looked at it too long, things like that? Would they bother you? (149)

These quotes are related to the theme of innocence because it related with Leper.

In Vermont, Gene discovers himself charged of having been responsible for Finny's fall at Leper's home. Leper reveals the horror of the military to the two boys when they walked in the snow covered fields. Gene found that

The crust beneath us continued to crack and as we reached the border of the field the frigid trees also were cracking with the cold. The two sharp groups of noises sounded to my ears like riffles being fired in the distance.(151)

Gene thought that the ugliness of the war finally becomes so forceful that he must run away from it, when he listens to Leper. He stated that, he did not want to hear any more of it. Not now or ever. He didn't care because it had nothing to do with him. And he stated that he did not want to hear any more of it. Gene wants to return to the world of the winter carnival and his training for the Olympics.



I wanted to see Phineas, and Phineas only. With him there was no conflict except between athletes, something Greek-inspired and Olympian in which victory would go to whoever was the strongest in body and heart. This was the only conflict he had ever believed in.  
(152)

These quotes explained when he and Phineas departure from the cruelty of the world.

According to Leper war seems to be a golden machine-gun fire with the rays of the sun were shooting past them.

black as death with this fire [the sun] burning all around them; and the rays of the sun were shooting past them, millions of rays shooting past them like – like golden machine-gun fire. (174)

Nature then presented as both hopeless and negative, with man's death and fall insured by nature's deadly fire and own inability to escape the savage within himself. Leper lost his innocence because of his experience he faced during the war.

Knowles successfully depicts the gravity of the idea of war and its effects. The efforts of war take its charge on the boys by compulsorily urging them to manhood. In retrospect, the situations to warfare and the portrayal of the changes that come with winter are similar with the boy's internal conflicts at school and how these clashes force them into adulthood. Additionally, the annihilation which follows winter highlights the cruelty and power of these quarrels.

The loss of innocence therefore brings in transformation in everyone throughout the novel. Each character in one way or another ended up losing it. Finny losses his innocence because of having to come to holds with his disability and the mental awareness that his best friend harmed him greatly. Leper's philosophy of innocence greatly describes that everything must evolve or it will perish. Innocence



and philosophy work together pleasantly in this novel because the characters cannot evolve to their loss of innocence and suffer death, whether physical, emotional of some kind.

## Chapter Four

### Style and Technique

Knowles does a great job of incorporating many literary devices and figurative language. Literary devices add to the stimulation and activity of the novel. Knowles uses the technique called foreshadowing which is to describe something in advance, that somewhat confusing thing is going to happen in his novel. Knowles foreshadows the fear that Gene lived in through the majority of the story.

Looking back now across fifteen years, I could see with great clarity the fear I had lived in, which must mean that in the interval. I had succeeded a very important undertaking. I must have made my escape from it. (10)

This quote describes the foreshadowing scene which has taken place in this story.

Knowles allows everyone to fully visualize Gene's imagination. Gene as an adult went to visit two fearful sites; he overcomes at some stage in his childhood days. As an older man, Gene notices a flight of marble stairs. He observed them for some time, how hard those stairs are and how easily it was for Finny to break his leg.

In through swinging doors I reached a marble foyer, and stopped at the foot of a long white marble flight of stairs. Although they were old stairs, the worn moons in the middle of each step were not very deep. The marble must be unusually hard. That seemed very likely, only too likely, although with all my thought about these stairs this exceptional hardness had not occurred to me. It was surprising that I had overlooked that, that crucial fact. (11)

Gene visits other of the fearful sites is a certain tree by a river. The tree has great significance in foreshadowing. Gene considered the tree as a weapon, as something that hurts somebody, who is later Finny.

There were several trees bleakly reaching into the fog. Anyone of them might have been the one I was looking for. Unbelievable that there were other trees which looked like it here. It had loomed in my memory as a huge lone spike dominating the riverbank, forbidding as an artillery piece, high as the beanstalk. (13).

According to Gene, the tree symbolizes everything this surrounded by him.

it seemed to me standing there to resemble those men, the giants of your childhood, whom you encounter years later and find that they are not merely smaller in relation to your growth, but that they are absolutely smaller, shrunken by age.(14)

Years later, the tree is not noteworthy because of the fear. This quote:

So the more things remain the same, the more they change after all – plus c'est la meme chose, plus ca change. Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even a death by violence.(14)

foreshadows the two accidents of Finny, the first was when Finny fell down the stairs, and the other second was when Finny fell from the tree. The French proverb shows that the more things remain the same, the more they change. Gene even foreshadows Finny's "death by violence".

Knowles uses a descriptive language of imagery to help the reader to form a picture or image in their mind. The use of imagery is excellently shows while Gene describes the pink shirt of Finny out of his jealous towards him.



Its high, somewhat stiff collar against my neck, the wide cuffs touching my wrists, the rich material against my skin excited a sense of strangeness and distinction; I felt like some nobleman, some Spanish grandee.(62)

Metaphors make once writing more engaging and exciting for the reader. Using metaphors can allow for fine-looking and sometimes fantastical descriptions that can be quiet memorable. To enhance ones writing, writers use individual metaphors.

I felt fear echo and along with that I felt unhinged, uncontrollable joy which had to been its accompaniment and opposite face, joy which had broken out sometimes in those days like Northern Lights across black sky. (10)

This is comparing his feelings of seeing the school and the feelings he would have seeing an old friend. This is significant because this at the beginning before Gene begins his flashback. Comparison to two unlike figures, Blitzball, a game invented by Finny because of his revulsion with the school's athletic plan is another really of significance metaphor within this novel. Blitzball is a reflection of every student's personal struggle against the universe. The game reflects the fact that in the present universe an individual can simply trust on himself. "There aren't any terms in blitzball," he yelled somewhat irritably, "we're all enemies. Knock him down!"(38). The setting of the book is set in World War II which compares the look of winter to a battlefield.

Winter's occupation seems to have conquered, overrun and destroyed everything, so that now there is no longer any resistance movement left in nature; all the juices are dead, every sprig of vitality snapped, and

now winter itself, an old, corrupt, of vitality snapped, and now winter itself, an old, corrupt, tired conqueror, loosens its grip on the desolation, recedes a little; grows careless on its watch; sick of victory and enfeebled by the absence of the challenge, it begins itself no withdraw from the ruined countryside.(128)

Metaphors play a vital role in this novel as they transform it from a field narrative into a complex one, where simple things represent a greater, complicated world. The powerful usage of metaphors in this novel was shown during Finny's invented game "blitzball", and large tree from where Finny fell down. These illustrations clearly show us the many quarrels which exist within the characters themselves and in the universe around them.

A simile evaluates two unlike substance using the words 'like' or 'as' to link them. In the opening of the novel, Gene compares his fear to stale air.

Preserved along with it, like stale air in an unopened room, was the well known fear which had surrounded and filled those days, so much of it that I hadn't even known it was there.(10)

Later in the novel while Brinker decides that he is going to enlist in the army, and Gene thinks about it too there is a usage of simile. Gene looks up at the sky and sees the stars and says they are "as unromantic as knife blades".(101) Specifically when stars are compared to knife blades, it highlights the danger in the decision that he makes. The stars are using instead of other objects because they can be seen from anywhere.

Nature is frequently the tool for personification in this novel. Personification is often used in poetry to enhance the meaning and beauty of poems but Knowles made use of this term skillfully in this novel. Personification allocates human



behavior or emotion to lifeless objects. It is used throughout the novel to reflect how the characters are feeling, as long as looming into the confusing changes that are taking place inside. When Gene and Finny went to the beach, Gene reflects that

This kind of sunshine and ocean, with the accumulating roar of the surf and the salty, adventurous, flirting wind from the sea, always intoxicated Phineas. (47)

Knowles personifies the wind as "adventurous, flirting", which is a likeness of Finny's own individuality.

Irony is the use of words to put across a significance that is the opposite of its literal meaning. Occasionally at some stage in a story, the reader knows much more than the characters. Dramatic irony is used when the character behaves out of ignorance while the audience knows the truth. The biggest example of irony in the text is the fact that apart from Gene and Leper, nobody in the text knows that Gene calculatedly jumped on the limb to cause Finny to fall. Finny is serving Gene train for the 1944 Olympics. Gene works hard and develops his running time, but he is lose himself in the process and becoming more like Finny. "Leave your fantasy life out of this. We're grooming you for the Olympics, pal, in 1944." (117)

Situational irony occurs when Phineas remark about the tree, happens opposite of what one would expect. "What I like best about this tree", he said in that voice of his, the equivalent in sound of a hypnotist's eyes, "what I like is that it's such a cinch." (14). Verbal irony frequently comes in the form of sarcasm as the character intentionally says something that is the polar opposite of what he means. For example, Finny tells Mr. Prud'homme.

"The real reason, sir, was that we just had to jump out of that tree..." I knew, Mr. Prud' homme must have known, Finny knew, if he stopped



to think, that jump out of the tree was even more forbidden than missing meal. "We had to do that, naturally...because we're all getting reading for the war."( 22)

Of course, Finny is simply toying with his teacher and does not mean what he says. After Finny's accident when Finny asks, "You aren't going to start living by the rules, are you?" and Gene commands, "Oh no, I wouldn't do that." Even Gene admits "that was the most false thing, the biggest lie of all."(71)

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. There are three symbols used in this novel. The first of all is a tree symbols which is a main symbols which holds the entire story. The tree is considered to be a giant tree from which Finny falls becomes visible in Gene's memory. He imagines it as a "huge lone spike" or an "artillery piece" as an adult, but when he sees it up close during his return visit to Devon it looks little and unthreatening. Gene realizes that he has changed though the tree stayed the same, and grown past its ability to label or fright him.

Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even a death by violence.  
Changed, I headed back through the mud. I was drenched; anybody  
could see it was time to come in out of the rain.(14).

The tree is therefore a symbol of both the lighthearted joy and scrupulous fears of boys growing into men, and a symbol that in time men can leave those fears behind.

Finny's fall from the tree and the turn from summer to fall(Autumn) mark the novel's turning point. During the summer session, the boys enjoyed a time of carefree childish adventure. The novel's main "fall", Finny's, has much the same effect as the Summer Session ends and fall and winter come, everything changes: Devon returns to its harsh corrective ways, and the threat of having to battle in the war darkens

everyone's consciousness. The joy of childhood with that fall, Finny symbolized disappears, and the boys' unusual reactions to the fall help define who they'll be as adults.

Across the hall...where Leper Lepellier had dreamed his way through July and August amid sunshine and dust motes and windows through which the ivy had reached tentatively into the room, here Brinker Hadley had established his headquarters. Emissaries were already dropping into confer with him (74)

The Devon School is a one-sixth year old institution which has successfully weathered the wars of the past and has changed just enough to adapt to the changes in society. One of Gene's first explanations about the school is that it can adapt to change harmoniously; this thought encourages Gene to think that perhaps he too can change just sufficient to maintain his happiness.

To keep silent about this amazing happening deepened the shock for me. It made Finny seem too unusual for—not friendship, but too unusual for rivalry. And there were few relationships among us at Devon not based on rivalry. (45).

\ There are few more symbols used in this novel such as Olympic Games which was a dream for Finny, can no longer play sports...it didn't mean that he does not have any influence just because a direct participation is not possible. The characters in this novel have different qualities, Finny who is represented for his goodness while Gene shows the darker side of the humanity. Leper's gentle souls escape from the grotesque elements of reality by developing a mental illness and Brinker who represents individuals because of some change in perspective, become disheartened with their former ideals.



Alliteration is the repetition of the similar sounds which is sometimes used by authors to draw attention to an important point. The name of the club the boys form contains a stream of words that begin with the letter 's' which helps the reader remember the name of the club and characterizes the light-heartedness the boys were experiencing during the summer session. "The Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session was a success from the start."(33).

"Walking back to the school grounds from the railroad station in the descending darkness we overtook a lone figure sliding along the snow-covered edge of the street."(98)

In this above sentence alliteration occurs in the word descending – darkness.

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes. There are three motifs in this novel memory and change, twinning or doubling and homoeroticism. The novel opens as Gene returns to Devon School more than a decade after graduating. The story he informs about his time there dissimilarities vivid brightly with his description of the school as an adult. Memory often overstates how much things have changed, as the changes within the characters likely manipulate both how they remember things from long ago and how they view them as adults.

The memory plays a vital role in the story about school days. The story Gene tells from the youthful point of view but the story is altered by the grown-up man who is recounting it based on the memories touched by the years of experience. Gene and Finny at several points seems to be a two parts of a single person. They are twinned or doubled with each other to form a single entity. It can be seen when Gene wears Finny's clothes, and when Finny treats Gene with great friendship who trains Gene for the Olympics. Gene is gifted academically while Finny is a superb athlete,



together they makeup something akin to the "perfect" person. The most nearly homoerotic scene occurs when Finny and Gene napping near each other on the beach. During this break from school nothing overt occurs, but the event highlights the unspoken, potential attraction the two boys, who are so close they are sometimes describes as one. The attraction is particularly strong for Gene in his relationship with Finny. But later in the book Gene says that Finny loved everyone. Homoeroticism is nowhere made obvious but it might be read into the text.

The novel holds a dark tone because of the back and forth feelings that Gene has about Finny. Knowles applied a pessimistic, confessional tone to this novel. The tone almost gives off a sense of threatening. The readers feel for Gene, and were struggling right along with him and his jealousy in the beginning and his guilt throughout the rest of the novel. The novel is an intense and it is not a happy, light story.

Diction refers to the choice of words and style of appearance that an author makes and uses in a work of literature. Diction can have a great effect on the tone of a piece of literature, and readers distinguish the characters. In this novel *A Separate Peace* uses diction of a melancholy tone that prevailed throughout the novel. "dead gray waves hissing mordantly."(49) While following Finny's death, a hopeless tone is conveyed when Gene "grabbed his head, digging into [his] skin...[and] lost all hope."(64)

The word "digging" and the phrase "lost all hope" successfully reveals that distressed and hopeless tone as it more particularly describes the anger and grief that Gene is experiencing. Words such as "dead", "gray", and "horrified" all connote the gloomy tone of the characters, Gene and Phineas, and their "dead-looking" Devon High School. "His stunned look of total appalled horrified amazement."(109) The

tone is most obvious in the tragic fall Phineas takes in the tree, the crippling result and his subsequent death. "I began with false heartiness." (142) Knowles use of diction mainly developed the events and characters in the novel. This novel belongs to a genre of literature called Bildungsroman. This is a German term which describes a novel whose main character matures over time, usually from childhood.

The use of figurative language such as simile, metaphors, or personification will help to make ideas and themes more tangible to the reader. Metaphors and simile flourish throughout the novel. The literary techniques like allusion, apostrophe, diction, form, mood, irony, rhetoric, style, tone, symbolism are expressed in this novel. Motifs discussed the major roles played in this story which help to improve the novel. The thematic importance is discussed very clearly in this novel. The symbols enable Knowles to explore the contrast between the past and present in this story. Style as a complicated concept, can be approached from various perspectives such as literary, narrative, linguistics, cognitive and corpus. Diachronically, it is designated that there is a maturity in the understanding of style of a text.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

*A Separate Peace* stems from Knowles personal experiences considers many elements of the novel which was evolved from Knowles short story *Phineas*. The book consists of many different themes and it is a critical and commercial success. The plot follows the friendship of the serious, intellectual Gene and the athletic, charismatic Phineas and the tragic turn their relationship takes when a moment's impulse has terrible consequences. It explores morality, patriotism and loss of innocence through its characters. It is timeless in its description of adolescence during a period when the entire country was losing its innocence. The novel can be read as a bildungsroman in which each character develops during each stage of their life.

American literature does not easily lend itself to organization by time period. This literature evolved and cultivated in colonial America and got matured in independent American nation, known as United States of America. The size of the United States and its varied population, there are on a regular basis several literary movements happening at the same time. The most commonly agreed periods of American literature is from the colonial period to the present. The Contemporary period in American literature identifies its basic characteristics. At the end of World War II, the Contemporary period in American literature developed.

John Knowles' *A Separate Peace* (1959) was first and most famous novel, published in England. It is considered as a most excellent novel at his time. Many critics congratulated the novel for its rich characterization, artful symbolism, and effective narrative. Critics distinguished that the novel could be read as an allegory about the cause of war. *A Separate Peace* did not become an instant best



seller, but it has gradually become a commercial success sold more than nine million copies. Knowles' love of New England stems from his happenings as a student. His fondness for the school is reflected in this novel. The novel proved its success later in United State, in 1960. About ten years later, the story was modified for the screen and made into a movie. It is measured as a standard reading in many high schools now. A reading of the novel will feel like unearthing a forgotten gem.

The title represents Finny's world of sports that is kept separate from the obstructing world of war that he did not want to identify as he is not acknowledged into any of the armed forces. The clues given in the title are that something will separate peacefully. The title can be related to the plot of the story, in which Finny and Gene's worlds separated peacefully until Finny's death. The time in this novel is flash-back. The novel quickly flashes back to 1942 – 1943 while the beginning of the novel takes place at 1958. This is a young adult classic which has endured the test of time and remains relevant not just for young adult readers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but also for adults. The significant events and location which were revisited ones, youth and considered their experiences formed their adult character and behavior from their maturity.

Knowles' *A Separate Peace* takes place mostly on the campus of a superior class New England prep school, a quiet and secluded corner of a world on the brink of World War II. The boys at the school wait impatiently for the day when they will be released at last from their senior year. The story was simple on its exterior as it was complex underneath. Gene has a love and hate relationship with Finny, admiring him for his limitless good qualities, but at the same time envying him. Finny is one of

those saint-like young man who cannot envision evil in the world, and joyfully participate in life.

Knowles skill fully depicts the different boys' reactions in facing up the idea of threat in the world by maturity and experience. Finny remains wholly true to himself and refuses to recognize that he has an enemy, a kind of innocence. All sports seems to come naturally to Finny and Wolfe describes his ability in sports that, "His athletic prowess stems not from brawn but his superb coordination vitality." Gene still did well in sports; he was nowhere in Finny's athletic level. This athletic gift tends to be a mistaken, as Gene mistakes it, for a moral quality. Finny has no fear and that demonstrates no courage by his actions.

This novel *A Separate Peace* traces with some decision the events in the last year at a New England boys' preparatory school. In 1942, the fairly peaceful, protected life is already overshadowed by the awkwardness of the war and the draft forward. It is not always concentrates on Gene Forrester assessable relationship with Finny, whose careless charm, disregard for and non-cooperation of any rules, and dazzling athletic feats attract him- and also distract him from the academic success Gene is more interested in achieving. The changes on the emotion replace their relationship which gives the book its interest; the close friendship which is not pure with resentment; Finny's power, which ends in hope after the accident imprinted here as a personal one. Knowles clearly stated that identification is a strong part of the involvement and it is unsentimental, with the subtler elements of attachment.

Knowles' deals with various themes in his novel *A Separate Peace*. This is a great book about growth and accepting the loss of innocence. This book is highly recommended for teenagers and adults. Two friends experience an intense "rivalry,"



which would later define who they are as people. Jealousy creates an interesting dynamic between the friends, and becomes the main character in this novel. This book revels both in complexity and simplicity of sixteen year old boy whose mind is both confusing and simple at the same time. Childhood development is clearly expressed in this book which made the book more enjoyable to read. Being World War II really enhances the ups and downs of the novel.

The themes become more substantial when Gene is wearing Phineas' clothes. The theme of living through another's identity, is made clear again when Phineas said, "we're aiming for the 44 Olympics"(121), this showed that Phineas was living through Gene. Therefore, it shows Gene and Phineas' identities were interdependent. The theme appears once more at the end of the book when Gene said "Phineas-filled", showed that he still had some of Phineas identity. The overall lesson people can take from this novel is to be more independent. Gene spent his senior year letting Phineas "live through him". The lesson can take from the book is more independent.

Fall of innocence is a major theme which moves throughout the novel. This story about changing perspective shows how things both change and encourage the same. The part of growing up by losing one's childhood from false impression, the world is a fundamentally friendly place. The story is told from Gene's point of view, and he cannot quiet be sure in his own mind whether he jarred the limb and caused Finny to the fall, or whether his action was insensible. Throughout the novel Knowles uses Phineas' fall from the tree to symbolize his loss of innocence, to show Gene's guilt, and to develop Phinea's death.

There are also very insightful psychological observations. Phineas and Gene's act mostly based on misconceptions in their own minds about eachother. At one point



they come up with a make-believe world in which the war is not real and Gene trains every day for Olympics that will never happen. This fictional idea has got pretty lost even though they are aware of it, but at times more real than reality. Leper, who is sensitive and into nature, and somewhat cowardly, enlists in the army and is later given a section eight dismissal, sees things that are not real, but are not much crazier and are somewhat less damaging than the misconceptions and make-believe that Gene and Phineas use just to cope with their own lives. In the end reality comes to everyone though and no one allowed escaping from it forever.

The novel chronicles the boys' development as the war encroaches further and further into their lives. The journey from innocence to experience has been described as depressing; his capture of youthful emotion, surprising maturity and reactions of life's great tragedies make it a must-read during those awkward teenage years. This book *A Separate Peace* is good and deserving for its classic status. The novel skillfully provides graphic descriptions of both natural objects, such as trees and rivers and artificial structures such as buildings on the Devon campus. These elements function as a construction for Gene to memorize and, in many respects, relive the past. The subject of youth is also fundamental to the novel. *A Separate Peace* reminds one that, even though one matures, youth is still easily reached through memory. By revisiting one's youth may create a sense of peace, a peace that is reasonable only with reflection.

The author uses sentences of fairly different lengths in the novel. Imagery is used in the beginning to describe the campus of Devon and continually throughout the more significant parts of the story, but during the other parts imagery is not a main concern. The author's dialect seems very proper, but nothing distinct that says he tries

to write in a different form of English. Gene would know more about the thoughts of other characters. The story personifies the reality of the world with the usage of metaphor. The metaphorical meaning of the novel's wartime backdrop: World War II represents man's need for a personal war, for a personal enemy and to defend against and kill. The usage of simile, metaphor, irony, symbolism moves the story very effectively.

The author wrote this work to depict the story of jealousy and trying to overcome the feeling to remain friends. The ultimate purpose the author hoped to accomplish was to write a novel related to his experience at Exeter, with a few twists to have a main conflict to make the story interesting. The tone of the work is dark throughout the novel. The author uses fairly varied sentence lengths in the novel. The novel ends on fittingly dark note, as the war invades Devon. The characters have felt the war descending upon the school throughout the book. The abstract notions that one would expect to accompany the war with honour and glory have drained away leaving only an adolescent doubt of the other characters.

Knowles' story shows how humans tend to satisfy the need to have someone to compete with by sometimes choosing to dislike the people who deserve it the least. The novel closes with Gene reflecting on Finny's great gift with his ability to remain innocent. The novel *A Separate Peace* last lines leave one to wonder if Finny's worldview is eventually truer to than that of the other characters. Our hatred of others stems from something fundamental to the human heart, and then sincere friendships and peaceful societies whether be always endangered. On the other hand, our animosities stem from ignorance, perhaps retain hope for our future, both as individuals and as communities. *A Separate Peace* is considered as a classic tale, the

best written and best designed novel considers as a most is plainly moving fables ever written of the dark forces that brood over the tortured world of adolescence.

*A Separate Peace* is an American Classic and great bestseller for over thirty years. This novel is timeless in its description of adolescence during a period when the entire country was losing its innocence as students were forced to involve in Second World War. This novel is an invaluable guide on child psychology. The novel received wide circulation among the public as it appeared during a time when the genre 'novel' was almost forgotten. It is certainly a crowning achievement and deserves a great applause.



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**The Quest for Love: A Study of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**AGNES S.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN02)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**



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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **The Quest for Love: A Study of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

  
AGNES S.

## CERTIFICATE

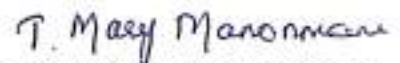
This is to certify that the project entitled **The Quest for Love: A Study of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Agnes S. during the year 2018 – 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **The Quest for Love: A Study of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*** explores the phenomenon of adolescent identity with special focus on the protagonist's perception of adulthood.

In the first chapter "**Introduction**" a short biography of the author J.D. Salinger and the plot construction of the novel is presented.

In the second chapter "**Cornucopia of Love**" the thematic development of the motive of alienation and theme of love and death are highlighted.

In the third chapter "**Estrangement and Ameliorative vista**" the causes for alienation and the healing methods to solve the problem are explored.

In the fourth chapter "**Resistance to Maturity**" how the protagonist copes up with the trials of adulthood and finally achieves happiness is discussed.

In the fifth chapter "**Summation**" all the important aspects in the preceding chapters are summarized.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

The American writings of the early seventeenth century were mainly valuable as a study in origins and understood America's early experience. The Civil War was one of the great significance in the history of the Nation. The few decades between the Civil War and the First World War had incredible changes witnessed in American life which gave birth to changes in literature.

The political writings of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine was notable during the period of revolution. The nation's first novel was published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. William Hill Brown published *The Power of Sympathy* in 1791. In 1836, Ralph Waldo Emerson started an influential movement known as Transcendentalism. It was a philosophical movement that developed in the late 1820s and 1830s in the eastern United States. It arose as a reaction to protest against the general state of intellectualism and spirituality at that time. Henry Thoreau was inspired by that movement and wrote *Walden* which celebrated individualism and nature and urged resistance to the dictation of organized society. There was also a movement called abolitionism in the United States before and during the American Civil War to end slavery. The political conflict surrounding abolitionism inspired the writings of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

During the twentieth century, there was a diverse field covering a variety of genres. In the mid nineteenth century, Nathaniel Hawthorne published his masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel about adultery. He influenced Herman Melville, who was notable for his works *Moby - Dick* and *Billy Budd*. America's greatest poets of the nineteenth century were Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson.

Mark Twain was the first major American writer to be born away from the East Coast. Henry James put American literature on the international map with the novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. Experimentalism in style and form was seen in the works of Gertrude Stein.

American writers expressed disillusionment that followed World War I. The stories and novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald captured the mood of the 1920s and John Dos Passos wrote about war. Ernest Hemingway became famous with *The Sun also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms* and won the Nobel Prize in Literature. William Faulkner was remarkable for his novel *The Sound and the Fury*. American poetry reached a peak after World War I with writers Wallace Stevens, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Ezra Pound and E.E. Cummings. American drama attained international status at that time with the works of Eugene O' Neil, who won four Pulitzer Prizes and the Nobel Prize. In the mid-twentieth century, American drama was dominated by the work of playwrights Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. One of the Depression era writers were John Steinbeck and he was notable for his work *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Henry Miller assumed a distinct place in American literature in the 1930s when his semi-autobiographical novels were banned from the United States. From the end of World War II until the early 1970s many popular works of the modern literature were produced, like Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mark Twain's *Life on Mississippi*, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. American's involvement in World War II influenced the works such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, Joseph Heller's *Catch - 22* and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse - Five*.

Women's literature presents a unique view into the female American experience. America experienced many changes which followed the Civil War. The



country was in a period of transformation, political, economic, social and literary shifts. As the country emerged into the Industrial Revolution, female authors were forged a place for themselves in literary cannon. The feminist movement called into question the role of women in society and female authors responded by creating works which presented strong, self - reliant, intelligent women. During the twentieth century the women's suffrage movement reacted to the social, legal and political inequalities placed on women. Women's literature reflected the feminist movement through theme, characterization and situations. Works of Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman reveal women's individuality and speak out against social expectations of women. Louisa May Alcott created strong, self - reliant female characters which presented a new definition of the role of women in America.

Feminine literature of the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century served the purpose to present the readers with realistic views of women's intellect, desires and potential range which was far beyond the limitations of submissive domestic life. Both female and male writers of the period used realism to create stories that accurately depicted American life. Women's literature embraced this form of writing as a means to convey regionalism beyond their male counterparts. The famous women writers of early American literature and their works were Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*, Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. Women's literature which represented life were Edith Wharton's *The Other Two*, Kate Chopin's *Desiree's Baby* and the Native American stories of Sarah Winnemucca *Life Among the Piutes* and *Impressions of an Indian Childhood* by Zitkala's Sa. Female works center more on the family than their contemporaries.



Literature by male writers often focussed less on family and more on broader social issues such as war, as in Ambrose Bierce's *An Occurrence at Owl Creech Bridge* and racism as in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a strong naturalist movement emerged that comprised of the American writers such as Edith Wharton, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London. Jack London's *To Build a Fire* or Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* and Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground* were considered works of Naturalism.

One among the twentieth century American writers was J.D. Salinger. He was born as Jerome David Salinger on January 1, 1919 in Manhattan, New York, United States. His father, Sol Salinger, sold kosher cheese and was from a Jewish family of Lithuanian descent, his own father had been the rabbi for the Adath Jeshurun Congregation in Louisville, Kentucky. Salinger's mother, Marie, was born in Atlantic, Iowa, of German, Irish and Scottish descent, but changed her name to Miriam and considered herself Jewish after she married Salinger's father. He did not learn that his mother was not of Jewish ancestry until just after he celebrated his bar mitzvah. Bar mitzvah was the initiation ceremony of a Jewish boy who had reached the age of thirteen and was regarded ready to observe religious precepts and eligible to take part in public worship. He had one sibling, an older sister, Doris.

In youth, Salinger attended public schools on the West Side of Manhattan. Then in 1932, the family moved to Park Avenue and Salinger was enrolled at the McBurney School, a nearby private school. Salinger had trouble to fit in, at his new school and took measures to conform, such as to call himself Jerry. His family called him Sonny. At McBurney, he managed the fencing team, wrote for the school newspaper and appeared in plays. He showed 'an innate talent for drama', though his

father opposed his idea of him to become an actor. His parents then enrolled him at Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He began to write stories under the covers at night, with the aid of a flashlight. Salinger was the literary editor of the class yearbook, *Crossed Sabres*. He also participated in the Glee Club, Aviation Club, French Club and the Non - Commissioned Officers Club.

In the fall of 1938, Salinger attended Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pennsylvania and wrote a column called 'skipped diploma', which included more reviews. He dropped out after one semester. In 1939, Salinger attended the Columbia University School of General Studies, where he took a writing class taught by Whit Burnett, long - time editor of story magazine. According to Burnett, Salinger did not distinguish himself until a few weeks before the end of the second semester, at which point he suddenly came to life and completed three stories. Burnett told Salinger that his stories were skilful and accomplished, to accept 'The Young Folks'. It was a brief evocative description about several aimless youths, for publication in story. Salinger's debut short story was published in the magazine's March - April 1940 issue. Burnett became Salinger's mentor and they corresponded for several years.

His career had started to take off, but like so many young American men around this time, World War II interrupted his life. Followed by the attack on Pearl Harbour, Salinger was drafted into the army, serving from 1942 - 44. His short military career saw him land at Utah Beach in France during the Normandy invasion and be a part of the action at the Battle of the Bulge. During this time, Salinger continued to write and assembled chapters for a new novel whose main character was a deeply unsatisfied young man named Holden Caulfield.

Salinger did not escape the war without some trauma and when it ended he was hospitalized after he had suffered a nervous breakdown. While he underwent care at



the hospital he met a woman named Sylvia, a German and a former Nazi. The two married but their union was a short one, just eight months long. He married a second time in 1955 to Claire Douglas, the daughter of high profile British art critic Robert Langdon Douglas. The couple was together for a little more than a decade and had two children, Margaret and Matthew.

When Salinger returned to New York in 1946, he quickly set about to resume his life as a writer and soon found his work published in his favourite magazine, "The New Yorker". He also continued to push on with the work on his novel. Finally, in 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* was published. The book earned its share of positive reviews, but there were some critics. But over time the American reading public ate the book up and *The Catcher in the Rye* became an integral part of academic literature curriculum. To date, the book had sold more than 65 million copies.

Along the way the main character of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* Caulfield had become as entrenched in the American psyche as much as any fictional character. Mark David Chapman, the man who assassinated John Lennon was found with a copy of the book at the time of his arrest and later explained that reason for the shoot could be found in the book's pages. Not surprisingly, the novel vaulted Salinger to a level of unrivalled literary fame. For the young writer, who had fiercely boasted in college about his talents, the success he had seemingly craved early in life had become something he ran away from once it came.

In 1953, two years after the publication of *Catcher*, Salinger pulled up stakes in New York City and retreated to a secluded, 90 - acre place in Cornish, New Hampshire. There, Salinger did his best to cut - off contact with the public and significantly slowed his literary output. To the dismay of many anxious readers, *Hapworth* was the last Salinger piece ever to be published while he was still alive.



Despite Salinger's best efforts, not all of his works remained private. In 1966, Claire Douglas sued for divorce, with the report that if the relationship continued it would seriously injure her health and endanger her reason. Six years later Salinger found himself in another relationship, this time with a college fresh one named Joyce Maynard, whose story, "An 16 - year - old looks back on life" had appeared in *The New York Time Magazine* and caught the interest of the older writer.

The two lived together in Cornish for ten months before Salinger kicked her out. In 1998 Maynard wrote about her time that Salinger in a salacious memoir painted a control and obsessive portrait of her former lover. A year later, Maynard auctioned off a series of letters Salinger had written her while they were still together. The letters fetched \$ 156,500. The buyer, a computer programmer, later returned them to Salinger as a gift. In 2000, Salinger's daughter Margaret wrote an equally negative account of her father that like Maynard's earlier book was met with mixed reviews. For Salinger other relationships followed his affair with Maynard and for some time he dated the actress Ellen Joyce. Later he married a young nurse named Colleen O'Neil. The two were married up until his death on January 27, 2010, at his home in Cornish.

Despite the lack of published work over the last four decades of his life, Salinger continued to write. Those who knew him said he worked every day and speculation turned about the amount of work that he may have finished. One estimate says that there may be as many as ten finished novels locked away in his house. In 2013, a new light was shed on Salinger's life and work. Shane Salerno and David Shields published a biography of the famed writer entitled *Salinger*. One of its revelations was that there were about five unpublished works by Salinger that were scheduled to be released over the next few years. An obituary about the author J.D.

Salinger referred to an element which was incorrect in the plot of his short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish". The character Seymour Glass commits suicide while on his vacation with his wife. The obituary also misstated the name of the yearbook at Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania, for which Mr. Salinger was literary editor when he was a student there. It was Crossed Sabres not Crossed Swords. And the obituary referred incorrectly to a work he had written while at Valley Forge. It was a poem that was later set to music but it was not a school song.

*The Catcher in the Rye* was set around the 1950s and was narrated by a young man named Holden Caulfield. Holden was not specific about his location while he narrated the story, but makes it clear that he was to undergo a treatment in a mental hospital or sanatorium. The events he narrated took place in few days between the end of the fall school term and Christmas, when Holden was sixteen years old.

Holden's story began on a Saturday which followed the end of classes at the Pencey private school in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. Pencey was Holden's fourth school he had already failed out of three others. At Pencey, he has failed four out of five of his classes and had received notice that he was being expelled, but he was not scheduled to return home to Manhattan until Wednesday. He went to visit his elderly history teacher, Spencer, to say goodbye, but when Spencer tried to reprimand him for his poor academic performance, Holden was annoyed.

Back in the dormitory, Holden was further irritated by his unhygienic neighbour, Ackley and by his own roommate, Stradlater. Stradlater used to spend his evenings on a date with Jane Gallagher, a girl whom Holden used to date and whom he still admires. During the course of the evening, Holden grew increasingly nervous about Stradlater's take with Jane out and when Stradlater returned, Holden questioned him insistently about whether he tried to have sex with her. Stradlater teased Holden,



who fled into rage and attacked Stradlater. Stradlater pinned Holden down and bloodied his nose. Holden decided that he'd had enough of Pencey and will go to Manhattan three days early, stay in a hotel and not tell his parents that he had come back.

On the train to New York, Holden met the mother of one of his fellow Pencey students. Though he thought that the student was a complete 'bastard', he told the woman made - up stories about how well respected he was at school. When he arrived at Penn Station, he went into a phone booth and considered calling several people, but for various reasons he decided against it. He got in a cab and asked the cab driver where the ducks in Central Park go when the lagoon freezes, but his question annoyed the driver. Holden had the cab driver taken him to the Edmont Hotel, where he checked himself in.

From his room at the Edmont, Holden could see into the rooms of some of the guests in the opposite wing. He observed a man put on silk stockings, high heels, a bra, a corset and an evening gown. He also saw a man and a woman in another room, took turns to spit mouthfuls of their drinks into each other's faces and laughed hysterically. He interpreted the couple's behaviour as a form of sexual play and was both upset and aroused by it. After they had smoked a couple of cigarettes, he called Faith Cavendish, a woman he had never met but whose number he got from an acquaintance at Princeton. Holden thought he remembered of having heard that she had used to be a stripper and he believed that he could persuade her to have sex with him. He called her and though she was at first annoyed to be called such a late hour by a complete stranger, she eventually suggested that they would meet the next day. Holden doesn't want to wait that long and hung up without an arrangement for a meet.



Holden went downstairs to the Lavender Room and sat at a table, but the waiter realized he was a minor and refused to serve him. He was flirting three women in their thirties who seemed to be like they were from out of town and were mostly interested in to catch a glimpse of a celebrity. Nevertheless, Holden danced with them but felt that he was 'half in love' with the blonde one, after he saw how well she danced. After he had made some witty remark about her age, they left and let him pay entirely.

As Holden went out to the lobby, he started to think about Jane Gallagher and in a flashback, recounted how he got to know her. They met while they spent a summer vacation in Maine, played golf and checkers and held hands at the movies. One afternoon, during a game of checkers, her stepfather came onto the porch where they played and when he left, Jane began to cry. Holden had moved to sit beside her and kissed her all over her face, but she wouldn't let him kiss her on the mouth.

Holden left the Edmont and took a cab to Ernie's jazz club in Greenwich Village. He again asked the cab driver where the ducks in Central Park go in the winter and this driver was even irritable than the first one. Holden sat alone at a table in Ernie's and observed the other patrons with distaste. He ran into Lillian Simmons, one of his older brother's former girl friend, who invited him to sit with her and her date. Holden said he had to meet someone, left the place and walked back to the Edmont.

Maurice, the elevator operator at the Edmont, offered to send a prostitute to Holden's room for five dollars and Holden agreed. A young woman, identified herself as "Sunny", arrived at his door. She pulled off her dress, but Holden started to feel peculiar and tried to make conversation with her. He claimed that he recently underwent a spinal operation and wasn't sufficiently recovered to have sex with her,

but offered to pay her anyway. She sat on his lap and spoke dirty to him, but he insisted to pay her five dollars and showed her the door. Sunny returned with Maurice, who demanded another five dollars from Holden. When Holden refused to pay, Maurice punched him in the stomach and left him on the floor, while Sunny took five dollars from his wallet. Holden went to bed.

Holden woke up at 10 o' clock on Sunday and called Sally Hayes, an attractive girl whom he had dated in the past. They arranged to meet for a matinee show of a Broadway play. He ate breakfast at a sandwich bar, where he conversed with two nuns about Romeo and Juliet. He gave the nuns ten dollars. He tried to telephone Jane Gallagher, but her mother answered the phone and he hung up. He took a cab to Central Park to look for his younger sister, Phoebe, but she wasn't there. He helped one of Phoebe's schoolmates tighten her skate and the girl tells him that Phoebe might be in the Museum of Natural History. Though he knew that Phoebe's class wouldn't be at the museum on a Sunday, he went there anyway, but when he got there he decided not to go in and instead took a cab to the Biltmore Hotel to meet Sally.

Holden and Sally went to the play and Holden was annoyed that Sally talked with a boy she knew from Andover afterward. At Sally's suggestion, they go to Radio City to ice skate. They both skated poorly and decided to get a table instead. Holden tried to explain to Sally why he was unhappy at school and actually urged her to run away with him to Massachusetts or Vermont and live in a cabin. When she refused, he called her a 'pain in the ass' and laughed at her when she reacted angrily. She refused to listen to his apologies and left.

Holden called Jane again, but there was no answer. He called Carl Luce, a young man who had been Holden's student advisor at the Whooton School and who was now a student at Columbia University. Luce had spoken frankly with some of the



boys about sex and Holden tried to draw him into a conversation about it once more. Luce grows irritated by Holden's juvenile remarks about homosexuals and about Luce's Chinese girlfriend and he made an excuse to leave early. Holden continued to drink Scotch and listened to the pianist and singer.

Quite drunk, Holden telephoned Sally Hayes and blabbered about their Christmas Eve plans. Then he went to the lagoon in Central Park, where he used to watch the ducks as a child. It took him a long time to find it and by the time he does, he was freezing in cold. He then decided to sneak into his own apartment building and woke his sister, Phoebe. He was forced to admit to Phoebe that he was kicked out of school, which made her mad at him. When he tried to explain why he hated the school, she accused him of not to like anything. He told her his fantasy of being "the catcher in the rye", a person who catches little children as they are about to fall off of a cliff. Phoebe told him that he had misremembered the poem that he took the image from: Robert Burn's poem said "if a body meets a body, coming through the rye" (186), not "catch a body".

Holden called his former English teacher, Mr. Antolini, who told Holden to come to his apartment. Mr. Antolini asked Holden about his expulsion and tried to counsel him about his future. Holden couldn't hide his sleepiness and Mr. Antolini puts him to bed on the couch. Holden awakened to find Mr. Antolini struck his forehead. Thinking that Mr. Antolini is making a homosexual overture, Holden hastily excused himself and left, for he slept a few hours on a bench at Grand Central Station.

Holden goes to Phoebe's school and sent her a note, said that he was to leave home for good and that she should meet him at lunchtime at the museum. When Phoebe arrived, she carried a suitcase full of clothes and she asked Holden to take her with him. He refused angrily and she cried and then refused to speak to him. Knowing



she will follow him, he walked to the zoo and then took her across the park to a carousel. He bought her a ticket and watched her ride it. It started to rain heavily, but Holden was so happy to watch his sister ride the carousel that he was close to tears.

Holden ended his narrative here, telling the reader that he was not going to tell the story of how he went home and got 'sick'. He planned to go to a new school in the fall and was cautiously optimistic about his future.

*The Catcher in the Rye* had sold widely in the US, as well as across cultures, a particularly challenging feat given that book was written in American slang and hence not easy to translate into other languages without further loss of meaning. Its popularity came despite the fact that most early critics did not recognize the work's enduring appeal. *The Catcher in the Rye* had found new audiences in each generation, particularly among people close to Holden in age who could adopt the novel to fit their own experiences.

## Chapter Two

### Cornucopia of Love

Many of J.D. Salinger's novels, had a recurring theme of the loss of innocence of children, the falling and the confusions of childhood and many other ideas that applied to the ideas of adolescence and the life of average teenager growing up. The idea of love was also a major theme that arose in many of his characters and that indicated the character of the individual. He used 'love' in the context of being a device that was used to protect and care for people who needed it.

The quest to find the true love of people was an ongoing dilemma in the lives of many people all throughout the world. The constant need for love was overwhelmed and the tragedy of Salinger's great world was the fact that some people did not find the proper love that they deserved. Holden Caulfield was a perfect example of strive to acquire love all throughout his life.

Throughout the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* Holden Caulfield alienated himself from everyone and the world because he could not fit in with the expectations of his peers and the world around him. Holden was faced with denial and rejection from all quarters. Holden perceived his loneliness and isolation and wanted to break the confines of his alienation by making some form of human connection. Alienation both protected and harmed Holden. It protected him by ensuring that he would not ever had to form connections with the other people that might wind up causing awkwardness, rejection or the sort of intense emotional pain he felt when his brother Allie died. Just as Holden wore his hunting cap as a sign of independence, separation and protection from the world, he created his own alienation for the same purpose, the problem, though, was that Holden was human. He might have wished that he didn't

need human contact, but he did. So while his alienation protected him, it also severely harmed him, making him intensely lonely and depressed.

While everyone else was off at the game, Holden was isolated, aloof and watched people instead of connecting with them. Instead of watching the game with the other spectators, he watched by himself on top of Thomsen Hill. "I remember around three o'clock that afternoon, I was standing way the hell up on top of Thomsen Hill" (3).

Accordingly, Holden was simply to express an innocent, incapable of genuine hatred. Holden did not suffer from the inability of love, but did not despair to find a place to bestow his love. Holden Caulfield had the need to allocate his cornucopia of love for people. Holden sought 'Virtue Second of love'. He wanted to be good. When the little children were playing in the rye-field on the cliff top, Holden wanted to be the one who caught them before they fell off of a cliff. He was not driven towards honour or courage, was not driven towards love of woman. But rather Holden was driven towards love of his fellowman. There was no tragic influence towards Holden and also seek circularity in his life.

I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damned nice, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there . . . . (229).

Holden revealed in the virtues of softness of the edges, a roundness that could not hurt anyone. He found a comfort in the circular motions of the carousel.

All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe and I was sort of afraid she might fall off the god dam horse,



but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with the kids is, if they want to grab the gold ring, you have to let them to do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off but it's bad if you say anything to do . . . . (124).

The pure innocence of children and the gold rings portrayed a sort of round goal that children seek and reached for. The true symbolism was realized only towards the end of the novel. Holden also sought the truth from people in general, reaching for the one theme left in the world, innocence. One kind of bitter truth he did not seek was phoniness. In this he means, the people losing innocence or people who already lost innocence, or has fallen from the cliff.

Holden felt isolated partly because he lived in such a confined circle. All his schoolmates were rich, privileged kids with narrow worldviews, but he was also too rich and privileged to connect with anyone who wasn't a rich, privileged kids. Holden seemed to be in excluded form and victimized by the world around him. As he said to Mr. Spencer, he felt trapped on the other side of life and he continually attempted to find his way in a world in which he felt he doesn't belong. The truth was that interactions with other people usually confused and overwhelmed him and his cynical sense of superiority served as a type of self - protection. Thus, Holden's alienation was the source of what little stability he had in life.

Holden's alienation was the cause of most of his pain. He never addressed his own emotions directly, nor did he attempt to discover the source of his troubles. He desperately needed human contact and love, but his protective wall of bitterness prevented him for looking for such interaction. Alienation was both the source of Holden's strength and the source of his problems. His loneliness propelled him into

his date with Sally Hayes, but he was too frightened to make any real effort to contact her. He depended on his alienation, but it destroyed him.

Holden invented a fantasy that adulthood was a world of superficiality and hypocrisy while childhood was a world of innocence, curiosity and honesty. Nothing revealed his image of these two worlds better than his fantasy about *The Catcher in the Rye*. *The Catcher in the Rye* was a game in which a person who caught little children as they were about to fall off of cliff. He imagined childhood as an idyllic field of rye in which children romp and play. Adulthood, for the children of this world, was equivalent to death, a fatal fall over the edge of a cliff. His created understandings of childhood and adulthood allowed Holden to cut himself off from the world by covering himself with protective armour of cynicism. But as the book progressed, Holden experienced, particularly his encounters with Mr. Antolini and Phoebe, the shallowness of his conceptions. Holden's secret goal was to be *The Catcher in the Rye*. He envisioned a field of rye and stood by a dangerous cliff. Children played in the field with joy. If they should come too close to the edge of the cliff, Holden was there to catch them. His attitude seemed to shift near the end of the novel when he realized that Phoebe and other children must be allowed to 'grab for the gold ring', to choose their own risks and take them, even though their attempts may be dangerous.

'Phoniness' which was probably the most famous phrase from *The Catcher in the Rye*, was one of Holden's favourite concepts. It was his catch - all for describing the superficiality, hypocrisy, pretension and shallowness that he encountered in the world around him. In Chapter 22, just before he revealed his fantasy of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden explained that adults were inevitably phonies and what was worse was that they couldn't see their own phoniness. Lying



and deception were the most obvious hurtful elements of the larger category of phoniness. Holden's definition of phoniness relies mostly on a kind of self-deception: he seemed to reserve the most scorn for people who think that they were something they were not or who refused to acknowledge their own weaknesses but lying to others was also a kind of phoniness, a type of deception that indicated insensitivity, callousness or even cruelty. Of course, Holden himself was guilty of both these crimes. His random repeated lying highlights his own self-deception. He refused to acknowledge his own shortcomings and was unwilling to consider how his behaviour affected those around him. Through his lying and deception, Holden proved that he was just as guilty of phoniness as the people he criticized. "One of the biggest reasons I left Elkton Hills was because I was surrounded by phonies. That's all. They were coming in the goddamn window" (60). Phoniness, for Holden, stood as an emblem of everything that was wrong in the world around him and provided an excuse for him to withdraw into his cynical isolation.

Though oversimplified, Holden's observations were not entirely inaccurate. He could be a highly insightful narrator and he was very aware of superficial behaviour in those around him. Throughout the novel he encountered many characters whom were seen affected, pretentious or superficial. Sally Hayes, Carl Luce, Maurice and Sunny were genuinely harmful. But although Holden expended so much energy in search for phoniness in others, he never directly observed his own phoniness. His deceptions were generally pointless and cruel and he noted that he was a compulsive liar. On the train to New York, he accomplished a mean-spirited and needles prank on Mrs. Morrow. He'd like the readers to believe that he was an exemplary of virtue in a world of phoniness, but that simply wasn't the case. Although he would have liked to believe that the world was a simple place and that virtue and innocence rest



on one side of the fence while superficiality and phoniness rest on the other. He himself was his own counter evidence. The world was not as simple as he would have liked and needed it to be. Even he could not adhere to the same black and white standards with which he judged other people.

Holden's loneliness, a more concrete manifestation of his alienation problem, was a driving force throughout the book. Most of the novel described his almost maniac quest for companionship as he flit from one meaningless encounter to another. Yet, while his behaviour indicated his loneliness, Holden consistently shies away from introspection and thus doesn't really know why he kept behaving as he does. Because Holden depended on his isolation to preserve his detachment from the world and to maintain a level of self - protection, he often sabotaged his own attempts to end his loneliness. His conversation with Carl Luce and his date with Sally Hayes were made unbearable by his rude behaviour. His calls to Jane Gallagher were aborted to protect his precious and fragile sense of individuality. Loneliness was the emotional manifestation of the alienation Holden experienced. It was both a source of great pain and a source of his security.

Relationships, intimacy and sexuality were also recurring motifs relating to the larger theme of alienation. Both physical and emotional relationships offered Holden the opportunity to break out of his isolated shell. They also represented what he feared most about the adult world: complexity and predictability, and potential for conflict and change. As he demonstrated at the Museum of Natural History, Holden liked the world to be silent as frozen, predictable and unchanging. As he watched Phoebe sleep, Holden projects his own idealizations of childhood onto her. But in real-world relationships, people talk back and Phoebe revealed how different her childhood was from Holden's romanticized notion. For intricate and unspoken

reasons, seemingly stemming from Allie's death, Holden had trouble to deal with this kind of complexity. As a result, he had isolated himself and feared intimacy. Although he encountered opportunities for both physical and emotional intimacy, he bungled them all, wrapped himself in a psychological armor of critical cynicism and bitterness. Even so, Holden desperately showed continuous search for new relationships, always undoing himself only at the last moment.

*The Catcher in the Rye* was a novel about a young character's growth to maturity. Holden Caulfield was an unusual protagonist and it was because his central goal was to resist the process of maturity itself. As his thoughts about the Museum of Natural History demonstrate, Holden feared change and was overwhelmed by complexity. He wanted everything to be easily understandable and eternally fixed, like the statues of Eskimos and Indians in the museum. He was frightened because he was guilty of the sins he criticized in others and because he couldn't understand everything around him. But he refused to acknowledge this fear, expressing it only in a few instances. When he talked about sex he admitted that "Sex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't" (68).

The dominated theme of *The Catcher in the Rye* was the protection of innocence of children. Holden seemed this as a primary virtue. It was very closely related to his struggle against growing up. Holden's enemy was the adult world and the cruelty and artificiality that it entailed. The people he admired all represented or protected innocence. He thought of Jane Gallagher, not as a maturing young woman but as the girl with whom he used to play checkers. He went out of his way to tell the readers that he and Jane had no sexual relationship. Quite sweetly, they usually just held hands. Holden comforted Jane when she was distressed and it bothered him that



Jane might have been subjected to sexual advances from her drunken stepfather or from her date, Holden's roommate, Stradlater.

Death was another consistent theme in the novel. It was continually implied by the presence of Holden's younger brother's spirit, even though Allie had been dead for about three years. When Holden feared for his own existence, such as when he felt that he might disappear, he spoke to Allie. He was haunted by the thought of Allie in the rainy cemetery surrounded by tombstones and dead people. Holden associated death with the mutability of time. He wished that everything could just stay the way it was, that time could stand still, when something beautiful happens. When he compared this to the displays under glass at the museum, Holden seemed to be rejecting life itself. Life is change. Aging and mutability were inevitable. It wasn't just that society wanted Holden to grow up. His own biological clock that eventually would have resulted in old age and death. He also resisted simply growing up. Although the readers might have admired his candour and even sometimes identified with his adolescent wish, the readers were left to conclude that Holden's way led to considerable frustration and eventually madness.

Holden's aesthetics were entertaining, but they also told the readers a good deal about his worldview. He sees much of life as conflict between the authentic and the artificial, which was directly related to his attitude towards children and his resistance to the adult world. When Holden saw the 6 - year - old child march down the street and singing, "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (186), he was uplifted because of the authenticity. The boy was not trying to please anyone. He merely expressed his passion of the moment. His brother's short stories fall into the same category. They were quiet, private, an author's expression of his own truth without concern for reward. Estelle Fletcher, the black artist who sang 'Little Shirley



Beans' on the recording that Holden bought for Phoebe, was another adult who got it right. Holden liked her jazz style and said she "sings it very Dixieland and whorehouse and it doesn't sound at all mushy" (165). He appreciated the fact that she avoided sentimentality and didn't care the audience by making the song sound cute as hell.

On the other hand, when Ernie played his piano at his nightclub in Greenwich Village or when Holden's elder brother wrote screenplays for Hollywood or when various actors compromised their talents to please an audience, Holden couldn't withstand it. Those adult manipulations were, for him, the same as prostitution. The artists had sold out- for money or fame or just for applause. Nor could he tolerate what he saw as emotional manipulations in literature. Romance magazines with 'lean - jawed guys named David' and 'a lot of phony girls named Linda or Marcia' usually set Holden to 'puking', although he did sometimes read them on the train. Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, which had a great reputation as an antiwar novel, also struck him as manipulative and artificial. So did most films, especially sentimental war films. In the end, he seemed to distrust the corrupted potential of the relationship between artist and audience, especially among adults. Thus this chapter had explored the theme of alienation in all possible manners and also provided the idea to overcome alienation.

## Chapter Three

### Estrangement and Ameliorative vista

J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, a novel published originally for adult readers illustrated the solitude of the young male narrator, Holden Caulfield. He became physically, intellectually and emotionally detached from the society because of his overly reflective personality.

Aside from the fact that he made many informal remarks, he wrote his story from a mental asylum or sanatorium. The introduction of Holden in the novel indicated his alienation from society as he described his present location. "I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run - down and had to come out here and it took it easy" (1). Alienation referred to the state of one's isolation from society or a particular culture. This usually referred to a person who had peculiar and unusual personality which forced him or her to become alienated from a certain group. Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* was considered to be alienated from society because of his non - conformist attitude. Holden had alienated himself from society because of his belief that he was different from them. J.D. Salinger presented his character as separated from the normal society in the emotional, mental or psychological aspects. This way of characterizing Caulfield enabled the readers to fully put themselves in the situation of the characters. It was also important to note that the novel was consistent in providing the point of view of Caulfield alone. Therefore, readers were more emotionally involved and attached with the character. Caulfield was also considered to be not the typical type of hero but more like an anti - hero who was able to gain the sympathy of the readers.



The mental state of Caulfield had clearly distanced him from the regularities of his society. Nonetheless, Caulfield was an intellectual. He was an intelligent young man who had a lot of reflective ideas and frank concepts about life. He was fond of philosophizing and pondering about certain issues even the minute detail. His beliefs were usually against conformity. He did not conform to what the society dictated and most of the time he even despised people's behaviour. For an instance, Caulfield talked to Sally about cars and provided the readers some insights about how he perceived people who bought cars upon buying several months or weeks ago.

Holden's way of contemplating about things and issues made him an intelligent thinker who was very observant around his surroundings. His observation revealed the hypocrisy and over consumerism of people. He was humanistic on the inside despite his seemingly continuous rage with other people. However, Holden's attitude towards life and humanity was always presented to be ambiguous as his thoughts were usually impulsive and spontaneous. Sometimes they could even be inconsistent such as his remark about war. "Anyway, I'm sort of glad they've got the atomic bomb invented. If there's ever another war, I'm going to sit right the hell on top of it. I'll volunteer for it, I swear to God I will" (152).

Another suspect that showed his alienations was that Caulfield also spoke much about death. Death was a phenomenon that every man had to go through alone. Therefore it was reasonable to assume that someone who talked about it in lighter and positive way had the tendency to embrace life as an individual who could strive by himself. By means of pondering about the thoughts of death, Caulfield was able to transcend the message of isolation to the readers. His unconventional way of speaking to the readers and voicing out his opinions made him a very different person to



converse with. He spoke of his death as something which he was not afraid of. Most of the time, people who thought this way were constructed to be mentally fit.

Salinger, as the author and reflection of Holden Caulfield, had also preferred reclusion from celebrity. In a brief biography of Salinger, it was discovered that he gave up the privileges of fame, wealth and recognition as he decided to leave New York and move to the country side where he could live his life in seclusion. Despite, Salinger's constant denial that Caulfield was an autobiographical character who represented a life aspect of Salinger himself there were similarities between Salinger and Caulfield's attitudes and views towards life. It was quite reasonable to say that Caulfield's alienation from society was his own defence mechanism to protect himself from the hypocrisies and phoniness of the world.

The concept of therapeutic landscape or 'healing places' had attracted considerable attention in health geography and in recent years, several studies have shown its potential. However, the concept was often considered outside of most people's everyday experiences, though sacred pilgrimages, spas and hospitals attract people in search of healing.

The story told in *The Catcher in the Rye* followed a few days in the life of 16 – year - old Holden Caulfield, based on his account to a psychiatrist while in a mental hospital. The account started with Holden's last day at a Pennsylvania Prep school (Pencey Prep) after flunking out. Following the tense changes with his roommates, he left in the middle of the night and travelled to New York City, where his family lived. He avoided seeing his parents because the end of the school year was not for a couple more days. In the mean time, his problems seemed increasingly out of control. Many of the mundane things in life presented the greatest problems for Holden - the affected ways that people talk or act and his feeling of not belonging in the society around

him. He dreamt of dropping out of society and clings to the memory of his brother Allie, who died of leukaemia as a child.

As the book progressed, Holden felt worse and worse, fainted and worried that he was going to disappear or die out of cancer. Near the end of the book, Holden returned to his parents, in a scene that was left to the imagination of the reader. On the final page, the narrative shifted abruptly to the mental hospital where Holden was now a patient. He never mentioned his medical diagnosis except for comments interspersed throughout the text about being a 'madman' or 'crazy'. However, it appeared that his health had improved, at least through the perspective of the mental hospital, since he would be allowed to go to school in the autumn.

Holden's decline in health might seem like an exceptional case, far removed from most people's everyday experience. However, *The Catcher in the Rye* included everyday concerns and thoughts that have resonated well with many people, such as the difficulty fitting into a world that seemed 'phony', the awkward transition between childhood and adulthood and even the idiosyncrasies of different people's mannerisms and speech. Because of Salinger's talent at portraying the awkwardness of the everyday, the novel provided an especially useful foundation for thinking about therapeutic landscapes in the context of daily life. Therapeutic landscapes were part of Holden's real and imagined geographies- the mental hospital, a field of rye, a museum, a cabin camp and were woven thoroughly into his identity. The spaces that he described might be fictive for the reader and real or fictive to varying extents for Salinger.

The concept of a therapeutic landscape could at first seem like an odd pairing with *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden Caulfield's ideal spaces were not directly concerned with health. Nonetheless, his ideal spaces, both real and imaginary, were



therapeutic landscapes. They were alternatives to the problems he faced in life, problems that embodied in his declining state of mental and physical health. Literally sickened by his transition between and adulthood, he dreamt of unambiguous spaces that were free of everything that could spoil innocence. The identity of his later brother Allie would always be as that of a child. Holden might move on in life, but it was not easy to leave his own childhood behind. Holden's reality was a mixture of childhood and adulthood, even down to his appearance. As he explained to the reader:

It's really ironical, because I'm six foot two and a half and I have gray hair. I really do. The one side of my head-the right side-is full of millions of gray hairs. I've had them ever since I was a kid. (9)

He tried to use the partial appearance of adulthood to his advantage, by standing up to show his height when ordering drinks or showing the bartender his gray hair in order to look like an adult. Similarly, in trying to pick up a woman over the telephone, he deepened his voice so that she would think that he was an adult. It was this state of togetherness that characterized his life. Yet, although he wanted some of the perks of adulthood, his ideal reality was to be an innocent child again. Holden's escape from society was symbolized through the imaginary landscapes that he wanted to be real. He wanted to preserve innocence, existing without defilement in his imagination. Holden described his dream of being a catcher in a field of rye to his little sister Phoebe:

Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around- nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they're running and they don't look where



they're going. I have to come out from somewhere and catch them.  
(186)

The field of rye was a rigidly defined space within which no adults were allowed. The children could not cross the boundaries outside of this space, so they remained playing in an open field, with Holden's role in life as their protector. By keeping the children from falling off of the cliff, he made sure that they remained innocent in an area that was not defiled by adults.

Similarly, in another imagined space, Holden saw himself as a protector of innocence by escaping society to live in a cabin. The general location was apparently unimportant, since it varied without reason from one part of the story to another, including cabins in Massachusetts, Vermont, Colorado and less specifically 'west'. Among other assumed identities, he imagined pretending to be a deaf mute, free from 'any goddam stupid useless conversations' and living in a cabin camp in the West:

I'd build it right near the woods, but not right in them, because I'd want it to be sunny as hell all the time. I'd cook all my own food, and later on, if I wanted to get married or something, I'd meet this beautiful girl that was also a deaf - mute and we'd get married . . . If we had any children, we'd hide them somewhere. We could buy them a lot of books and teach them how to read and write by ourselves. (214)

Again, Holden was envisioning an ideal space in which he would not be confronted by anything that he deemed objectionable. He and his wife would protect the children from all of the problems of society. As Holden explained later, 'I'd have this rule that nobody could do anything phony, they couldn't stay'. As with his goal of being a catcher in the rye, Holden was a protector of innocence who preserved rigid

and enforceable boundaries. In the cabin in the woods, he could find refuge from the defilement of innocence and by extension, his own declining health. While the cabin camp was not discussed directly as a healing place, it was a place where he would not find the defilement of innocence that led to his health problems, such as nausea, depression, loss of consciousness, hangover, problems with concentration and fear of disappearing. Holden could not be healthy if he was caught between preserving and losing innocence.

The idea of preserving spaces of the past was best understood through another therapeutic landscape, the Museum of Natural History. As a child, Holden would take a field trip to the museum each year, a place where the past would be preserved and on display for all to see. The children could still try to touch museum pieces without any negative consequences, since one of the guards would say, 'Don't touch anything, children', but he always said it in a nice voice, not like a goddam cop or anything. Thus, there were no consequences for testing boundaries in contrast to living in an adult world of responsibility consequences. The place and the historical artefacts in it would stay the same from one school year to the next. In Holden's explanation:

The only thing that would be different would be you. Not that you'd be so much older or anything it wouldn't be that, exactly. You'd just be different that's all. You'd have an overcoat on this time. Or the kid that was your partner last time had got scarlet fever and you'd have a new partner. (131)

Life would still change from year to year but without the consequence of losing childhood. Little wondered then that Holden decided that all of a sudden I wouldn't have gone inside for a million bucks. By his explanation, certain things they



should stay the way they were. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those with class cases and just leave them alone. He would now be too different to see the museum through the eyes of a child and the visit shattered his own memories of the place as an ideal landscape. For Holden, a reality from his childhood should stay as an imagination in his life now. That was the crux of the problem: how to stay a child without defiling childhood by his current reality.

The mental hospital where he ended up at the end of the story was an escape from this quandary, but not one of his choosing. He could not escape from defilement there. In fact, the hospital was located near Hollywood. For Holden, Hollywood was a place of pretence, one of the phoniest places in the world. That was why his therapy must have been taken place there. Part of Holden's cure was to realize that he could not remove the defilement, but instead must become part of the society that he rejected. Holden's psychoanalysis served as a tool for cementing his loss of innocence so that he would be more like everybody else. Indeed, Holden had now completed the transition away from innocence. He missed his innocence and everybody who was part of it. On the one hand, the mental hospital might in fact be the antithesis of a therapeutic landscape, since it was a place to let go innocence in favour of defilement. On the other hand, Holden was no longer in a state of togetherness, as his sickness was in the past.

To the end, this analysis of *The Catcher in the Rye* had led to a rethinking of the concept of therapeutic landscapes. For Holden, they were defiled if there was ambivalence and preserved as space of innocence and its defilement was not as easily accomplished in reality. It was still useful to try to find less ambivalent examples of therapeutic landscapes or to isolate the beneficial links between a particular space and a person's improvement in health. Nonetheless, to explore the concept of therapeutic



landscapes more thoroughly, there was a need to extend the concept into more difficult and contestable examples.

## Chapter Four

### Resistance to Maturity

*The Catcher in the Rye* presents Holden's account of his expulsion from Pencey Prep in Agerstown, Pennsylvania and his four - day return trip home. This was Holden's fourth expulsion from school and he was not unhappy and embarrassed. For he hated boys' schools as they promoted false values, like admiration for a football team which often made unethical plays to win. They appealed to boys with money and not necessarily intelligence and they breed pride. Holden recalled that at boys' school which he attended earlier a group of bullying schoolmates hounded a fellow student until he committed suicide to save his honour. According to Holden, Ackley, picked his pimples and had green, mossy teeth because he failed to brush them. Holden's roommate, the virile Stradlater was with a razor that was 'always rusty as hell and full of leather and hairs and crap'. Both Stradlater and Ackley thought only of themselves: Ackley interrupted Holden whenever he pleased and enjoyed telling him that he was expelled. Stradlater took a fiendish pride in implying he had made love to Jane Gallagher, a childhood sweetheart of Holden's who was pictured as a fine girl unknowingly victimized. Holden pictured other students less sharply, but they were much like Ernest Morrow, whose mother Holden met on a train:

Her son was doubtless the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey, in the whole crummy history of the school. He was always going down to the corridor, after he'd had a shower, snapping his soggy old wet at people's asses. That's exactly the kind of a guy he was. (58)

Against this rugged pride, malice and lack of ethics Holden fortified himself, but only precariously, for his defences were shallow ones. He knew his parents would

be angry with him, so he decided to spend a few days in New York City before going home. In New York, Holden endured several adventures before explaining to his only real friend, his sister, Phoebe, just what it was he believed in. This discovery of some moral identity did not save Holden from hospitalization.

At first, he labelled: everyone said Holden, was phony, even the aged instructor Spencer, who treated Holden with paternal kindness and his earlier counterpart Mr. Antolini, who treated Holden with a combination of comradely understanding and adult wisdom. When labels seemed useless to Holden, he buttressed his contempt with exaggeration or distortion, making the most minor of incidents major and dramatic. Another route away from the events he most disliked was lying:

I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. It's terrible.

(17)

But Holden was trapped in a far worse world than his exaggeration could produce. His comprehension of exaggeration seeped into him first when he dated Jane Gallagher for a summer. Jane was kind and loving and her athletic ability matched Holden's, on the tennis court, while her intellect could have held its own playing checkers. But the youthful Holden was shocked. He recalled for Stradlater:

Her mother and father were divorced. Her mother was married again to some booze hound . . . Skinny guy with hairy legs. I remember him. He wrote shorts all the time. Jane said he was supposed to be a playwright or some goddam thing, but all I ever saw him do was booze all the time and listen to every single goddam mystery program on the



radio. And run around the goddam house, naked. With Jane around, and all. (34)

Holden left Pencey Prep three school days before Christmas recess, because he could longer bear to remain. The hiatus between his arrival at home, a half-week later, he began to fill by taking a cheap hotel room. But he could not escape immortality:

I looked out the window for a while . . . . You'd be surprised what was going on . . . . I saw one guy, a gray - haired, very distinguished - looking guy with only his shorts on, do something you wouldn't believe me if I told you. First he put his suitcase on the bed. Then he took out all these women's clothes, and put them on. Real women's clothes - silk stockings, high - heeled shoes, brassiere and one of those corsets with the straps hanging down and all. Then he put on this very tight black evening dress. I swear to God. Then he started walking up and down the room, taking these very small steps, the way a woman does and smoking a cigarette and looking at himself in the mirror. He was all alone, too. (66)

Holden was rejected by a prostitute named Faith Cavendish and by bartenders who refused to serve him. He was even refused by Sally Hayes, an old girl friend who insisted Holden come trim their tree on Christmas Eve and who necked with him in the taxi on the way to a Sunday matinee. For even though he had bought tickets to see the Lunts because Sally liked the Lunts, she would not take a trip with him and found more delight during intermissions at the play in a socially correct boy from Amherst, a phony for Holden, than in Holden himself.

Holden battled his sense of futility and superficiality. He found some refuge in a red hunting cap he bought for a dollar and in the New York Historical Museum,

where he learned that the statues were still where they were when he went to grade school and would have probably always occupied the same places.

He also found some hope in his sister Phoebe, who, with Jane, was an object for him of truth, purity and love. But Holden broke the record he bought Phoebe. And when he decided to sneak home early to see her, even that visit failed. He was nervous that his parents would walk in and find him home before vacation was scheduled to begin. Moreover, Phoebe's questions led him to the self-revelation that his father, a lawyer, was no better than others who worshipped money and social convention. But though Phoebe was only ten, she was not content with her brother's easy dismissal of wrong as the province of others, his wholly negative attitude. The trouble with Holden, she told him in her youthful precocity, was that he didn't like anything that was happening. "You don't like any schools. You don't like a million things. You don't" (182), she asked him to name one thing he particularly liked. This was Holden's last refuge - this endearment of his sister's - and she gave him no comfort. For Holden was as phony at times as his objects of hatred. He attempted to make love to Sally Hayes, but when she told him his dreams of escape to the woods were unrealistic, he left her stranded in the snack bar at the Rockefeller Center skating rink. When he met Old Luce at the Wicker Bar, he tried to swagger through an adult role by slapping his friend on the back and insisted on stories of sexual exploits. He attempted to go to bed with two prostitutes and failed with both. Despite his height and his greying hair, he could not even get a drink and spent his Saturday night with a childish blonde and drinking cokes.

The odyssey of Holden Caulfield was a peculiar one. It was often humorous frequently satiric and sometimes poignant. The style was more accurate than offensive and the rhythm of the prose captured the new rhythm of the urban adolescent: it was



secretive, exaggerated, excited, frightened. Holden's search was for self - understanding and he never fully gained that. But in rejecting evil, he made a firm beginning. The problem was one of establishing goodness in a life which was deeper and more real than the apparent evil, which went beyond the complexity of convention and activity. It was Holden's tragedy that he saw evil sharply but only got glimpses of the good.

The difficulty with Salinger's characters was that evil was not only without, but within. The social forces of evil and immortality worked on their psyches until every children like Holden think only of running. It was with young people that an answer to the world of external evil and internal torment came for Salinger and the answer came in the persons of Holden Caulfield. Holden's brother Vincent said of him in "This Sandwich Has No Mayonnaise", that the people such as Holden could not "do anything but listen hectically to the maladjusted little apparatus for a heart". Yet it was exactly Holden's use of emotion that began to suggest an answer to his discouragement.

In the opening pages of *The Catcher in the Rye*, the elderly Mr. Spencer was trying to advise Holden by pointing out his failure to work, but

The funny thing is, though, I was sort of thinking something else . . . I was thinking about the lagoon in Central Park, down near Central Park South. I was wondering if it would be frozen over when I got home, and if it was, where did the ducks go. I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got all icy and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away. (13)



The concern was choric. In Chapters nine and twelve, Holden asked the taxi drivers what happened to the ducks and he finally got to the pond to see for himself. Throughout the novel, his compassion made life bearable for him. He was angered because Mr. Spencer humiliated him by reading a poor exam of his, but he reverts by feeling sorry for a man who cared as much as "old Spencer" for an ancient Indian blanket. Stradlater was "too sexy", but he was handsome. Ackley was bothersome, but Holden felt sorry for him because he knew loneliness. Holden lied to Mrs. Morrow on the train by telling her that her towel-snapping son was "one of the most popular boys at Pencey. Did you know that?" He feared going home, not because he had failed at his fourth school, but because "it drives my mother crazy. . . I hated like hell for her to know I got the ax again" (116). He was quick to note that he embarrassed a roommate at Elkton Hills with his more expensive suitcases and he hid them. Finally, although he had counted his money and knew he was getting low, he slipped ten dollars to a nun because she had only toast and coffee for breakfast.

Love for others, a selfless compassion, was Holden's answer to immortality and it primes him for the realization that strangers would tread over his brother Allie's grave. It also helped him defend the reputation of Jane against Stradlater's veiled hints and even provoked Holden to attack the stronger Stradlater when he believed Jane's virginity had been lost.

Holden's mission in life, he realized, was one of love - the way Jesus counteracted evil, although Holden did not say so. When wandering the streets of New York, Holden heard a child walking the gutter in heavy traffic singing that song, "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (186) and the song, which suggested charity, led to his new dream in life. He later told Phoebe his mission:

I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff- I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going. I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. (186).

But like his impossible dream, Holden remained adolescent - he continued to exaggerate, he was frightened by sex and he was unable to accept responsibility except when he took Phoebe home.

Salinger became famous - and popular - because he caught modern society in a new, but real and relevant idiom with Holden. He spoke of rebellion - a popular topic - but rebellion earned by insight and enacted for a reason. He established love as a saving grace in a society of convention, immortality, phoniness. But in leaving this social frame for an exercise in a labyrinth of rhetoric, Salinger left behind his readers as well. Despite the popularity of his latest work, Salinger's greatest relevance began with Holden. If the present trend continued, Salinger's peak may already belonged to his readers - in that short but satisfying answer of a heavy gold watch and the selfless devotion of the pure young.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

*The Catcher in the Rye* was J. D. Salinger's first novel. It was set around the 1950s fictional town of Agerstown, Pennsylvania. The novel detailed two days in the life of 16 - year- old young man named Holden Caulfield, who struggled desperately to find somebody to allocate his love. Confused and disillusioned, Holden searched for truth and railed against the "phoniness" of the adult world. But finally he realized that love was not necessarily expressed. This novel *The Catcher in the Rye* was a quest of finding the true love of people.

Holden Caulfield was one of the best - loved fictional characters in American literature. Like any another popular character, Holden told his own story in his own words as if speaking aloud and it was Holden's voice on the page, rather than the plot of *The Catcher in the Rye*, for which the novel was most remembered. Although this novel *The Catcher in the Rye* seemed to be like an unedited thought and feelings of an actual teenager, it was nothing of the kind. Actually J. D. Salinger was in his twenties and thirties when he wrote the novel, which began as a short story and grew, over many years, into a book length work of fiction.

*The Catcher in the Rye* was told in first person by an unreliable narrator named Holden Caulfield. Holden blatantly informed the readers that he was insane. He told,

The funny part is, I felt like marrying her the minute I saw her. I'm crazy. I didn't even like her much, and yet all of a sudden I felt like I was in love with her and wanted to marry her. I swear to God I'm crazy. I admit it. (134)



Holden's voice was that of an adolescent, but it was unclear when and whether it was the author's own voice. The two were confounded. Indeed, Salinger's former partner, Joyce Maynard (1999), wrote that when she first read *The Catcher in the Rye*, she recognized Salinger's voice from the letters that he had sent her. Moreover, scholars had linked the places that Salinger described in his books with places in his real life. Ian Hamilton in 1988, found evidence to link Holden's Prep school with Salinger's military school and it was perhaps no coincidence that Salinger, like Holden, lived in New York City as a child. Holden's dream of dropping out of society and lived in a cabin in the woods might have become Salinger's eventual reality, living as a recluse in rural New Hampshire. The authorial and character voice presented two layers of the story, but it was unclear where one stopped and the other started.

Through the course of the novel, Holden could not figure himself out which caused the reader to question the accuracy of his opinions and judgements. Holden told his story while in a therapist's office. The entire novel was a recollection of what previously happened to him over the course of a weekend. Holden told of a psychoanalyst that consulted with Holden and questioned what his behaviour would be like when he returned to school.

From what was implied to be a sanatorium, Holden, the narrator and the protagonist, told the story of his adventures before the previous Christmas. Holden was a teenager who was unwilling to grow up and mature.

Holden mentioned various times that he had gray hairs. This was ironic because one would assume that a person with gray hair was older and mature. The Museum of Natural History was a place Holden and Phoebe often visited. The museum represented Holden's desire to stop time. Holden had a rigorous time

accepting change which was part of his issue with growing up. Everything was exactly how you left it in the museum and that was what he appreciated.

Holden's red hunting hat symbolized a number of things. It was a physical representation of both his security and individuality. Holden was lonely but did not know how to make connections with anyone so he used his hat as a defence mechanism. The hat made him unique while simultaneously creating a barrier between himself and the rest of the society. This way, if someone rejected him, he could easily divert all blame to the hat.

In the novel, Holden recalled the death of a boy named James Castle while talking to Phoebe. James Castle was a quiet boy who called Phil Stabile conceited. He would not apologize for he was remarked and so Phil and his friends did something repulsive to James. James felt that the best strategy to end this torture was to jump out of the window, thus killing himself. When Holden thought of his tragedy, it gives the reader a better understanding of Holden's thoughts.

This novel *The Catcher in the Rye* had an innocence and rebellion motif. This motif could be traced back to Holden's belief that the world was black and white. To him, there was only pure and tarnished. People such as nuns were pure and innocent. Holden also placed Phoebe in this category. Then, there were people such as Stradlater whom Holden saw as bad because Stradlater used girls and had sex with girls he did not truly care about.

*The Catcher in the Rye* took the loss of innocence at its primary concern. Holden wanted to be the "catcher in the rye"- someone who saves children from falling off a cliff, which could be understood as a metaphor for entering adulthood. As Holden watched Phoebe on the carousel, engaged in childlike behaviour, he was to overcome with happiness that he was, as he puts it, "damn near bawling". By taking



her to the zoo, he allowed her to maintain her childlike state, thus being a successful "catcher in the rye". During this time, however, watching her and the other children on the carousel, he had also come to accept that he could not save everyone: "If they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off". (25)

Holden was constantly battling with his own mind and his own demons. He was constantly judging others for being a phony but then he went out with Sally Hayes even though he did not actually like her. While on the date he told her countless lies such as saying he loves her. Holden clearly had a complex given that he was sometimes phony too. Holden wanted to remain innocent and childlike forever but drinks and swears while isolating himself. Since he was alone so much, he was left with his own thoughts which allowed him to always over think. Because he was always in his own head, the majority of his problems were also in his head. If he decided to stop thinking so much, he would have no longer such a fear of other people, their opinions and sex.

The novel's title was a metaphor. A Catcher in the Rye was a person who saved all children from falling and getting hurt while playing. This was a metaphor for children maturing. Holden wished that he could save everyone every single time he or she got hurt but that was not imaginable. Holden had a desire to catch everyone but he did not realize that he was actually the one falling.

Holden described his brother as a prostitute because he left home to go to Hollywood and make a living. Holden attempted to degrade his brother's work even though he was proud of his D.B. because he felt abandoned. Like so many of the people in his life, Holden thought that his brother left him.



Holden's epiphany was completed when he saw Phoebe on the carousel horse. Holden told Phoebe that he wanted to be a catcher in the rye so he could catch children when they fall. But then, when Phoebe was on the merry-go-round, she was trying to reach for the gold ring and Holden said that if kids wanted to grab the ring, they would have to let them and if they fall, they fall. This showed a change in Holden's character. Holden then relinquished his job of saving everyone and was allowing himself and others to grow from their mistakes.

Holden's name was also significant: Holden could be read as "hold on" and Caulfield could be separated into "caul and field". Holden's desire was to "hold on" to the protective covering (the caul) that enclosed the field of innocence (the same field he wished to keep the children from leaving). Holden desperately wanted to remain true and innocent in a world full of "phonies". Salinger once admitted in an interview that his novel was semi - autobiographical.

After publishing *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger became a recluse. When asked for the rights to adapt it for Broadway or Hollywood, he emphatically declined. Despite Holden of never having appeared in any form subsequent to that in Salinger's novel, the character has had a long - lasting influence, reached millions of readers, including two particularly notorious ones.

The novel's main thematic conflict pits the innocence and authenticity of childhood, as represented by Holden's sister Phoebe, against the phoniness, as Holden saw it, of most adults Mr. Antolini, neither a child nor a grownup. Holden resisted maturation, a process he saw as characterized by loss rather than growth. Holden was excluded from and victimized by the world around him. He felt trapped by the other side of life and he continually attempted to find his way in a world in which he felt he did not belong. Holden's alienation was a unique way of protecting himself. His

cynical sense of superiority served as a type of self - protection. His alienation was a source of little stability he had in life.

J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* was truly a unique novel in terms of writing style. The story was written loosely in a fashion known as "stream of consciousness". The stream of consciousness style of writing was that in which the writing directly followed the character's thought process in either an interior monologue or through the character's reactions to external occurrences. Stream of consciousness was not typically used in books due to it clearly - defined limits and its extreme demand for a talented and devoted author. In order for the writing to be effective, the story must revolve around only one character and that was to be developed extensively as a believable person through the realistic thoughts and actions. The following of Holden's stream of consciousness was the reason that many seemingly unnecessary facts found their way into Salinger's writing. They were a direct result of Holden's roaming teenage mind. Many other works of literature had used the stream of consciousness, so this alone does not make Salinger's work unique. What makes *The Catcher in the Rye* a unique literary work was Salinger's combination of stream of consciousness along with several other literary contrivances.

Many critics considered J.D. Salinger a very controversial writer, for the subject matters that he wrote. J.D. Salinger's works were written during the two time periods. The first time period was during World War II and the second time period was during the 1950s. Critics felt that the works during the 1950 time period were very inappropriate, because of the problems for which he wrote. The main characters were misfits of the society. In most of his works, he had the protagonist of the story go on a quest for happiness. Salinger did not conform to the material happiness. The characters underwent a spiritual happiness. The characters started out as in bad



conditions, through the end of his works they underwent changes that change them for the better.

Salinger wrote *The Catcher in the Rye* in first person which gave the real thoughts and feelings of Holden. He also had Holden use cuss words and slang to express his many opinions. These techniques made the whole story seemed so realistic.

Holden's criticism of society was brutally honest: his profanity was atrocious and he levelled his knife against everything from religion to homosexuality without flinching. This was, after all, an adolescent's mind. Similarly, the readers also note the psychological exactness with which Salinger detailed Holden's thoughts, which reflected the symptoms of depression as well as the common biases which plague human nature. Salinger knew when to break the heaviness of his subject matter with humour. Holden's conversation with the cabbie about how fish stay alive in the winter. It's a classic. Sometimes there was a fine line between seriousness and humour and Salinger danced deftly between the two.

Since its publication, *The Catcher in the Rye* had become an enduring classic of American literature. The novel was a favourite because of its humour, its mordant criticism of American middle - class society and its values and skill with which Salinger captured colloquial speech and vocabulary. The novel's story was told in retrospect by the main character, Holden, apparently while staying in a psychiatric hospital in California. Throughout the novel, Holden spoke of his loneliness and depression. The story of a few days in his life indicated how sad and lonely his search for moral values was in a society in which he found them lacking.

From the beginning of the novel, readers saw Holden as the champion of the downtrodden children whom he saw as essentially innocent, fragile and



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From the beginning of the novel, readers saw Holden as the champion of the downtrodden children whom he saw as essentially innocent, fragile and

uncomplicated and those who have been persecuted by others. At the same time, Holden showed no patience for hypocrisy and self-delusion except his own. Readers need to keep in mind that the narrator was institutionalized as seen in any number of his acquaintances. Holden's idealism did not spare even his older brother, D.B., whom Holden accused of sacrificing his writing talent as a screenwriter in Hollywood. Holden admired courage, simplicity and authenticity. He was preoccupied with the lack of justice in life, a point that led him to defend a girl's honour in a fight with his Pencey roommate, Ward Stradlater and resulted in another beating in New York, when Holden refused to be cheated by a pandering hotel elevator operator. Holden was devastated by the death of his younger brother, Allie and it turned out that one of Holden's heroes was a former schoolmate named James Castle, who committed suicide rather than contradict his beliefs. In a well-known passage late in the novel, Holden saw obscene graffiti on the walls of Phoebe's school. He was enraged that someone would affront children in the way and he managed to efface one set of obscenities. Later, he found more such graffiti and depressed came to the conclusion that one could never erase all obscene scribbling from the walls of the world.

Salinger's novel took its title from two key episodes that involved children. The first of these was Holden's chance observation of a little boy, who, with his parents, was strolling along a city street. The happy boy was singing to himself, humming a song Holden called "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (186). Holden was impressed with the fact that the boy was simply enjoying his own music, pleasing only himself in naive artistic integrity.

Much later, when Holden spent an evening with Phoebe, he defended himself against his sister's charge of moral bankruptcy by indirectly alluding to the little boy.

Holden told Phoebe that he would like to be a "catcher in the rye," a man who watched over children, protected them from falling off a cliff while they play. Holden's fantasy elaborated his obsession with innocence and his surprisingly traditional moral code.

It was important to remember controversial books because they might eventually disappear. If the readers keep the conversation going, chances were more for books like *The Catcher in the Rye* would remain in the public lexicon and more readers would stand up against censorship.



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**Perils of Postcolonial Hybridity: A Study of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**ANUSIA S.**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Perils of Postcolonial Hybridity: A Study of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Perils of Postcolonial Hybridity: A Study of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Anusia S. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project is entitled **Perils of Postcolonial Hybridity: A Study of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*** gives a detailed analysis of the sufferings of the main characters in the postcolonial world.

The first chapter throws light on a short biography of Jean Rhys discussing the general characteristics of her works. It also states her predominant place in the English Literature.

The second chapter entitled **Racial Hybridity** deals with the fragmentation of Antoinette's identity. It examines the effects of patriarchy and colonization and the conservative roles of victim and victimizer.

The third chapter entitled **Psychological Complexities** depicts the life of women in a decadent, materialistic and insensitive male world. It observes the dejection endured by the characters in the novel.

The fourth chapter highlights the narrative techniques. It focuses on Rhys's usage of landscape as a tool to portray different aspects of cultural identity and emotions.

The fifth chapter is a summation of all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters by finding the perils of postcolonial hybridity in the novel.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Literature is a form of human expression. It has been produced worldwide over such a long period of time. It is a body of written works of a culture, language, people or a period of time. Great literature has a timeless appeal. It is the true depiction of life. It is the art to show the reality of life and that reality can be handed down through generations. Literature of a particular age is the mirror image of its social, political, religious and philosophical situations. The writers have always shown the real face of society, its positive as well as negative aspects. Even the great wars have been vividly and explicably discussed along with their devastating effects on human beings. According to Ezra Pound, a confessional poet and critic, “Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree” (12).

English literature has long history. It has changed from all over the past centuries and underwent many transformations. From the written old tales of Chaucer to the contemporary age, England has produced some of the richest treasures of the literary world. The oral tradition was very strong in early British culture and most literary works were written to be performed. Epic poems were very popular and *Beowulf* has survived to the present day. It is a Scandinavian tale during eighth century. William, the Conqueror makes England a part of the Anglo-Norman Realm in 1066. This is a period of Anglo-Norman literature. As the Normans are assimilated into mainstream culture, the French penetrates the lower orders of society changing much of grammar and lexicon of old English. With this Norman Conquest, the Middle English period begun. England’s first great author was Geoffrey Chaucer. His most famous work is *The Canterbury Tales*,



a collection of stories in a variety of genres, told by a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. They are from all walks of life, which is reflected as much in the language they used as in the context of their life.

Chaucer was inspired by literary developments taking place in Europe, especially in Italy. The Renaissance was making its way to Britain. The introduction of a printing press into England by William Caxton in 1476, vernacular literature flourished. The Reformation inspired the production of vernacular liturgy which led to *The Book of Common Prayer*. The literature was religious in nature. The Elizabethan era saw a great flourishing of literature in the field of drama. The Italian Renaissance had rediscovered the ancient Greek and Roman theatre and was particularly inspired by Seneca and Plautus. Earlier Elizabethan plays are *Gorboduc* by Sackville and Norton and *The Spanish Tragedy* by Kyd. William Shakespeare stands out in this period as a poet and playwright. He was not a man of letters by profession and not as ‘the university wits’. Most dramas met with great success, it is in his later years that he wrote his greatest plays such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*.

The sonnet was introduced into the English by Thomas Wyatt in the early sixteenth century. Other important figures in the Elizabethan theatre include Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Dekker, John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont. Christopher Marlowe introduced Dr. Faustus to England, a scientist and magician who is obsessed by the thirst of knowledge and the desire to push man’s technological power to its limits. Edmund Spenser is the greatest non-dramatic poet of an age and his fame mainly rest on *The Faerie Queene* and *The Shepheardes Calendar*. His *Amoretti*, a series of 88 sonnets, describes the progress of his love. Philip Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*, Daniel’s *Delia*

and the sonnets of Shakespeare are love poems. Francis Bacon was the principal master of his time.

Jacobean literature begins with drama, including some of the Shakespeare's greatest and darkest plays. The dominant literary figure of James' reign was Ben Jonson whose varied and dramatic works followed classical models. Jonson is a master of style and a brilliant satirist. His *Volpone* shows how a group of scammers are fooled, vice being punished by vice, virtue meeting its reward. Beaumont wrote the brilliant comedy. Revenge plays were popular during the Jacobean tragedy by John Webster and Thomas Kyd. The King James Bible was started in 1604 and completed in 1611. It became the standard Bible of the Church of England. The major poets of the early seventeenth century included John Donne and the other Metaphysical poets. George Herbert and Donne were principal metaphysical poets. The greatest of the Cavalier poets were Robert Herrick, Sir John Suckling and Richard Lovelace.

The turbulent years of the mid-seventeenth century, during the reign of Charles I and the subsequent Commonwealth and Protectorate saw a flourishing of political literature in English. The growth of Puritanism established the controlling power in the state. John Milton was the greatest product of Puritanism. He wrote his greatest political works with hidden political message. The restoration of the English monarchy widened the literary tastes. Restoration comedy reveals both the influence of French force and of Jacobean comedy. Such dramatists were William Congreve and John Wycherley. John Dryden became the foremost poet and critic of his time. The satiric poet of the period was Samuel Butler whose *Hudibras* (1663) satirizes Puritanism. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress* (1675), an allegorical prose narrative is considered a forerunner of the novel.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 established a Protestant monarchy. Alexander Pope was a neo-classicist and master of the heroic couplet. Jonathan Swift was a prose satirist. Middle class tastes were reflected in the growth of periodical. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were produced by Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele. The novels of Daniel Defoe were the first modern novels of English. The eighteenth century was the age of town life with its coffeehouses and clubs. The prominent poets were James Thomson and Edward Young. William Blake was the first great romantic poet. The works of Jean Jacques Rousseau and William Godwin had a great influence. *Lyrical ballads* in 1798 illustrated a literary aesthetic. Shelley combined lyricism with a political vision in his great drama *Prometheus Unbound* and his wife Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote the greatest of all gothic romance *Frankenstein*. The romantic era was also rich in literary criticism and other nonfictional prose. The master of personal essay was Charles Lamb and Thomas De Quincey was master of the personal confession. Jane Austen wrote domestic novels.

The Victorian era was the great age of the English novel. Charles Dickens had an endless variety of characters and plot compliments in his novel. William Makepeace Thackeray is best known for *Vanity Fair* which satirizes hypocrisy. The founders of Communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels researched and wrote their books in the free environment of England. The prominent poets of the Victorian age were Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. A. E. Housman and Thomas Hardy shared a pessimistic view in the poetry. During 1890s the most conspicuous figure on the literary scene was the decadents. The



principal figures in the group were Arthur Symonds and Lionel Johnson. The Realists present the ugliness of modern industrial civilization.

The twentieth century was dominated by a chain of events that heralded the significant changes in world history as to redefine the era. The century saw the major shift in the way, with the changes in politics, ideology, economics, society, science and technology. The two deadliest world wars brought a major disaster. It shook the life of common people. The experiences of First World War were reflected in the works of war poets such as Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon. The outbreak of war brought to an end an era of great intellectual and creative exuberance. The horrors of the Great War forced women into jobs that had previously been a male preserve.

The woman had forced out of domestic service and into factories. The war gave a boost to demand women's emancipation. The writers experimented with other kinds of structures. For instance, Virginia Woolf wrote main plot which was often interrupted by individual characters memories. It differs from the literature of past centuries because the importance has been given to the presentation of human consciousness and human psychology. A new narrative technique 'stream of consciousness' has been introduced. The purpose is to highlight human perception. *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud was published in 1899.

Twentieth century literature has three outstanding characteristics which have their counterpart in the life and changing pattern of the historical period itself. First, it is an age of search. Secondly, it is a stimulating and adventurous age. Thirdly, it is evaluating age. The Post-war British society found it difficult to sustain "an authoritative whole picture" of Britain as a result of the process of decolonization and the rising spirit of post

nationalism. Under such circumstances, the subversive currents of the countercultural revolution of the 1960s made Britain a breeding ground for experimental literary forms. The rise of 1960s feminism has forced post-war female writers in English to take a position for or against feminism. Women writers born in the ex-colonies of the British Empire and writers of other nationalities within the United Kingdom have used English to express the experience of colonization, such writers are Angela Carter and Jean Rhys.

Angela Carter, one of the most original, provocative contemporary writers was fascinated and disturbed by the impact of popular culture on gender politics. Her works treat issues of female sexuality, eroticism and violence with a humour that stuns and unnerves, leaving readers uncertain whether to laugh, scream or cry. *The Bloody Chamber and other stories* (1979) is a movement towards fantasy. It offers an escape from a male-dominated society. She reworked fairy tales from feminist point of view. She stated the need for female resourcefulness and independence.

Jean Rhys, original name Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams was born on August 24, 1890, in Dominica, one of the former English colonies in the Caribbean. Rhys was of Creole heritage. Her great-grandfather was a slave-owner who acquired a Dominican sugar plantation in the nineteenth century, but after the Emancipation Act was passed; his estate fell on hard times. Subsequent riots led to the looting of the house, which was eventually burned by arsonists. Rhys visited her family's ancestral abode in 1936 and was extremely affected by the experience. She purportedly had the idea for *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The daughter of a Welsh doctor and a Creole mother, she was educated in Dominica until she went to London at the age of sixteen and worked as an actress.

She began to write when the first of her three marriages broke up. She was in her thirties by then and living in Paris, where she was encouraged by Ford Madox Ford who also discovered D. H. Lawrence. Ford wrote an enthusiastic introduction to her first book in 1927, a collection of stories called *The Left Bank*. This was followed by *Quartet*, originally *Postures* (1928), *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939). After the publication of these books, Jean Rhys dropped completely out of sight. It was generally thought that she was dead. Nearly twenty years later she was rediscovered, largely due to the enthusiasm of the writer Francis Wyndham. In 1966, she made a sensational reappearance with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which won the Royal Society of Literature Award and the W. H. Smith Award for that year. Her final collection of stories, *Sleep It Off Lady*, appeared in 1976, and *Smile Please*, her unfinished autobiography, was published posthumously in 1979. She was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1966. She was made a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire), an honour bestowed by the queen in 1978. She died in 1979.

According to A. C. Morrell, “All her stories are about the indignity, the personal damage, which flows from a woman’s financial and economic dependence on men in an alien world” (80). Jean Rhys is well known for bringing the issues related to the psychodynamic of women under patriarchy. Rhys’s narrative have female protagonist, and mostly these women live on the margins of the society as mistresses to wealthy men. Her works bring to the centre the voices of those women who struggle for survival in the men’s world. The dejection endured by her characters is based on the traumatic experiences of Rhys in her relationships with men. Rhys always believed in writing about



the self. Her fiction reflects an attitude toward life often in opposition to traditional middle-class values. She is honest in her presentation of the isolated and abandoned world of her women characters.

Rhys's first novel *Quartet* (1929) paints the life of Marya Zelli who after her husband's imprisonment, lives with an art dealer Heidler and his wife Louis. Her affair with Heidler causes her immense anxiety and pain. Her increasing dependence in Heidler makes him recoil. While Marya's is still suffering from the pain of rejection, her husband comes back from prison, gets to know about the affair and tries to assault her. In *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), Rhys created the powerfully modern portrait of Sophia Jansen, whose emancipation is far more painful and complicated than she could expect, but whose confession is flecked with triumph and elation

. *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930) is a brilliant, yet brutal, portrait of a woman struggling to retrieve both life and love. It narrates the life of Julia Martin who tries to maintain her psychological balance in a selfish world governed by patriarchy. The novel concentrates on the identity crisis that Julia faces rather than on a failed love relationship. Julia Martin visits her ailing mother for solace but gets no help. Julia's heart gets heavier with grief, and she grows intensely hostile and suspicious of the world.

*Voyage in the Dark* (1934) is told from a first-person point of view. The novel also incorporates more autobiographical material with its memories of the lush and tropical West Indian Island, which Rhys uses as contrast to the coldness of England. The time frame of *Voyage in the Dark* is 1914, and the central character is Anna Morgan, who is nineteen and touring the provinces in the chorus. The woman is depicted as a victim,

but a survivor. After an unsuccessful love affair with a young man, she is abandoned and becomes a prostitute. The novel concludes with Anna recovering from an abortion.

*Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966 toward the end of Jean Rhys's writing career, was the most successful of Rhys's literary works. It is the captivating story of a lonely young woman who is driven to near madness by her need to be loved. Literary theorists find Rhys's novel rich in the portrayal of the damaging effects of colonization on a conquered people and the debilitating consequences of sexual exploitation of women. It was written as Rhys's attempt to explain the character of Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys wanted to explore the reasons why Bertha Mason went mad. The novel has three parts. The first part is narrated by the female protagonist, Antoinette and she explains that she lives in isolation from the rest of the population of the small Caribbean island on which her family's plantation exists. The story opens in 1839 after the recent emancipation of slaves in the British Empire. The emancipation has not only caused the family to live in poverty. Five years have passed since her father reportedly drunk himself to death, his finances in ruins after the passage of the Emancipation, which freed black slaves and led to the demise of many white slave owners. Throughout Antoinette's childhood, hostility flares between the crumbling white aristocracy and the impoverished servants they employ.

Part One opens, Antoinette Cosway is a young girl living with her mother and brother at Coulibri, her family estate near Spanish Town, Jamaica. With the passage of the Emancipation Act and the death of her father, the family is financially ruined. Annette, Antoinette's mother marries Mr. Mason, a wealthy planter. This marriage aggravates racial tensions in their neighbourhood. One night, rioters burn the house

down. The entire family escapes, except Antoinette's brother Pierre, due to the exposure to the smoke, he dies. Mr. Mason sends Antoinette to a convent school. Part one ends with Mr. Mason back in Antoinette's life, planning for her marriage.

Part Two opens with a newly wedded Antoinette and Rochester in their honeymoon in Granbois, the Cosway estate outside Massacre, Dominica. Rochester receives a malicious letter from a man who claims to be Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's step brother. The letter alleges that there is a history of mental illness in Antoinette's family. It also alleges that Antoinette had been engaged to a relative of colour, Sandi Cosway. After receiving the letter, Rochester spurns Antoinette. Antoinette seems to go mad herself. Part two ends with their departure from Granbois to Spanish Town, where Rochester plans to have Antoinette declared insane and confined.

Part Three opens with Antoinette confined in Thornfield Hall in England, guarded by Grace Poole. Antoinette seems to have a little sense. Her stepbrother Richard Mason visits her, and she attacks him after he refuses to help her out of her marriage. Finally, she dreams that she escapes from her room and sets fire to the entire room. At the end of the dream, she flees to the top of battlements and then jumps off. Antoinette wakes up and the novel ends as she escapes from her room, with a candle lighting her way down a dark hallway.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys explores perception of women and gender roles, making a case that 'madness' can be a normal response to intolerable pressures and exploitations experienced by women. Madness and colonization are central concerns in her novels. Jean Rhys represents a modernist perspective on the suffering of woman.



The second chapter of the dissertation is entitled 'Racial Hybridity'. It is about social phenomenon as one of the reasons for madness. Madness can be viewed as both a disorder of the brain and a social phenomenon. Antoinette's madness is also due to racial oppression and marginalization. Antoinette is scorned by both white and black cultures. It becomes one of the factors of that drive Antoinette into madness.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Racial Hybridity**

From the margins of the late nineteenth century English society and the mainstream literary world Rhys wrote as a woman who had known the ills of being emotionally and economically dependent on a man, both within and without wedlock. Her protagonists know the pain of not belonging, of being left alone in a sea of selfish and unsympathising people and of belonging to a culture that is patriarchal and thus maddening partial. Her protagonists keep warring against their existential predicaments and continue their desperate search for some meaning in life.

Rhys also subverts the conservative roles of victim and victimizer and portrays both of them being assaulted by the powerful emotions that shape their perceptions as well as the resulting behaviour. The tragic tension in her novels is maintained not by virtue and vice but by the convention of the society and isolation of individuals. Therefore, if the weak suffer from the scarcity and moral degradation, the powerful suffer from self-alienation. Identity crisis is considered to be a central theme in postcolonial literature. The colonized or formerly colonized nations suffer a lot in reconstructing their identity and survival in a world where they feel less important, oppressed and marginalized politically, economically or culturally.

Women in this case are suffering the most from the identity crisis for being women living in a colonized country. The effects of patriarchy and the colonization play a significant role in augmenting the identity crisis that the colonized are expected to face in such a situation. Consequently, women have to struggle in order to get rid of any feelings of alienation, oppression and exile. As women often suffer from the negative effects of patriarchal oppression and segregation, they are likely to reach the

peak of identity crisis when colonization and patriarchy join hands in oppressing them.

*Wide Sargasso Sea*, in many ways, is the story of a woman who is denied positive cultural and gender identity because of her intermediate position in the colonial structure. Her final madness is, in effect, the manifestation of this denial. Moreover, discussing this madness allows us to clarify the constitution of personal identity in relation to cultural identity, colonialism, and gender.

An important factor that leads to the fragmentation of Antoinette's identity and her identity crisis is concerned with race and ethnicity. Antoinette is a white Creole, a woman of mixed Black and European ancestry. The definition of "Creole" goes beyond the binaries of black and white. Creole is neither a black nor a white category. Creole possesses the qualities of both black and white races and cultures. In this sense Creole marks a break from the black and white, African and European categories of identifications and establishes a new domain a "third space". After the Emancipation Act 1833 under which Britain outlawed slavery in all its colonies, the suppressed hatred between blacks and whites was released and increased.

As a result, Antoinette's childhood has been replete with racial violence, discrimination, anxiety, poverty and fear. All these problems affected her desire to construct her own identity or her independent self and eventually led to the definite destruction of her identity. As a white Creole in the West Island of Jamaica, Antoinette suffers a confusion of identity and individual existence. She is caught in the middle between the purely white people and the black people without belonging to either race. The black people consider her a hybrid that they look down upon while the British colonizers consider her an alien or an outsider. This leaves Antoinette caught between two cultures and never able to identify herself.



Bhabha recounts about hybrid culture as, “Strategies of hybridization reveal an estrangement movement in the authoritative” (212). Antoinette becomes the “other” who is unable to claim the English identity as her own, nor can she break from the complications of her ethnic background to create an independent self. As Creoles, Antoinette and her mother Annette are maligned by both the black Caribbeans and the white Europeans. Though the Creoles are taught to consider England as home, they are labeled as inferior colonials but they are racially privileged in relation to the Africans. This results in creating a sharp conflict between the white and black population of the West Indies.

Antoinette is scorned by both white and black cultures and is thus forced to see herself as “Other” without being able to consider herself as part of these two prevailing ethnic and cultural groups. Antoinette is, therefore, doubly exiled on her island home and her mother country, having no place to truly belong. It is basically this sense of belonging to neither culture that brings about Antoinette’s identity crisis and finally becomes one of the factors that drive Antoinette into madness.

Antoinette’s identity crisis occurs at an early stage of her life. Using her friendship with Tia, her only childhood friend, as a means of knowing herself Antoinette begins to gauge her ethnic and cultural identity. Being black, Tia shows Antoinette the extent to which black people don’t like her and her Creole family. Intending to torment her friend, Tia calls Antoinette a “white nigger”, a hybrid who does not belong to any specific race. Tia’s insolent behaviour with her childhood friend shows how racism is controlling her behavior and her treatment of her Creole friend. Tia refers to Antoinette as poor and dirty and also tries to underestimate her by cheating on her and by taking her clothes.

Antoinette is looking for a place which she loves and to which she belongs. She is also anxious to have a trustworthy friend who would make her feel more secure and might help in the construction of her identity. After the house of Antoinette's father was set on fire, Antoinette tried to run toward Tia hoping to stay with her and find a sense of comfort with her presumed friend. Antoinette is looking for someone to be identified with so that she can feel at home. Antoinette recalls the house she used to live in before it was set on fire and compares it to the Garden of Eden. She says: "Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the bible- the tree of life grew there" (43).

The island is all that she knows, and she is desperate to identify with it through Tia, her only friend. Antoinette feels that she and Tia have shared the same experiences on this island and so she should have the same rights as Tia to consider the island as her homeland from which she derives her identity. She wants to be a part of something, and so she clings to the hope of Tia being like her. This desire manifests itself most strikingly when Antoinette looks directly at Tia as if she were looking into a mirror where she can see a reflection of herself.

Antoinette's illusions are shattered when Tia throws the stone in her face, breaking the mirror image and leading Antoinette to the realization that she is not like Tia. Antoinette's struggle for her identity, her belonging and her existence began when she was just a little child where she could not define her own self properly. She was marginalized not only for being of a mixed blood but also for being a female. As a white Creole, Antoinette becomes a double outsider: "white nigger" for the Europeans and "white cockroach" for the blacks. As Antoinette wistfully explains to her husband in the novel:

It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they [the blacks] call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (64)

Another factor affecting Antoinette's identity crisis is her gender and her shifting social class and status. Since early childhood, Antoinette has been desperately trying to fit herself into her Caribbean society. When Antoinette moves to the convent school, she finds a shelter from all the corruption, cruelty and hatred that were directed to her before from the outside world. Antoinette finally feels safe and nothing can harm her anymore, not the colonial, not the patriarchal or even the racial acts. Silvia Cappello points out that "It is undeniable from Jean Rhys's perspective that when someone is compelled to forget his/her past, to be displaced geographically and spiritually, to accept the identity someone else created for him/her" (50).

Dreams become part of Antoinette's life and her search for identity. The second nightmare that she has is after Mr. Mason's visit, when he tells her that she is going to leave and live with him. In this dream she is following a man into darkness; she is sad and begins to cry. The dream becomes like a nightmare:

I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. Here? He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry, He smiles slyly. 'Not here, not yet' he says, and I follow him, weeping. (34)



Antoinette is a sensitive and lonely young Creole girl who grows up with neither her mother's love nor her peer companionship. By the time she was supposed to construct an identity of her own away from the values and expectations of others, she gets married to Rochester who becomes an obstacle in the way to an independent self. Rochester is the unnamed white Englishman whom the reader knows by *Jane Eyre's* Rochester, particularly by his biased, racist and repulsively gendered descriptions of his wife Bertha, the Antoinette of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Antoinette's unnamed husband is a representative of both colonial and patriarchal systems. Though Rhys tries to humanize the marginalized protagonist Antoinette by giving her a voice to speak out about her own suffering and to express her own feelings, her husband endeavours to suppress her attempts and to deprive her from her right to speak or to have her own independent cultural and social identity. Antoinette's ill-timed, badly-motivated and ominous marriage makes her suffer from a role confusion or identity crisis because her husband is attempting all the time to eliminate her and her own sense of identity.

Antoinette is faced with a crucial decision in her life and on her way to achieving her long-time desired sense of identity. If she decides to fight against the obstacles that are presented through her husband and begins to find a way out to self-realization, she might succeed in resolving her identity crisis and ultimately begin an intimate relationship with the people she loves. Antoinette does not do that, instead, she decides to be submissive and passive; she never fights her husband or thinks of leaving him.

Initially, the marriage of Antoinette's mother to Mr. Mason, the wealthy Englishman, creates hopes inside Antoinette for solving her identity crisis by inspiring into her the feeling of having a protective family that will make her feel more secure.

Their desire to have a better life forces them to imitate the English society in order to indulge into their world. In other words, Antoinette and her mother try to imitate the colonizer and to find comfort in adapting their modes of behavior as well as their lifestyle. Antoinette begins to eat English food in the English way: “We ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings. I was glad to be like an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine’s cooking” (17).

This feeling does not solve Antoinette’s identity problem. Her sense of her “hybridity” still persists when Antoinette and her mother view themselves as Creole women who neither belong to the Europeans nor to the Jamaicans. They are half way between the two identities, not knowing what to choose as a fixed representation of their identity. Antoinette’s identity crisis reaches its peak with her marriage that has been arranged by her stepfather Mr. Mason and his son Rochester. Before, she used to find hope in her home and her friend Christophine, but now, and with this marriage, the hope is diminishing.

Antoinette’s husband is shown as a representative of the patriarchal society and the colonial powers. With the appearance of Rochester and his domineering character, the oppression, discrimination and marginalization practiced on Antoinette are magnified. Rochester never gives support to her but tries to eliminate her identity and her presence. His harsh and inhumane treatment of her diminishes any hope for her of ever becoming an independent woman. Rochester has not married her out of love but for money and he never hesitates to keep her under his full control as a colonizer and as a patriarchal man who makes her feel lost.

From her marriage, Antoinette’s identity becomes to fade progressively, until she disappears at the end of the novel Rochester’s sexual abuse of his wife makes Antoinette an inferior human being and increases her crisis of identity. Viewed in

light of traditional gender roles, Antoinette is forced to follow a traditional gender role as an inferior, weak, emotional human being who is unable to take central decisions, while her husband is cast as a superior, strong and rational being. Changing his wife's name into Bertha, Rochester starts treating her as an object and considers her as his property.

Rochester tries to eliminate her identity and prevent her from taking any central decision in her life. He treats Antoinette as Bertha, not Antoinette. Though Antoinette got married in order to prove herself, it turns out that she is doing exactly the opposite and losing what has remained of hope to get an independent self.

In postcolonial terms and particularly in light of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the 'othering' attitude of Rochester when he considers his wife to be the 'other' for he is the 'subject', the superior Western colonizer, while his wife represents the inferior Creole colonized 'object'. The decisive negation of Antoinette's identity or existence is further enhanced by the oppression exercised by Rochester on her. Under the colonial hegemony of her husband who is actually a symbol of colonization, Antoinette is colonized into a slave figure and thus loses her identity. Becoming more aware of her need for an identity of her own, Antoinette finally tells Rochester not to call her Bertha:

Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name... I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate... I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoilt it... I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you. (94)



The above impassioned speech indicates that Antoinette is gradually moving, though slowly, towards achieving a kind of epiphany or realization of what is going on and of her need for an independent self and an identity of her own.

It is this lack of identity which constitutes the basis of Antoinette's quest. Antoinette's psychic unease is simply figured in a set of external tropes. Her identity shifts between past and present struggling to develop an identification of place in her memory. For Antoinette, therefore, the past becomes as real as the present, not because her life lacks change, but because she struggles to piece together the seemingly opposite poles of her identity.

Correspondingly, Antoinette struggles for integration instead of split, for feeling instead of numbness, for herself instead of mirror images. She wants to see herself in the others. She wants also to be seen. The Creole struggles to perceive reality, not a reflection of it. Aware of her predicament, Antoinette fights for life through her survival strategies. With each new cultural encounter whether in the Coulibri Estate, the convent, with Rochester, in the attic, Antoinette keeps re-negotiating her identity to fit in and to belong. Readers unable to perceive and value Antoinette's Creoleness fail to understand the complexity of her identity. It is to *Wide Sargasso Sea* as an exploration of the possibilities of bringing wholeness to the divided self of the Creole that readers respond with such a sense of personal involvement.

Rhys acknowledges that each part of Antoinette's identity must be restored if both the parts and the whole are to develop fully. This assemblage of the white Creole's different parts of identity is cast as a process that culminates in a vision of 'wholeness' that has the promise to deliver both social justice as well as emotional and spiritual transformation at the level of personal identity. Antoinette cannot come

to terms with her identity, which is usually manifested as ambiguous. And her female status also blurs Antoinette in her acknowledgement of a precise individuality. Throughout the novel the character Antoinette, is referred to by the public as the daughter of Annette, or as the wife of Mr. Rochester, or as Bertha, a name and individuality which is totally imposed on her by the husband. Owing to the imposed identities on herself by other power holders, Antoinette cannot strike a balance with her individual self.

The third chapter of the dissertation deals with psychological complexities. The post-Emancipation setting subverts a conventional, progressive conception of history. Life is more difficult for Antoinette. Her mental health starts degrading after her marriage with Edward Rochester which finally leads to insanity. Rhys presents Antoinette's story and reveals her search for identity, place, meaning and purpose. Through this search Rhys questions the assumptions about woman and madness.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Psychological Complexities**

Jean Rhys is well known for bringing the issues related to the psychodynamics of women. Her female protagonists live in the margins of the society as mistresses to the wealthy men. Her works bring to the centre the voices of those women who struggle for survival in the men's world. The dejection endured by the characters is based on the traumatic experiences of her relationships. The presentation of the post-Emancipation setting subverts a conventional, progressive conception of history.

Sexual difference marks a radically alternate relationship to power, language, and meaning. Rhys speaks from a self-consciously marginal position. She raises the issues of gender and colonial difference. A patriarchal society is a world where men are the sole decision makers and hold positions of power and the highest authority. Patriarchal occurs where men are dominant in their status related to decision making and power.

Antoinette Cosway of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a woman living in a patriarchal society and life is difficult for her. Her tragedy is the larger tragedy of the English Creoles. As a result women are introduced to the world made by a man's actions. Jean Rhys focuses on the history of Antoinette. Rochester renames Antoinette. It is evident that he uses this as a mean to control her. By altering her name, he believes that she is his property. Adjarian argues, "He controls what Antoinette comes to represent for him – the island, its inhabitants and the threat they pose to him and his self-conception as a powerful, all-knowing European" (206).

Mr. Rochester is attempting to break her down physically and mentally, Antoinette informs Mr. Rochester that she does not agree with him and she speaks up for herself in the process. She says: "Bertha is not my name; you are trying to make



me into someone else, calling me by another name” (94). Renaming her is one way in which Rochester exerts his masculine power over by his wife. By standing up to Mr. Rochester, she is not allowing herself to be controlled by a man.

Antoinette’s long-time struggle is to find her own voice. She takes a turn after her marriage to Rochester. She begins to doubt her whole sense of individuality and existence. In the beginning of their marriage, Antoinette’s beauty attracted Rochester. He is seldom used to seeing such kind of beauty. While riding together he remarks: “Looking up smiling, she might have been any pretty English girl.” This remark of Rochester shows how he perceives his wife, Antoinette, to be like any other perfect English girl. On the other hand, when insanity takes over Antoinette’s mind and she starts acting crazy, Rochester’s whole perception about her changes and instead of coming across as a beautiful swan, that same Antoinette comes across as a madwoman in Rochester’s eyes. When he sees her in that state for the first time he says: “Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen” (93).

By describing Antoinette’s appearance in a negative way, Rochester puts down Antoinette as a whole since his attraction to Antoinette is based on her appearance. Rochester feels a certain attraction towards this Creole girl because of her appearance; he disregards her emotions in his narration:

I woke next morning in the green-yellow light, feeling uneasy as though someone were watching me. She must have been awake for some time. Her hair was plaited and she wore a fresh white chemise.  
(51)

Rochester’s descriptions of Antoinette clearly shows that she becomes a physical object for him, he notices but whose existence and identity doesn’t have a

place in his mind. Antoinette manages to express herself in parts. Rochester's constant attempt is not to give her a space to voice her opinions.

The economic inequality in a patriarchy is apparent. The situation of Antoinette's mother, Annette is economically dependent upon men. After her first husband's death, she becomes so poor that she cannot support her family. Her economic situation is solved when she marries Mr. Mason. She uses her beauty as her only means to compete with other women. In search for English protection and economic support takes place. Antoinette realizes that her constant struggle to get to know and preserve her complex identity was further threatened.

Antoinette's mother marries Mr. Mason in order to provide them with economic security. She sees the search for her real self frustrated by Mr. Mason's presence and his condescending, paternalistic attitude. His inability to comprehend Antoinette's and her mother's intuitive understanding of the negro, and to acknowledge that aspect of their personality, created a barrier between them and further alienated her from the negroes.

Antoinette sees her life, then, becoming a repetition of her mother's. She was incapable of taking control of it because she had no inner resources. She was not only aware of the similarities in their situation but realized that her own experience was a further stage in the deterioration of the Creole woman. Her mother's experience was a stage beyond Aunt Cora's. This shadowing of her life by her mother's and Aunt Cora's reveals the Creole woman in a peculiar situation. Antoinette's story reveals that her circumstances, this woman end up trapped the victim in a male-dominated society. In the lives of her Aunt Cora, another Creole woman who sought economic security by marriage to English man, her mother and herself.

Antoinette reveals stages in what appeared to be a process of increased economic independence but which in reality was an increasing economic dependence and a tightening of control. This situation was especially tragic and ironic as these women's lives also reveal stages in the growth of woman's psychological awareness. This economic control conflicted with psychological awareness and resulted in greater disorientation.

As a subversive novel, Rhys rewrites many deterministic concepts which lead to improper conceptualization of norms related to gender and class. Madness is one such concept. In colonial discourse is linked with the female sex and the colonized races. Madness and sanity are also perceived as mutually exclusive. Michel Foucault argues in his work *Madness and Civilization* that madness, which has the power to point out the limits of social order, is silenced by reason. Foucault depicts madness as located in society and culture rather than in mind or body.

Psychoanalytic theories propound that women are prone to mental instability which should be regulated by repressive techniques. Women are not part of patriarchal power structures and are therefore more vulnerable than men. In Antoinette's case the issue of normative frameworks is important. Her "madness" is not due to a disorder of her brain but rather as a result of patriarchal oppression.

Antoinette depends on her husband Rochester for her consolidation and her fragmented self. Rochester fails her. He finds himself trapped in marriage with Antoinette whom he does not understand. Her mental health starts degrading continuously after she hears Rochester making love to Amelie, the black servant girl. This experience of abandonment makes Antoinette furious with Rochester because she fears that her childhood dejection would be repeated in the form of her husband's behaviour.



When Christophine advises Antoinette to leave her husband and go to Martinique, she replies that “he would not give me any money to go away and he would be furious if I asked him. There would be a scandal if I left him and he hates scandal” (71). Antoinette is imprisoned. In the West Indies Mr. Rochester does not want her to leave him for fear of scandal since a woman is not supposed to leave her husband, and in England Antoinette is confined to his attic in order to avoid scandal. Antoinette is imprisoned by the patriarchal rules of her marriage, which eventually leads to her “madness”.

Foucault explains how the fear of a scandal made people treat the “madmen” as non-human beings. They were assigned animal features; the animal in man became his madness. Foucault also points out that the extended excitations without repose could lead to madness. This can be applied to Antoinette’s mother, Annette, who was driven “mad” by others. She is rejected by the people of her island; she witnesses her home Coulibri burn down and the death of her only son. These incidents were revengeful acts carried out by the black people of their town, since they despised Antoinette’s family for being ex-slave owners. Modern psychology has developed new perspectives about madness and has revealed that the most important causes of madness are injury, stress, abuse and the neglect of children during the developmental years.

Modern psychology views madness an illness related to the mind which is curable. Antoinette's earliest recollections are of her life on her father's Coulibri Estate in Jamaica where she lived with her mother, her crippled brother Pierre, and two black servants, Christophine and Godfrey. Her story begins at the point where she becomes aware of some drastic changes in the society which directly affect her family. Antoinette understands the changes around her mainly through their effect on her

mother, and her family's isolation from the Creole society. She noticed that "so few people came to us" (5), and after her mother's only friend, Mr. Luttrell, killed himself "no one came near us" (5).

Antoinette remembers her natural curiosity about the changes in their lives and how she questioned her mother about the past. She recalls Annette's reluctance to tell her anything. "Why do you pester and bother me about all these things that happened long ago?" (8). Antoinette sees that she was unable to understand or gain a sense of belonging to a past which Annette had shut away from her. She realizes that, being denied any knowledge of the past. She was deprived of an important part of her heritage and identity. Her rejection and alienation had their roots in the past that was closed to her. Rhys undermines the false assumptions about madness as a "female malady" and questions its association with the Creoles.

Rhys underscores the irrationality. She appropriates the notions of race, class and gender. She writes the reason behind Antoinette's eventual dissociation of identity. She shows the Antoinette's psychological ailment is inevitable result of socially induced. Rhys affirms that Antoinette's madness is acquired and not genetic. Another reason for abnormality is childhood stress and neglect by her only parent, Annette. The unsuccessful relation of Antoinette with her mother, the improper identity formation and the absence of a father figure leads to the lack of confidence.

Antoinette re-experiences her past and her personal need for love. The understanding and nurture drives her to Christophine who was her nurse. She sought refuge in Christophine's company to compensate for her mother's rejection. She says that:

I spent most of the time in the kitchen which was an out-building some way off. Christophine slept in the little room next to it. When evening

came she sang to me if she was in the mood. I couldn't always understand her patois songs. She also came from Martinique. (7)

Antoinette recalls that Christophine became her surrogate mother. She nourished Antoinette's cultural development. Through her songs, stories and the food she prepared, Christophine provided her with a psychic rather than an economic development. Annette and Christophine and was the catalyst for drastic changes in her life. Antoinette keeps on longing for an imaginary unity and laments its absence when she talks of the destruction of the garden of Coulibri where the trees of life grew. She searches for psychic unity which she never attains.

Rochester tries to subjugate her within the patriarchal codes. But the similarities are found between both Rochester and Antoinette. Rochester becomes uncontrollable. Like Antoinette, he is a rejected child, alone in a strange land and afraid of being hurt and exploited. Antoinette and Rochester are victims of the English patriarchal law.

Rochester is denied his rights by his father and Antoinette becomes patrimony to Rochester as dowry. He is afraid of getting overwhelmed by the excess. He is not tyrant who ruthlessly seeks out to destroy her, but a victim of his own dilemmas who tries to make his way in the world.

Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too many purple, too much green. The flowers are red, the mountains too high, the hills are too near. (42)

Both Edward Rochester and Antoinette Cosway live a life of denial where they fail to understand the true nature of their desires and the destructive influence they can have on their partners. Both of them are highly egocentric and their common failing is the inability to love appreciates difference.



Daniel is a villain in the story who intends harm. He is the coloured cunning bastard child out to avenge himself on the innocent for the wrong done to him. Daniel is oppressed by rejection and isolation like Rochester. According to Angier, Rhys is trying to demonstrate that it is through weakness rather than strength that cruelty and hurt enter the world. The strong characters like Aunt Cora and Christophine are kind. The rejection and fear make people according to their natures, angry and violent like Antoinette, envious and bitter like Daniel and cold and cruel like Rochester. Rhys has characterized Daniel as a person full of vengeance more than of mindless evil.

After this review of Antoinette's life she has her third dream, a recurring one about the fire at Coulibri and in it she finds a positive solution for the futility of her incarceration. She realizes the step she must take: "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (54). In the attic, Antoinette is brutally excluded and her affective life as a woman has been destroyed in the events leading up to her incarceration. In her dream, Antoinette briefly claims her place in the symbolic order by reenacting the masochism that nearly constituted her and Rochester's freedom.

Antoinette transcends her imprisonment in the English manor at the same moment she invokes traditionally defined symbols of gender. Life is in the form of a symbol of nature, burns in Antoinette's imagination as her dream culminates in a death. Antoinette's search for her real identity as woman, and for that woman's place and purpose in society, is embedded in Rhys's dramatic presentation of her story. Its form and content is expressive of Rhys's ideology of life. Rhys sees woman, especially, and life generally, as a complex unity of multiple associations.

Through Antoinette's story she presents on one level a psychologically complex woman in a decadent, materialistic and insensitive male world. Submerged in this world, she presents a woman's world, a new exciting feminine world revealed

through a whole spectrum of woman. Caught up in this new and exciting world is a young male from the old world. In Antoinette's story Rhys shows how this man and this woman see each other and each other's world.

Through a complex interlocking of consciousness and an intricate but clear patterning, Rhys presents Antoinette's story and reveals her search for identity, place, meaning and purpose and through this search questions the assumptions about woman and about madness. Antoinette, as a storyteller within the walls of a room and in her consciousness, functions within Rhys's dramatic presentation in a limited but very explosive sphere.

Antoinette's voice comments on the scenes on the screen of her mind. Within her consciousness many voices are heard. Her husband's is the dominant voice. Her mother's, Christophine's, her Aunt Cora's and Mr. Mason's are among the other important ones. Each voice contributes something specific toward the development of her story and helps to present a composite view of her life.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation deals with narrative techniques. Rhys's novels are intensely pessimistic and thickly painful. Rhys uses landscape as a tool to portray different aspect of cultural identity. Pairing of opposites is a motif used by Rhys to show apparent differences. The narrative structures are made of an alternation of states of consciousness including daydreams, memories and nightmares.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Narrative Techniques**

In literature, writing style is the manner of expressing thought in language characteristic of an individual, period, school or nation. Beyond the essential elements of spelling, grammar and punctuation, writing style is the choice of words, sentence structure and paragraph structure, used to convey meaning effectively. It is the technique that an author uses in the writing. It varies from author to author, and depends upon one's syntax, word choice and tone. The rules are about what a writer does; style is about how it does. While following the rules drawn from established English usage, a writer has great flexibility in how to express a concept.

The point of good writing style is to express the message to the reader clearly and convincingly. The aim of the writer is to keep the reader attentive, engaged and interested. It also displays the writer's personality, skills, knowledge or abilities. The novels of the nineteenth century were written at a time when there was confidence and stability in British society. But the twentieth century novels were influenced by the changes in beliefs and political ideas after the events of the First World War and the disappearance of the British Empire.

Rhys's style resembles those of experimental writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, or Dorothy Richardson in their portrayal of individual consciousness and perception. Her treatment of words resembles the linguistic doubling of Gertrude Stein's poetry, often depending on sound and syntax for their meaning. The social isolation, faced by Rhys's characters, seems to further emphasize a private, even schizophrenic,



vision. She developed her own unique forms of interior monologue and of a fragmented style that, to borrow Wallace Stevens' words, created “a violent order (in) disorder” (9).

But Rhys's writing goes beyond these more formal similarities to modernism to expose the violence that informs them. Violence smolders in Rhys's fiction. The violence of poverty, sexual barter, social exclusion, and psychological splintering assaults her heroines. Because her heroines live in sexual and cultural exile, because of their withdrawal from a world that degrades them in almost melodramatic series of events, Rhys's formal techniques outline the dimensions of a social world in often brutal transformation. Her novels expose the specific crisis-felt from the period of the First World War through the present-of the dissolution of moral values and traditions delineating the foreign from the ‘civilized’ and those separating private from public lives.

The novels of Jean Rhys are marked by the fact that all the protagonists are woman put in circumstances that Rhys herself had to go through in her life. Helen Carr notes that “like many modernist writers, Rhys had used her life, in all its painful rawness, as the material from which she formed her fiction” (3). From the margins of the late nineteenth century English society and the mainstream literary world Rhys wrote as a woman who had the ills of being emotionally and economically dependent on a man, both within and without wedlock. Her protagonists know the pain of not belonging, of being left alone in a sea of selfish and unsympathising people and of belonging to a culture that is patriarchal. Rajni Walia observes that “Rhys's work is modern in its sensitive portrayal of the loneliness of modern life, which has drawn into the vortex of the feminine self” (2).

Her protagonists keep warring against their existential predicaments and continue their desperate search for some meaning in life, and fail. Her novels are intensely pessimistic and thickly painful. All her women protagonists seem to be one woman during different stages of adjustment with self and society. Rhys's also subverts the conservative roles of victim and victimizer and portrays both of them being assaulted by the powerful emotions that shape their perceptions as well as the resulting behaviour. The tragic tension in her novels is maintained not by virtue and vice but by the unconquerable dead seas of silence. The conventions of the society also add to this isolation of individuals from each other.

Creole was the title that Jean Rhys gave to her writings about the West Indies. Creole can be used as a noun of both language and people. It is also used as an adjective. It is used in the West Indies of people of European or African descent who are born and naturalized in the Caribbean. Rhys and her mother were Creoles. When the slaves were taken from Africa, they were separated from people of their own area who spoke their language, to inhibit insurrection. When they arrived in the plantations they could not understand the language of their masters. In these circumstances, they learnt the language of their masters.

It is a marginal language for restricted communities. A Creole language develops when pidgin becomes the mother tongue of a community. For instance, Godfrey leaves out the verb when he says, "I too old now" (6). The omission of the inessentials creates an impression of vitality to speakers of the language that was the source of Creole, for instance when Christophine leaves out the verb and the preposition, "she pretty like pretty self" (6). Christophine's omission of inessentials makes her sound much more direct and

emphatic that English speakers, “Read and write I don’t know. Other things I know” (104).

*Wide Sargasso Sea* was earlier called as *Le Revenant*, which means the ghost. Later Rhys chose to select the present title which has been taken after the name of a sea in the North Atlantic Ocean, between the West Indies and Azores, called Sargasso Sea. The title problematizes the issue of racial and gender biases which keep the two individuals in a state of mutual fear and suspicion thus negating any possibility of a healthy relationship between them. The title appears symbolic wide gulf separating the two cultures, as well as the parallel male and female perspectives and dichotomies, which receive the most extensive exploration through the Antoinette and Rochester relationship.

Antoinette’s narration constitutes a considerable portion of the novel. It gives her own version of her courtship and marriage to Edward Rochester. Rhys chooses a peripheral character to narrate most of the novel. Antoinette’s initial social and psychological position is marginal, a West Indian Creole from a slave owning family. She is a child when emancipation frees the slaves and abolishes plantation culture. She neither belongs to the English fortune hunters, nor to the native population of ex-slaves. Antoinette’s mother, Annette offers her no support and the lonely child lives in fear. Only moral and emotional subject is Christophine who introduces her to Tia, a failed friendship.

Landscape and its utilization are used to describe different aspects of the narrative. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note that place and displacement are important concepts in the study of postcolonial literature. The emphasis is placed on “an effective identifying relationship between self and place” (8). Place, consequently landscape, is an



important element in the construction of one's cultural identity. It helps to anchor one's existence to a location, a home. Having a place to call home is an important building block in an individual's practical identity. Being part of a society presumes a location specific to said society. Thus, cultural identity, as well as the sense of belonging, is intimately connected to the notion of place. Displacement is a concept related to removal from said place, or home. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define displacement as a state where the "valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation" (9).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, landscape is used as a tool for the portrayal of many different aspects of cultural identity as well as emotion. One such use of landscape and nature imagery in the novels is to portray nostalgia, which is also closely linked with the concept of displacement. Nostalgic feelings towards a place occur when one is removed from it, voluntarily or involuntarily. The use for landscape imagery is the development of an individual's cultural identity. As a victim and dejected child Antoinette spends time with nature. Rhys sets her novel in a plantation area.

Emancipation rejects the power exercised by English in Creole. For instance, Antoinette compares the garden to the "garden of Eden" before emancipation. The garden had changed and gone wild. The paths were overgrown and smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. It reflects the life of Antoinette, as a subversive, she can't pave the way of her own life. The impending danger in the future is mirrored in the initial pages of the novel. "I didn't remember the place when it was prosperous" (6).

The reality is harsh to Antoinette and the acceptance of reality is difficult. She says, "I went to bed early and slept at once" (6). Even the physical plan is better for her. In certain instances, Antoinette says:

And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think 'It's better than the people.' Black ants or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin –once I saw the snake. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people. (12)

Antoinette feels that the people around her are hostile towards her. She prefers to turn to landscape for comfort instead of turning to family members or friends. Even at the house, the moss-covered softness of the garden wall was her place of safety:

When I was safely home I sat close to the old wall at the end of the garden. It was covered with green moss soft as velvet and I never wanted to move again. Everything would be worse if I moved. (9)

The same garden is where she hides and eavesdrops on the visitors who speak ill of her mother.

Ashcroft sees the use of different senses in the depiction of landscape as a particularly postcolonial implement. He points out that the overpowering inclination towards the visual is a characteristic of the Western culture, and thus using different senses in the expression of their creativity, the postcolonial authors are able to differentiate themselves from their suppressors. Incorporating all five senses into the reading experience gives the texts a feel of otherness that is central to postcolonial writing. The use of these other senses can also be seen as a form of empowerment for the suppressed colonial subject; a prominent example of this can be found in part three of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, when Antoinette has been locked up in the attic of Thornfield Hall, and all she has left of her old life is a red dress. On this dress she can smell the scents of the Caribbean:

The scent that came from the dress was very faint at first, then it grew stronger. The smell of vetiver and frangipani, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees when they are flowering. The smell of the sun and the smell of the rain. (120)

Rochester has thus been able to remove Antoinette from her landscape, but he has not been able to take away the scent of the Caribbean, which is her one way of still clinging to the remnants of her old identity in the attic.

Antoinette herself becomes aware of Rochester's fascination. Antoinette chooses her physicality to use it as a method of expressing herself and reaching out to Rochester. Colour plays an important part to become a medium of expression for Antoinette. She is seen to be fascinated by the color Red. Red can be linked to female sensuality, passion, and emotion and it shows courage, danger and a sense of power within women. Antoinette has an obsession for the colour red as she thinks that it attracts the eyes of her husband Rochester, "I took the red dress down and put it against myself: 'Does it make me look intemperate and unchaste?' I said." (121). The red dress has an adverse effect on Rochester's mind as to him. It makes her look like a desperate woman who is apprehensive of the dangerous warning that comes with red as it is a sign of rebellion.

On the other hand, the colour white has a desirable effect in Rochester's mind as it makes Antoinette look chaste and pure. White symbolizes virginity and chastity. The colour white arouses desire in Rochester. However, Antoinette has a different personality than that of what Rochester wants her to be. So she sticks to the colour red, which she believes makes her presence felt in a stronger way.



Antoinette changes from the virginal bride wearing a white dress into the ‘rejected scarlet woman’ in a red dress. It can be said that colours work as metaphor for Antoinette’s identity and individuality. It works as a form of expression for Antoinette. It exemplifies that Antoinette is independent as a woman and chooses to express herself in the way that is comfortable for her and suits her.

Antoinette’s grasp of landscape is almost immediate and highly personal. In the section of part two that is narrated by Antoinette, she verbalizes this personal connection to the land: “The sky was dark blue through the dark green mango leaves, and I thought, ‘This is my place and this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay.’” (68). Antoinette feels that her home island is the only place where she can feel whole. The landscape is such a vital part of her identity. However, she foreshadows her imminent departure from that landscape:

Then I thought, ‘What a beautiful tree, but it is too high up there for mangoes and it may never bear fruit,’ and I thought of lying alone in my bed with the soft silk cotton mattress and fine sheets, listening. (68)

She identifies with the fruitless mango tree in her loneliness and foresees this same destiny to be in her future. The use of landscape helps to learn about Antoinette’s childhood, as she already has an intimate relationship with the surrounding nature growing up in Coulibri. In her childhood, Antoinette finds solace in nature when she feels the people in her life have turned against her.

“Doubling” and pairing of opposites is a motif used by women writers of the twentieth century to deal with the themes of freedom and individuality. “Doubling” is used by them in a subversive way to write socially unacceptable feelings and behaviours.

The postcolonial writers use the technique for showing the permeability of the boundaries separating the colonizer and the colonized. They create characters which belong to the different genders, races or classes, show the apparent differences and then deconstruct the very differences to reveal the basic similarities beneath the surface.

Rhys deconstructs the fixity of the boundaries separating the colonial or Creole “self” from the Creole or the colonized “other” respectively in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by creating texting doubles. It blurs those ideological, social, moral and psychological boundaries between people who are segregated by race, class and gender and whose identities are compartmentalized in rigid hierarchical structures. Doubling in *Wide Sargasso Sea* not only crosses the boundaries of stereotypical Victorian femininity but also that of gender and race. Antoinette is similar in many ways to Rochester and even to the servant of Tia.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* stresses the opacity of the boundaries that separate a white English male from the Creole woman. When Edward sees Antoinette for the first time he associates her with natives who are mysterious and unmistakably other. Rochester says of Antoinette, “Long, sad dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either” (67). Edward Rochester, who is proud of being English resists falling in love with his Creole wife whom he sees with suspicion. Edward Rochester empathizes and finds a response in his heart both for the wilderness of the island and Antoinette. Finally he rejects Antoinette saying: “Vain silly creature. Made for loving? Yes, but she’ll have no lover, for I don’t want her and she’ll see no other” (165).

The double oppression that Antoinette undergoes is relatively much evident within the context of the novel via several relationships that she develops such as her morbid

marriage to Mr. Rochester, her pathetic pursuit of relief from Christophine, and her hateful relation to Amelia, who would not obey Antoinette's imperatives. Even the social space in which Annette and her daughter are fated to live in search of rich white English husbands is enough to recognize their restricted in-between status in the society. The patriarchal subjugation that Antoinette experiences as a woman intensifies her repression, causing her to endure double othering of the society both as a woman and as a postcolonial subject. The triple oppression under which Antoinette tries to acknowledge her self-identity leads her to the final place of resolution, which is nothing less than a desirable madness.

Antoinette's enactment of the slave metaphor insinuates a view of master-slave dynamics as more raw, natural, authentic, empowering, and erotically-charged than abstract, intellectualized liberal equality is. The fifth chapter is a summation of the aforesaid chapters.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Jean Rhys's novels and short stories have been read in multiple ways from multiple cultural perspectives. She marks a crossroad of powerful literary forces: modernism, women's writing, and emergent postcolonial literatures. Her work has gained accelerated attention and sparkling critical debates. Rhys's colonial Caribbean background gives perspective, tone, and aesthetics. It shares a great deal with modernist styles and themes of homelessness and alienation attributes to modernism. It was shaped by the dislocation of empire and colonial migration. Her work helped to see the complex dynamics linking modernism and imperialism.

Rhys portrays women's experiences and female subjectivity. As a writer from Caribbean, Rhys's representation of the patriarchal and colonist social relationships anticipates a later generation of writers from Caribbean such as George Lamming, C.L.R. Lamis, Derek Walcott and Wilson Harris. Rhys's legacies are most apparent in the contemporary woman writers from the Caribbean. Rhys achieves a feminine voice by writing her Caribbean experience. Rhys's writing tended to emphasize that Rhys herself bears a strong resemblance to all her main characters and has undergone experiences similar to events chronicled in all her novels.

Rhys tells her own story and in this respect she resembles many the twentieth century writers. She places marginal character at the centre of her fiction. Her protagonists are victims who are fully aware of their victimization. This awareness makes them self-conscious in their roles and thus alienated from the society. Rhys succeeds in the use of language, *Wide Sargasso Sea* employs lyricism, and it incorporates both beauty



and terror simultaneously. Rhys invents a language that expresses the form and content of consciousness.

Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* lies between Rochester's England and Antoinette Cosway's Island, between the opposite categories of colonizer and colonized, between the world of capitalism and post-Emancipation West Indies and between privileged men and dependent women. Rhys blends the dialects and speaking voices and interweaves forms of discourse among various narrators. She crosses traditional boundaries of uniformity for voice and draws unexpected parallels. Several years after the publication of the novel, A. Alvarez declared in the New York Times Book Review that Jean Rhys was the best living English Novelist. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a historical work written in the year 1966, but set in the early 1800s, which explores Victorian paternalism, racism and the complex social and political history of the West Indies. Rhys portrays the sexual exploitation and racialism, the heart of Western Civilization and literature.

The first chapter is dealt with the origin of English literature which has changed from all over the past centuries and underwent many transformations, from the written old tales of Chaucer to the contemporary age. Throughout the centuries, the writers have shown their real face of society both its positive as well as negative aspects. English literature has long tradition. It focuses on the literature of England and also includes writers from Scotland, Wales and the whole of Ireland, as well as literature in English from countries of former Britain Empire. The oral tradition was strong in early British culture. The earliest form of English was Anglo-Saxon or Old English period. Middle English began with the Norman Conquest. Chaucer was the first great author famous for

his *The Canterbury Tales*. Modern English makes its way through Renaissance. The Reformation inspired the production of vernacular liturgy.

Elizabethan era saw a great flourishing in the field of literature. Jacobean literature began with the drama, including some of the Shakespeare's greatest plays. The turbulent years of the mid-seventeenth century saw a flourishing of political literature in English. The growth of Puritanism established the controlling figure in the state. John Milton was the greatest product of Puritanism. Eighteenth century was the age of town life with its coffeehouses and clubs. In 1798, the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* illustrated a literary aesthetic. The romantic era was rich in other nonfictional prose. The Victorian era was the great age of the English novel.

The twentieth century was dominated by a chain of events. The century saw the major shift in the way. *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud in 1900, a new narrative technique "Stream of Consciousness", and many avant-garde movements began in the twentieth century. The rise of 1960s feminism paved the way for many women writers. Women writers born in ex-colonies of the British Empire wrote to express the experience of colonization, such writers are Angela Carter and Jean Rhys. Angela Carter reworked fairy tales from feminist point of view. She was fascinated and disturbed by the impact of popular culture on gender politics. She stated the need for female resourcefulness and independence.

Jean Rhys was born in Dominica, in a Windward Islands in 1890 to a Welsh doctor and a native-born Creole. Her first stories were collected in *The Left Bank* in 1927. Her final work is *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966, which brought her into limelight. The novel is narrated by Antoinette and Rochester. It has three settings: Antoinette's

crumbling West Indian family estate, Coulibri; an unnamed honeymoon house on a different island; and finally the attic room. Rhys skillfully evokes the impulses of anger, trauma fear, mockery and suspicion.

The second chapter justifies the racial hybridity in the novel which leads to identity crisis. It is one of the themes of postcolonial literature. Rhys's protagonists know the pain of not belonging to a culture, of being left alone in a sea of selfish and unsympathising people. The tragic tension in the novel is maintained by the convention of the society and isolation of individuals. Women suffer the most from the identity crisis. The effects of patriarchy and the colonization play a significant role in augmenting identity crisis. The fragmentation of Antoinette's identity and her identity crisis is corned with race and ethnicity.

As a Creole, she suffered a confusion of identity and individual existence. Creole possesses the qualities of both white and black races and culture, and establishes a new domain called "third space". As a result, she is caught in the middle between the purely white people and the black people without belonging to either race. Antoinette becomes the "other" who is unable to claim the identity of her own.

The difference is found between Tia and Antoinette, as a black Tia enjoys the identity and the island as her homeland. Antoinette feels comfort with Tia, but Tia showed the false friendship and made Antoinette to realize that she is not like Tia. Antoinette's struggle began in her childhood. She becomes a double outsider. She makes her pathetic remarks about herself: "I wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (56). She grows up with neither her mother's help nor peer companionship. She marries an Englishman who is a

representative of both colonial and patriarchal systems. She never fights her rights; instead she went submissive to him. Edward Rochester tries to eliminate her identity and prevent her from taking central decision in her life. Under the colonial hegemony of her husband who has an “othering” attitude, Antoinette becomes a slave figure and thus loses the identity. Throughout the novel, Antoinette is referred as the daughter of Annette, as the wife of Rochester or as Bertha. The imposed identities on her by the power holders make her submissive and passive.

The third chapter is about the problem of freedom and the causes for her madness. Rhys is well known for her bringing issues related to the psychodynamics of women. Her works bring to the centre the voices of the marginalized women who struggle for survival in the men’s world. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys focuses on the history of Antoinette. Antoinette’s long time struggle is to find her own voice. In her childhood, she doesn’t get any affection from her mother. Antoinette is interested in knowing her past. Annette tells her: “Why do you pester and bother me about these things that happened long ago?” (18). Antoinette is deprived of her past. Her rejection and alienation had their roots in the past that was closed to her.

The economic equality is apparent in the novel. Annette marries Mr. Mason after the death of her first husband. Annette is in the search of English protection and economic support. She uses her beauty to compete with other women. Antoinette found similarities with her mother; initially Rochester admired the beauty of Antoinette. The increasing economic dependency causes the tightening of control. This situation is tragic when it is conflicted with psychological awareness which results in the greater disorientation.



Madness is one such concept of greater disorientation. In colonial discourse, it is linked with the female sex and the colonized races. In *Madness and Civilization*, Michel Foucault depicts that madness is located in the society and culture rather in mind and body. In Antoinette's case, her madness is not due to a disorder of her brain but as a result of patriarchal oppression. Antoinette is entirely dependent on her husband Rochester, but he fails her. She has been trapped in marriage. Her mental health starts degrading when she hears that Rochester is making love with Amelie, the black servant girl. She fears that her childhood dejection would be repeated in the form of her husband's behaviour. Rhys undermines the false assumptions about madness as a "female malady" and she shows Antoinette's psychological ailment is due to the inevitable result of society. Finally, Antoinette imprisoned herself in the English manor.

The fourth chapter is about writing style and techniques. Writing style is the manner of expressing thoughts in language, the characteristic of an individual, period, school or nation. Beyond the essential elements of spelling, grammar and punctuation, writing style is the choice of words, sentence structure and paragraph structure, used to convey the meaning effectively. The point of good writing style is to express the message to the reader clearly and convincingly. It also displays the writer's personality, skills, knowledge or abilities. Modernist writers looked for new kinds of subject matter and new perspective on conventional ones.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* is one such example. Twentieth century writers were interested in the unconscious mind and its power. They were aware of Freud's work on the significance of dream. They experimented a new way to portray in which the interior life of their characters. The novels of Jean Rhys are marked by the fact that all the

protagonists are women put in circumstances that Rhys herself had to go through in her life. Her heroines live in sexual and cultural exile.

The novel is narrated by Antoinette and Rochester. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a sympathetic history of madwoman from her youth in West Indies until the moment when she takes her candle to fire Rochester. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys demonstrates that giving voice to oppressed peoples is more complicated than merely conferring narrative authority upon speakers. Her characters cannot merely tell their stories and join in an established community of language. Because of the complex social system in which they live, no single dialect is sufficient to represent their complicated lives; they often speak in manners inconsistent with the expected linguistic markers of race, class, and gender.

Landscape and its utilization are used to describe different aspects of the narrative. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note that place and displacement are important concepts in the study of postcolonial literature. Landscape is used as a tool for the portrayal of many different aspects of cultural identity as well as emotion. One such use of landscape and nature imagery in the novels is to portray nostalgia, which is also closely linked with the concept of displacement. Nostalgic feelings towards a place occur when one is removed from it, voluntarily or involuntarily. The use for landscape imagery is the development of an individual's cultural identity. As a victim and dejected child Antoinette spends time with nature. Rhys sets her novel in a plantation area.

Colour plays an important part to become a medium of expression for Antoinette. She is seen to be fascinated by the color Red. Red can be linked to female sensuality, passion, and emotion and it shows courage, danger and a sense of power within women. The colour white has a desirable effect in Rochester's mind as it makes Antoinette look

chaste and pure. White symbolizes virginity and chastity. The colour white arouses desire in Rochester. “Doubling” and pairing of opposites is a motif used by women writers of the twentieth century to deal with the themes of freedom and individuality. The novel is set between privileged men and submissive women.

The fifth chapter gives the overall view of four chapters in nutshell. *Wide Sargasso Sea* articulates race and gender in the context of debate within feminist postcolonial studies. It exposes the conventional culture constructions through which Antoinette represents her racial oppression. The resistance is located in the complex interplay between strategies and subaltern practices. Contemporary critics tend to agree with Spivak’s reading that *Wide Sargasso Sea* provides with a sympathetic representation of White Creole alienation at the expense of Black Creole perspective.

The novel’s evocation of colonial history consists of random and blunt references to place names, slavery and the Emancipation Act. The straightforward historical narrative is replaced by allusions. Antoinette comes to realize the pre-established views of her husband Edward Rochester. She says: “You are trying to make me into someone else, calling by another name” (65). Rhys creates space for woman and their experiences in her writing. Antoinette’s marriage with Rochester subverts her identity which is a result of the long imprisonment in the cold dingy attic room and is sensitively shown in the following lines in which she is not able to recognize her mirror image and longs for Christophine to give her some proof of her identity:

I dropped the candle I was carrying and it caught the end of a table cloth  
and I saw flames shoot up. As I ran or perhaps floated or flew I called help

me Christophine help me and looking behind I saw that I had been helped.

There was a wall of fire protecting me but it was too hot. (123)

*Wide Sargasso Sea* provides unique insight into the gradual deterioration of the human mind and spirit. On examining Antoinette and her mother Annette, the reader gains a new perspective of insanity. One realizes that these two women are mentally perturbed as a result of numerous external factors that are beyond their control. The cruelty of life and people drive Annette and her daughter to lunacy. Neither mother nor daughter has a genetic predisposition to madness, and their downfall is an inevitable result of the actions of those around them and the unbearable nature of their living situation. It captures the pathos of a society.



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**Existential Crisis in Sharon Draper's *Out of My Mind***

A project submitted to

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affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **Existential Crisis in Sharon Draper's *Out of My Mind*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

  
**ARPUTHA MARY PUSHPA S.**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Existential Crisis in Sharon Draper's *Out of My Mind*** submitted to St. Mary's college (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Arputha Mary Pushpa S. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Existential Crisis in Sharon Draper's *Out of My Mind*** analyses the disabled protagonist's struggle among the able bodied society.

The first chapter **Introduction** gives an account of literature, especially American literature. It highlights the life of the author Sharon Draper, her contribution to literature, awards and accolades won by her and finally a brief introduction about the novel.

The second chapter **Argumentum Analysis on Impairment** deals with the theme of disability of the character.

The third chapter entitled **The Power of Unconditional Love** reveals the character's self beyond the mask.

The fourth chapter **Narrative Style and Techniques** concentrates on the author's use of style and techniques in the novel.

The final chapter **Summation** sums up all the key premises dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the presentation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Literature is an oral or written record of man's thoughts, feelings and aspirations which has stood the test of time. It is a kind of mirror that enables the reader to see themselves better and to have a clear cut understanding of what they see. It is also a social institution which makes use of language as its medium to make it a social creation. Literature imitates "life", hence it is in large measure, a social reality. The natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary "imitation". Literature too is a cultural study. It takes its subject to analysis using both the popular and minor genres.

American literature is a literature written or produced in an area of the United States and its preceding colonies for more specific discussion of poetry and theatre, during its early history. The term America cover a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present day United Sates. Therefore, American literary tradition begins as linked to the broader tradition of English literature. However unique American characteristic and the breath of its production, but now it is considered as a separate path and tradition.

The New England colonies were the centre of early American literature. It began with the first English colonies in Virginia and New England. These colonists brought with them the literary wealth of their countries. Most of these Americans were the migrants who began writing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The revolutionary period contained political writings by Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine in the post war period Thomas Jefferson's United States declaration of independence solidified his

status as a key American writer. It was in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that the nation's first novels were published. An increasing desire to produce works on American literature and culture. Naturally arose in consequence of the war in 1812. A number of key new literary figures emerged.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century American literature differs from that of the earlier American literature. Modern literature is comparatively complex and technically more sophisticated. It is varied in content, simple in language, realistic and individualistic in approach. Modern American literature yields to easy lay out under certain heads such as mainstream American, African American, Jewish, Feminist and Asian American.

Ralph Waldo Emerson started a movement known as transcendentalism in 1836. It is an idealistic philosophical and social movement which developed in New England around 1836 in reaction to rationalism. Influenced by Romanticism, Platonism, and Kantian philosophy, transcendentalism taught that divinity pervades all nature and humanity and its members held progressive views on feminism and common living.

Transcendentalists were the writers who looked literature as a generation of people struggling to define spirituality and religion. In a way transcendentalism took into account the new understanding in their age. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were the central figures of the movement. Henry David Thoreau wrote *Walden* which urges resistance to the dictates of organized society. The political conflict surrounding abolitionism inspired the writings of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe in her world famous *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. These efforts were supported by the continuation of the slave narrative autobiography, of which the best known example



from this period was Frederick Douglas's narrative of *The Life of Douglass American slave*.

American writers expressed disillusionment following the short stories and novels of F.Scott Fitzer Gerald which captured the mood of the 1920s, and John Dos Possos who wrote about the World War II and its aftermath. Earnest Heming way becomes notable for *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*. In 1954, he won the Noble prize in literature. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American drama was dominated by the work of playwrights. Depression era writer John Stebeck is known widely for his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Henry Miller assumed a unique place in American literature in the 1930s, when his semi-autobiography was banned from the US. From the end of the world war -II up until roughly the late 1960s and early 1970s some of the most popular works appeared in American history. Harpee Lee's play *To Kill a Mockingbird* is one among them.

The nation's first novels were published in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These fictions were too elongated to be printed as manuscripts or general readings. Publishers took a chance on these works hoping that they would become substantial dealers and they would get a chance to reprint them. This was a good bet as literacy rates ascended in this period among both men and women. The first American novel is William Hill Brown's *The power of sympathy* published in 1791. In the next decade some significant women writers also published novels. The analysis of American literature in a regret soul, there should be no effort to underrate the depth that America owes to English literature. Hide the fact that American literature is young. And has not had time to produce as many respected work of art as England acquired something from America. Educated Englishmen today

gladly concede that without a study of William Cooper, Poe, and Hawthorne no one could give an enough report of the landmarks of achievement in fiction, penned in our own tongue. French interpreters have even gone so far as to idolize Poe. In a certain field Poe and Hawthorne occupy a unique place in the world's accomplishment.

In literature men like Bret Harte and Mark Twain are not ordinary. Foreigners have had American books interpreted into all the superior languages of the world. It is now more than one hundred years since Franklin, the great American philosopher of the practical, died, and yet various European nations reprint almost each year some of his maxims, that persist to control the masses. English critics, like John Addington Symonds, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Edward Dowden, have given testimony to the power of the self-governing aspect in American literature and have given the dictum that it cannot be neglected.

A few reasons why American literature matured along authentic lines and thus transmit information of its own to the world are to be found in the bartered environment. Even more valuable changed the ways to acquire a living and the change in climate, animals, and scenery was the conflicts leading to the rebellious war. All these were combined to give difference to American thinking and literature. As a whole, American literature has fairly skilled their ability more than their expectations. Its analysis is chiefly valuable for us, since the facts related with our birthplace must mean more to us than more extraordinary attainments of men born under other sides. American literature, even in its gentle openings, contains a teaching that no American can afford to miss. Without knowing its principles and ethical desires and are wavered by them, we cannot keep our tradition.



Just before the last part of the nineteenth century American fiction had the most part between romantic from its initiation. Charles Brockden Brown, Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Poe, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain were all coloured with romanticism. In the latter part of the last century, there emerged a school of naturalists who claimed that life should be portrayed as it is, without any addition to or subtraction from reality. This school did not ask, whether the matter interesting or exciting, whether it true to life. Howells and James were the chiefs of the realists. Howells uses everyday events and discourses. James not takes amazing situations carefully, so long as they adapt to reality, and subjects them to the most searching intellectual study. Mary Wilkins Freeman, a pupil of Howells, shows phenomenal skill in describing with sensible curiosity the gentle life of pastoral New England. While the school did not turn all writers into extreme realists, its authority was felt on the mass of modern fiction. Walt Whitman brings enormous realism into the pattern and material of verse.

Genre fiction also signified it could examine reality in its twentieth century forms in spite of its stable procedures. The criteria used to split up works into genres are not accordant, and may shift continually and be subject of debate. However, even an unsteady term like fiction is not a wide seeks to all fictitious literature. But ideally it cramped to the use for novel, short story and novella, but not fables, and is also generally a prose text. Types of fiction genres are science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, realistic fiction and mysteries.

Women's literature presents a unique view into the female American experience. America accomplished abundant alteration following the civil war. The country has undergone tremendous changes and has brought in reforms political, economic, social,

and literary fields. As the country rose into the Industrial Revolution, female authors were fabricating a place for themselves in the literature. The feminist movement called into the query the aspect of women in the society and female authors acknowledged by establishing works presenting strong, self-resistant, intelligent women. Women's literature gained extensive eminence by the end of the nineteenth century. Feminist agents and the augmentation of education for women led to many more female writers than any preceding century.

Female writers resist for approval in the literary society in spite of existing in a benevolent society. In previous eras women's writing was assigned generally to writing for children and poetry. These works were distinguished by sentimentality, morality, and intensity of sensation deliberates works of feminine genres. During the nineteenth century the women's attestation movement responded to the social, and legal inequalities placed on women. Women's literature echoes the feminist movement through subject matter, characterization, and situations. Works of Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman admit women's distinctiveness and speak out against social expectations of women. Louisa May Alcott strong, independent female character presenting a new role of women in America. Feminine literature of the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century served the purpose of presenting readers with sensible views of women's intuition, ambitions, and potential razing for beyond the restrains of deferential domestic life.

Sharon Mills Draper is one among the creative writers of the new blossomed literature. She was born in 1952 in Cleveland, Ohio, the oldest child of Victor and Catherine Mills. She is a graduate of Pepperdine University. She is an effective



participant in the activities of the YMCA of Cincinnati, a member of the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and Top Ladies of Distinction. Ms. Draper travels widely and has been a guest on television and radio programs throughout the country, discussing controversies of literature, reading, and education. She is a talented public speaker who addresses educational and literary groups of all ages, both nationally and internationally, with amusing readings of her poetry and novels.

Sharon Draper is a Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award winner, and was the Duncanson Artist-in-Residence for the Taft Museum. She is a YWCA career woman of Achievement, and is the receiver of the Dean's Award from Howard University school of Education, the Pepperdine University Distinguished Alumnus Award, and the Marva Collins Education Excellence Leadership Award. Last year she was named Ohio Pioneer in Education by the Ohio State Department of Education, received the Beacon of Light Humanitarian award, as well as the Doctor of Laws Degree from Pepperdine University. In 2011, she received the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual Jeremiah Ludington Memorial Award by the Educational and Media Association.

Draper has been dignified at the white house six times, and was preferred as one of only four authors in the country to speak at the National Book Festival Gala in Washington, D.C, and to symbolize the United states in Madrid at their Book Festival. Her book *Copper Sun* has been preferred by the US State Department and the International Reading Association as the United States novel for the international reading project called Reading Across continents. Students in the US, Nigeria, and Ghana were reading the book and sharing ideas. For thirty years Sharon Draper was an English

teacher in the Cincinnati, Ohio, Public School System, implanting her love of reading and writing in generations of children, and rousing them to reach for their extreme dreams. In 1997 she received the highest honor an education can be given when President Bill Clinton named her the U.S. Teacher of the year. As a result Draper became a spokesperson for the teaching profession, embarking the globe to talk about the significance of perfection in the classroom. In 1994 the devoted teacher became an author, releasing her first children's book, *Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs* since then she has composed numerous books equipped towards children and young adult, Draper is also a poet and a nonfiction writer. Her books have won countless prizes, including the Coretta Scott King award given annually by the American Library Association to authors and illustrators of African American descent Draper's most recent young adult novel *The Battle of Jericho*, was named the Coretta Scott King Honor Book of 2004.

Sharon Draper recognized her parents for introducing her to the world of books in many of her interviews. Books filled the Mills home and Catherine Mills read to her three children each night starting when they were very young by the time Draper began school she was already a self-described bookworm. She said that, "I inhaled books and knowledge", the author commented on her web site. Draper made clear that for her parent's education was a precious commodity. Victor and Catherine cheered their children to study and work hard and as a result they could reach whatever goal they set for themselves. When Draper was a little girl, her parents saw her and her brother and sister as one of those bright flames of possibility.

The school library is a place where Draper found herself and shines brightly. While still in elementary school Draper also realized that one day she wanted to become



a teacher. She said, "I was probably born to become a teacher", she revealed on her web site. She singles out one woman, in particular, who dealt as a distinctive role model; her fifth grade teachers, Mrs. Kathadaza Mann. According to Draper, Mann taught her students about Black history long before it was an acknowledged part of the curriculum. She said, "I write because I care about young people. I write because I teach".

Mann also introduced them to classic literature, art and music. Draper said that Mann was one of the first teachers; who Draper brought to mind, who taught her to read analytically, to think critically, and to speak fearlessly. Draper breezed through high school, taking advanced and honours and graduated a National Merit scholar National Merit Scholarships are awarded each year to a handful of students who achieve excellence on the college placement examination, the SAT. With scholarship in hand, Draper enrolled at Pepperdine University, located in Malibu, California. In 1971, when she was just twenty years old, Draper graduated with a degree in English .she earned a master master's degree in 1974. During the same period, she married Larry Draper, who is also a teacher. The couple has four children.

Once a student of Draper asked her, don't you write something, so she started to write. He gave her an application for a short story contest and she wrote the story, and Draper won first prize. She got her picture on the front page of the Cincinnati Enquirer, and she got a letter from Alex Haley that said, "Dear Mrs. Draper, I think you're a wonderful writer". She always cherishes that letter. It really hurt her when Mr. Haley passed away because he was the only who said, she could be a writer, but he didn't get to see it.

She had started writing since 1981. Some of her notable works are as follows: *Tears of a Tiger* has obtained various awards, along with the American Library Association / Coretta Scott King Award for an outstanding new book, and was also honored as an ALA Best Books for Young Adults. It has been identified as one of the best book of the year by the Children's Book Council, the New York City Library, Bank Street College, and the National Council for social studies. It was also titled Best of the Best by YOYA.

*Forged by Fire*, the sequel to *Tears of a Tiger*, was the 1997 Coretta Scott King Award winner, as well as the title-holder of the ALA Best Book Award and the Parent's Choice Award and the Indian Young Hoosier Award. *Romiette and Julio* is also filed as an ALA Best Book and has been chosen by the International Reading Association as a 2000 notable book for Global Society and by the New York Public Library in their Books for the Teen Age. *Darkness Before Dawn*, the third book in the trilogy, is an ALA Top Ten Quick Pick, and has earned the Children's Choice Award from the International Reading Association and received the Buckeye Book Award for 2005, and was entitled as IRA Young Adult Choice for 2003.

*The Battle of Jericho* is the 2004 Coretta Scott King Award, one of the New York Public Library's Books for the Teen Age, and is one of the 2005 Young Adult Choice Books termed by the International Reading Association. *We Beat the Street* is indexed on the New York Times Bestseller List and is a VOYA's Non-Fiction Honor List 2006 and is dignified on the 2006 New York Public Library Beat Books for the Teen Age.

*Copper Sun* obtained the 2007 Coretta Scott King Award, was named as one of the Top Ten Historical Fiction Books for Young by Booklist was designated for 2007 NAACP Image Award for Literature, and received the Ohioana Award for Young Adult



Literature. *Copper Sun* is also a CBC/NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book, received the Heartland Award for greatness in YA Literature, was named as an IRA Notable Book for a Global Society and was named as a Best Book of the Year by School Library Journals. *Copper Sun* is also catalogued on the New York Times Bestseller List. *November Blues* acquired the 2008 Coretta Scott King Award is honored on the 2008 New York Public Library Best Books for the Teen Age.

*Out of My Mind* was published in 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and was chosen as the titleholder of the 2013 Sasquatch Reading Award by the readers of Washington State and the 2013 Bluestem Award by the third through fifth graders of Illinois. It won the 2013 California Youth Reader Medal and the 2013 Nevada Young Reader Award. It is a realistic fiction.

Realistic fiction a genre comprise of stories that could have literally occurred to people or animals in a credible setting. These stories echo real life. The fictional characters within these stories react comparably to real people. Stories that are categorized as realistic fiction have plots that culminate social or personal occurrence or problems that mirror contemporary life such as slipping in love, marriage, finding job, divorce, drunkenness, etc. The characters seem like real people with real issues worked out in realistic fiction and molded in such a way with problems a reader could face in everyday life.

Sharon Draper, who herself had a child with cerebral palsy though she particularly stated that *Out of My Mind* was not based on her daughter's story. Posses the sparking, cramped mind and insensitive body of their child. The book resembles Terry Truman fixed in Neutral or Harriet Mc Bryde Johnson's Accidents of Nature that makes

readers aware of their own biases, and of what a great injustice those biases do to human beings whose outer apparel belie on unimaginable intelligence within. Draper's book is unique for the way she evidenced Melody's journey and her endeavor to communicate as far back as she could remember. In often poetic language, Melody described how early she,

Began to recognize noises and smells and tastes,

The whump and whoosh of the furnace coming alive each morning,

The tangy odor of heated dust as the house warmed up.

The feel of a sneeze in the back of my throat. (5)

The author evenly structured the book in a way that constructed anticipation while also constitution a fuller picture of Melody's daily life.



## Chapter Two

### Argumentum Analysis on Impairment

Robert M. Hensel, born with the birth defect known as Spina bifida told that "There is no greater disability in a society, than the inability to see a person as more". A significant portion of our population has impairments which reduce their ability to effectively or safely use standard consumer products. These impairments may be acquired at birth or through accident or disease. Note that much impairment which results in disabilities is associated with aging. This is especially significant, as the population as a whole is growing older. Although there is tremendous variety of specific causes, as well as combinations and severity of disabilities, we can most easily relate their basic impact to the use of consumer products by looking at four major categories of impairment.

A disability is a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness, and various types of chronic disease.

A disability is any continuing condition that restricts everyday activities. The Disability Service Act (1993) defines 'disability' as: which is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments. This is permanent or likely to be permanent. This may or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature. This results in substantiality reduced capacity of the person for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services. With the assistance of appropriate aids and services, the restrictions experienced by many people with a disability may be overcome.

Disabilities affect people in different ways. Many people associate the 'disabled' with someone who is in wheelchair, or who is blind or deaf. They have the attitude that people with a disability are totally different and therefore need to be treated differently. Unfortunately, this kind of stereotyping is in itself a form of discrimination. People with a disability come in variety of shapes, size, colours, sex and culture – just as we all do. The only thing that separates a person with a disability is that, for one reason or another, they are unable to do certain thing in the same way as the people of the mainstream of society. They may require some form of adaptation or alteration to assist them to overcome the effect of their disability. There may be effects on organs or body parts and there may be effects on a person's participation in areas of life. - this is a restriction or loss of ability due to impairment in performing an activity in a manner or range considered normal for a human being of that developmental stage.

The condition of being unable to do things in the normal way: the condition of being disabled. A program that provides financial support to a disabled person.

A disability defined as, "a condition which may restrict a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions to undertake or perform a task in the same way as a person who does not have a disability". Section 1(2) of the DDA defines a 'disabled person' for the purposes of the Act as a person who has a 'disability'. A person has a 'disability' if: 'he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on her or his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

'Impairment' is concerned with abnormalities of body structure and appearance or of organ and system functioning, resulting from any cause. One can use 'impairment' in



conjunction with speech, hearing, sight and mobility or either other forms of loss or abnormality. A person may also be "impaired" either by a correctable condition or by an uncorrectable one such as cerebral palsy.

'Disability' is the functional consequence of impairment, in terms of altered functional performance and activity by the individual. People may be disabled by physical, intellectual or sensory conditions or illness may be permanent or temporary in nature. A permanent physical or sensory or intellectual impairment substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities, including reading, writing and other aspects of education; holding a job; and managing various essential functions of life such as dressing, bathing, and eating.

Some persons have been disabled since birth. Some people become more disabled over time. Some other become suddenly, because of an accident or a disease. It is not possible to prevent all impairments. Some babies form disabled inside the womb and no one knows why. But some disabilities in babies are caused by harmful conditions of women's lives. If women can get enough nutritious food to eat, they can protect themselves from work with toxic chemicals and can get good health care, including care at the time of child birth, many disabilities could be prevented. Poverty and Malnutrition, War, Nuclear Accidents, Poor access to Health Care, Illness, Medicines and Injections, Dangerous work conditions, Accidents, Poisons and Pesticides are some of the causes of disabilities.

Types of disabilities include various physical and mental impairments that can hamper or reduce a person's ability to carry out his day activities. These impairments can be termed as disability of the person to do his or her day to day activities. IDEA

(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) list different disability categories under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services. These categories are autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, hearing impairment, developmental delay, traumatic brain injury, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, special learning disability, speech or language impairment, and visual impairment including blindness.

Speech and language disorders may result from hearing loss, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, or physical conditions. The disorder may result in stuttering, problems with articulation, voice disorders. Though certain disorders may improve with speech therapy, anxiety and stress often accompany oral communication and exacerbate the problem. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to. Modifications of assignments, such as one-to-one presentation or use of computer with voice. Written reports may be substituted for oral class reports.

Someone who is physically challenged has a problem with their body that makes it difficult for them to do things that other people can do easily. The term "orthopedic" refers to impairments of the skeletal system, including the spine, other bones and associated muscles, according to the Dictionary. Orthopedic handicaps are conditions of the skeletal system that limits a person's abilities. Children who are handicapped physically to the extent that they need assistance of others to go school. There are many children who are born with physical disabilities. However, the disabilities do not have to limit their life or natural talents if they are supported and encouraged correctly. Although physical challenged children do have to endure certain challenges, they are capable of



fulfilling their dreams by learning how to adapt and adjust to certain situations instead of giving up.

Physically challenged children are all challenged with physical limitations to some degree. Many physically challenged children suffer from a lack of coordination, weak muscles, stiff muscles, or no muscles strength at all. Rehabilitation and physical therapy can greatly assist physically challenged children in lessening and even resolving the over time. All of the necessary equipment and safety measures should be taken in order to allow the child to be as mobile and independent as possible.

It is important for parents, family members, friends, and teachers to monitor a physically challenged child's emotional state. At times, physical limitations can lead to frustration, anger and sadness. The emotional outlook of the child is often directly impacted by the level of support and encouragement that is received from the people around them. In some cases, it is beneficial for the child to see a therapist or enroll in a therapy program with animal or physical activities that increase his confidence.

Although some children with physical disabilities also have mental disabilities many children are mentally strong and just as capable as any other child. It is important that parents and teachers encourage physically challenged children to excel in school and discover their individual talents and strengths. Parents and teachers must recognize the gifts of the child and not limit them mentally because of physical disabilities. Educational program such as no special schooling, self-reliance, to develop self-concept, to develop creativity, occupation centre, and service of physiotherapist, school counselors and language skills should be given to the disabled students.

Some characters in this novel *Out of My Mind* brought the new acknowledgement about the wonders of life. Melody Brooks was one of the most significant characters in this novel. Here is the analysis of some themes from her problems with certain people. Her disabilities, struggles, and insecurities have provided more lessons. Yet, all create the same concept. Melody's conflicts in Sharon M. Draper's *Out Of My Mind* teach the themes of believing in oneself, respect, acceptance, friendships, etc.

Melody was a dazzling, ambitious, hard-working young woman with cerebral palsy, a neurological disorder that affects her muscles and movement. Melody spend her life in a navigating world, largely out-of-the-way to her, both because her own body is hard to control, and because people in her life undervalued and tormented her. Sharon Draper portrayed Melody's anger and frustration that nobody can accept her abilities, but she also made clear that this prejudice doesn't only harm Melody. Melody's classmates' left out her from the quiz bowl competition hurts the team. Their unfairness causes them to send away a person who could have made main contributions.

In the novel, physical disability often masked mental ability. Active adults and children imagine that Melody and other students with disabilities have no feelings, preferences, individuality, or potential. For example, Melody's physician, Dr. Hugely, assumes Melody was not smart because she has difficulty in answering his test questions. Although Melody knew the answers, she cannot actually act upon the tasks he asks her to do. Dr. Hugely by mistake believed that Melody was "severely brain-damaged," and suggested her parent's to send her away from home to a residential facility or a "special school for the developmentally disabled." Additionally, the students in Melody's program were often subjected to frustratingly simple lessons. One year, although Melody was in



the third grade, the teacher began each morning by playing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" and going over the alphabet. This finally led the students to revolt, as they're bored by the boring lessons that were far below their capacity level.

This book *Out of My Mind* emphasized that people with disabilities have talents in addition to, and in spite of, their boundaries. Melody had a photographic memory and a passion for language. She ultimately used this ability to join her school's Whiz Kid quiz team and won the regional competition. Melody observed the talents of the other students in the competition which was held for disabled students. She noticed that, not like the regular kids at her school, not one of the other boys and girls in her program but she knew, how to signify each and every one and she also identified some unique qualities about him or her. For example, Willy was the basketball expert, Gloria the music lover, and Maria had no enemies.

One major conflict in *Out of My Mind* that taught some of the most important themes was Melody's relationship with the two bullies of Spaulding Street Elementary School: Claire and Molly. By the middle of the book, Melody won the first round to join the Whiz Kids Quiz Team. At once, Molly blurted out that, "It wasn't fair! She had a helper who whispers the answers to her." Claire added that, "She must have cheated!". Claire and Molly always made offensive comments about Melody, as well as some of the kids in Room H-5 throughout the book. From these remarks, readers well-read to be even nicer. We've also been trained that some people didn't paid attention to the beauty of what was inside. Readers have learned this because Molly and Claire had taunted others for what they look liked outside. This showed a big theme of respect. This teaches to be polite to others no matter who they were. On the other hand, Rose,

Melody's so called friend, and Melody's conflicts taught a different lesson. At first, Rose treated Melody like a true friend. Eventually, Melody started noticing how Rose got embarrassed of her easily and how Rose would leave her out. This was same in the case of Claire and Molly state. Claire and Molly would say disrespectful things to her face. When Melody got to know Rose well again, she invited her to the aquarium with her family. At the aquarium, they encountered Claire and Molly. Rose told them that she was there with Melody and her family. In reply, Claire asks, "On purpose?" She asked this while laughing loudly. Rose tried to say quietly, "It's not so bad." But Melody heard her anyway. Another time, Rose and the other Whiz Kids didn't report to Melody of the flight delay. They went to Washington without her. Rose was supposed to call Melody to tell her, but she never did. She thought it was too late. Melody was overwhelmed with sadness because of this situation. Unlike the lessons of respect and kindness, that the situations with Rose taught more about friendship. It demonstrated the thought that friends would change. Some would leave out. Some would use. Some friends were not real.

The topics of friendship and respect show the way to another life lesson that can be learned. That would be acceptance. People around Melody had to accept her disorder and should understand who she was, which wasn't always easy. Melody had to acknowledge herself as well! And was one of the most important themes in this novel. When Melody got her medi talker, no one was willing to accept it. This was a significant inconsistency and important aspect in the book. This happened because at last Melody was able to use words which created a whole new perspective on her life. Melody got



many unusual reactions from others when she first brought her medi talker to her school. Her classmates told that,

They make computers for the special eddies?

It sounds weird.

What could she possibly have to say anyway? (141)

"That sure is a funny looking computer! But I guess it's perfect for a kid like you." Claire said this to Melody. On the other hand, Melody got some positive reactions. "That's awesome, Melody!" "Melody is ready to rock, y'all!" "I'm so happy for you Melody!" Connor, Mrs. Shannon, and Rose gave positive compliments to Melody. This novel taught that one should accept everyone and everything because each had their own stories and conflicts that may be going through. Throughout this novel *Out Of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, Melody's conflict with Claire and Molly which taught us respect and influence our eagerness to see the beauty what was inside. Melody's conflicts with Rose taught about friendship and how it changes. Melody's conflicts with the medi talker, her disorder, etc., taught about acceptance. Instead of all struggles, Melody didn't lose her heart. But, she took the right path and told the readers about the true value of life.

*Out of My Mind* was interested in the way that everyone was somehow disabled, whether physically or mentally. The book argued that deficits like a lack of empathy can be limited in the same way as a medically-diagnosed disability. Melody's mother points out that, although Dr. Hugely had a medical degree, he was not better than she or her daughter,

You've got it easy—you have all your physical functions working properly. You never have to struggle just to be understood. You think you're smart because you have a medical degree?... You're not so intelligent, sir you're just lucky! (26)

Melody programs her Medi-Talker, an own computer that speaks for her, to answer questions about her condition. She had two default answers, one that was easy, and explained the ways in which she was and was not disabled:

I have spastic bilateral quadriplegia, also known as cerebral palsy.

It limits my body but not my mind. (168)

The other, while more playful, was still true she would ask, "We all have disabilities. What's yours?" Melody's aide, Catherine, also protected Melody against fellow students who question her perfect score on a quiz. Catherine argues,

What your body looks like has nothing to do with how well your brain works! You ought to know that by looking in the mirror (152)

Throughout the novel, Draper argued that disability occurred on a spectrum, and could coexist with extraordinary ability. She cautioned against writing off those with visible disabilities, as Melody had insights and talents to offer to her wider, able-bodied community.

Draper in her novel *Out of My Mind* also dealt with the power of language, and it explored in depth the ability of language to forge mutual understanding and shape personal identity. Melody, although she cannot speak, had a rich inner life constructed through her own internal monologue. She saw herself about her language ability, but other people assumed that her inability to speak meant that she had no language ability



perceived her much differently than she perceived herself. Melody's journey from nonverbal to communicating through her personal computer radically changed the way she interacted with the world and how she was treated by others. As Melody's ability to communicate shifted throughout the text, her satisfaction with the wider world grew.

Language represented freedom to Melody. Before she could communicate, her thoughts and imagination allow her to transcend the limitations of her body. And finally she could communicate finally Melody was able to participate better in the world. She could have conversations, make jokes, ask questions, and speak up in class. Initially, Melody had a Plexiglas tray attached to her wheelchair, which allowed her to "say" a few basic words. She described being rapt by this limited vocabulary as living

In a cage with no door and no key.

And I have no way to tell someone how to get me out. (38)

The book was framed by the same passage repeated twice, in which Melody praised the power of words. Although she can't speak, words gave her a sense of agency because of their potential for self-expression. Since she can't speak, words became even more valuable: she observed that,

Everybody uses words to express themselves. Except me. And I bet most people don't realize the real power of words. But I do. (8)

Public perception of Melody was entirely based on her ability to communicate her thoughts and emotions. Her Medi-Talker, the personal computer that spoke instead of her, allowed Melody to better connection with her parents and classmates, although it does not allowed her to fit in completely. After getting the Medi-Talker which was named as Elvira, Melody was the centre of notice for the first time. She cracks jokes in

class, answers questions, and even asks other student to be her friend. Although Melody's parents understood her to some extent and believed that she understood them, one of the novel's most moving moments was when Melody first spoke to her parents through Elvira and told them that she loves them.

Although communication was most often liberating in the novel, when it fails or breaks down, it led to distress and tragedy. Even with Elvira, Melody was sometimes unable to make herself understood. As a young child, Melody's goldfish jumped out of its bowl. Unable to call her mother, Melody had to watch her fish die. She carried that guilt with her throughout the novel. Similarly, in the novel's climax, Melody saw her little sister Penny who ran out behind her mother's car. Although Melody tried her best to alert her mother, her mother doesn't understand her message without words, and backs the car into Penny. Melody blamed herself for being unable to help her sister, but Mrs. Valancia tried to explain to Melody that she did everything right.

In this novel *Out of My Mind* Draper also showed that language is a tool whose absence could be an unbearable burden. When Melody was able to exchange a few words she was given a new kind of liberty, and a new ability to mingle. However, when she was unable to converse, either because Elvira was not available or she was not quick enough to pass on her opinion, Melody was left trapped and irritated with a mind full of words and a body unable to convey them.

One of the book central conflicts revolved around Melody's desired to fit in and to take part with other people and academically with the active students at her school. Although she made improvement in certain friendships and was accepted to some extent



by her Whiz Kids team, the book left open the question of whether Melody will ever truly "fit in."

At times, Melody wanted nothing more than to feel like a "normal" child who could easily be incorporated into the general population at her school. However, what kept Melody from being "normal" also defined she was as a person. Melody was often upset when her body acts in ways that were not "normal." For example, when Melody got mad or excited she has what she called "tornado explosions," physical fits where she cannot control her body. She resented these, and at one point she lamented that she couldn't even express her frustration in a way that felt suitable. She told,

I feel like stomping on something.

Stomping and stomping and stomping!

That makes me even crazier because I can't even do that!

I can't even get mad like a normal kid. (263)

When Melody told her neighbour and sometimes caretaker Mrs. V that she wished she were "normal," Mrs. V explained,

Normal sucks!...People love you because you're Melody, not because of what you can or cannot do.

Give us a little credit. (281)

Negative response was a large part in Draper's *Out of My Mind*, and Melody evolved in her ability to deal with it. Instead of seeing rejection as a personal letdown, she grew to understand that not everyone was willing or ready to believe her and her abilities, and there is nothing she could do but try her best, being herself, and educate those who do not understand her. Although students and teachers tend to accept Melody,

they don't automatically see her as an intellectual equal. *Out of My Mind* then depicted acceptance as a spectrum. In the end, Melody was either completely rejected or unequivocally accepted by her classmates. Melody must settle for only biased recognition academically, on the Whiz Kids team, and in her friendships. Melody wished to be "normal," but she can't force her classmates to accept her disability. Instead she must focus on what she could control, what she could learn to accept herself, her limitations and abilities.

This novel *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper explored the themes like courage, communication, friendship, and being left out with a beautiful touch. Listen:

Words have always swirled around me like snowflakes—each one  
delicate and different,

each one melting untouched in my hands. (1)

This is what is trapped inside Melody, a brilliant eleven-year old with a disabled body that won't allow her to communicate.

### Chapter Three

#### The Power of Unconditional Love

Melody's family was significant because it holds everyone responsible to caring for everyone else. Meanwhile that it brought about a intellect of belonging and protection. It led to remorse when characters thought they have caused family members pain, or have been unable to fulfill essential obligations. Importantly, *Out of My Mind* does not identify family as only biological relatives. The book also incorporated those who love and support Melody as a part of her family.

I believe in me. And my family does. And Mrs. V.

It's the rest of the world I'm not so sure of. (174)

Melody's next-door neighbour, Mrs. V, was as much a part of her family as her mother, father or sister. Mrs. V saw Melody's ability and challenged her in ways that her parents do not, by guiding her for Whiz Kids taught her how to fall carefully out of her wheelchair as a small child. Melody thought that Catherine, was also a family to her. Catherine greeted Melody's cleverness and defended her against other students who tried to oppress her and damage her academic activities.

Melody's extended family unit provided a vital support network to her even though teachers, doctors, and other students dismissed Melody for being inefficient or speechless or tactless. Melody's mother advocated her in medical settings and in school. In general, Melody's mom enhanced her emotions, and Melody was often jovial in her presence. Melody's mom can, be a true accompanying person for Melody at certain period. Melody's mom was a true hero for Melody. Melody's mother was like Melody's guardian angel, next to Mrs. V. She understood Melody and believed that she was very



smart beneath it all. She was always supportive of Melody, and fights her battles for her, even if the teacher was a bully. When Melody was around 11, she had a baby named Penny, who is Melody's younger sister. Also she had an almost natural "mom sense" and picked up more or less however Melody tries to communicate with her. In addition, Melody's mom sticks up on Melody because she knew how smart Melody was. She said to Mr. Dimming, sponsor of Whiz Kids,

No, I don't understand. Why weren't we called?

We could have easily been at the airport an hour earlier.

We could have been there at dawn.

Do you know how much this devastated my daughter? (264)

"yes, I'm aware she's probably the brightest person on the team.

Was. The word is WAS. There is no IS.

You'll make it to her? You've got to be kidding! (264)

Melody's close association with her mother made her feel safe and secure. It developed a sense of confidence within her. She was quite sure that someone would fight for her and understand her feeling. Sometime, Melody's mom was angry and irritated with melody. She said,

Stop it! Are you crazy?

I can't take any more, Melody!

I hate it when you get like this.

You've got to learn to control yourself! Now Quit! (275)

When her mom was angry, she felt out of control and powerless. Overall, Melody's emotions were uplifted by her mother.



Dad's love to Melody revolved around her. He spends more time with her by reading books to her at night. Melody's dad was often honest in what he said to her. He never sugarcoats anything. However, his unrestricted love for her was clear. Melody's dad said,

Your life is not going to be easy, little Melody.

If I could switch places with you, I'd do it in a heartbeat.

You know that, don't you? (11)

Her father builds her a ramp that allowed her to move more easily. Her dad took Melody outside at night and whispered in her ear about the stars and the moon and the night wind.

The stars up there are putting on a show just for you, kid.

Look at that amazing display of sparkle! And feel that wind?

It's trying to tickle your toes. (12)

Melody felt amazed to have her dad's honesty in her life, and she felt that she could trust him. In addition, he wanted Melody to be well-groomed and wanted her to live her life to the fullest. He said to Mrs. V,

Well, Melody is, well, you know, really special.

We want her to reach her highest potential.

Bring her back in twenty years. (41)

Later on, when Melody got ditched at the airport on their trip to Washington, DC, he got so angry that he punched a wall "without warning."

Catherine a college student was Melody's personal aide or "mobility assistant." She understood Melody and acted as a tutor for her. She was with Melody always and went wherever she moved; only if it was in school. She had a very distinctive style of

clothing, and personality. She absolutely loved Melody and supported her, just like her mom and Mrs. V. She helped Melody in her tests or her lunch, moved around the school, went to the bathroom, and took part in class. She had a peculiar sense of style and good sense of humor, and cared deeply about Melody, sometimes defending her when other students don't believe in her abilities. She said,

You want something especially designed for you.

That's just plain brilliant, Melody! (124)

Catherine understood that Melody doesn't want a laptop, but a special computer, just for her, for communication. Catherine promised to explore a computer for Melody. This event sparks the Medi-Talker idea. Melody felt comfortable and self-assured in classes. When Melody received an electronic talking device, she could express herself which should have been a pure delight. However, her classmates still focused on her differences. Even when Melody proved her intelligence by joining the quiz team, she got excluded.

She talked to me like I was just like any other student, not a kid in a wheelchair.

I tried not to kick,

but it was hard to hold in my excitement. (104)

Draper's *Out of My Mind* gave an explanation of strength even though the situation was hard. Melody was surrounded by a loving family and also finally a good teacher who pushed her for inclusion classes. Mrs. V, the neighbor and care giver was the only person who truly accepted Melody's abilities and potential and never pities Melody. An extremely vital relationship in the book was Melody's relationship with Ms. V, who was also called as Mrs. Valencia, She was Melody's neighbour. She was almost like



Melody's best friend, except for the fault that she was an adult. She babysits Melody and her baby sister Penny. She always cheered everything that Melody did and was absolutely kind to her. She supported and helped her in whatever she did. Melody's mom and dad depended on her for helping Melody in her education and progress. Also, Melody did everything Mrs. V said, because she knew Mrs. V was right about everything, and she was also very wise. Melody and her parents trust Mrs. V one hundred percent. Melody said that,

Mrs. V is, well, like a tree,

and then my mom is a twig to her. (39)

She drives Melody to be her best and always tries her hardest, even when she was stressed with or when she thought she was unable to do something. Melody said,

I was on my back, stuck like a turtle. I screamed louder.

Mrs. V sat down on the quilt. "Turn over, Melody.

Sometimes she can make her voice really soft.

You're a smart little cookie. (42)

Melody said quietly Ms. V also believed in Melody's brain and helps others that intelligence by expanding Melody's vocabulary. The effect of all of Mrs. V's work was to give Melody the self-belief to try out and study for the quiz team which was a large part of the book. Overall, Mrs. V changed Melody's inferior thought about herself by boosting her confidence when there was none.

Mrs. Valencia helped Melody in keeping her emotions stable and content. She was Melody's friend and neighbour. The first day Mrs. Valencia met Melody, she put her on the floor and began to play music. She then came back with a toy and encouraged

Melody to turn over. Melody worked hard to please Mrs. Valencia, and eventually she turned over. The way Mrs. Valencia treated Melody and expected her to be able to do things made their relationship so different. It made Melody feel more confident. She learned a lot academically here, like when Mrs. V made her new words for her communication board, and taught her how to make certain gestures to signal her parents to get something for her. Mrs. Valencia's house was like her second home!

Melody would have probably given up many things like Whiz Kids team or her Medi-Talker without Mrs. Valencia. These were important values in Melody's life, and without them, she would be a very diverse person. In conclusion, the relationship between Mrs. Valencia and Melody was a very important part of Melody's emotions and overall life.

Teachers and doctors have similar, and at other times differing, effects on Melody's emotions. Doctors such as Dr. Hugely and teachers like Mrs. Billups both have the same concern on Melody. They both made her feel useless and unintelligent. Dr. Hugely asked slowly and loudly, "Can you stack these in order according to size?" He acted as if Melody was slow to process and hard of hearing. Mrs. Billups also made Melody feel stupid when, she said, "Let's all say 'buh' together, children." This later impacted Melody's actions by causing Melody to have a "tornado explosion". On the other hand, some of Melody's teachers made her feel intelligent or worthy. Mrs. Shannon said about Melody,

This child's got some serious smarts!

She's going to be our star in this program. (103)

Melody mentioned that,



Doctors really don't get me.

Mom's a nurse, so I guess she speaks their language, but they sure don't know to talk to me. (18)

These quotes show that Melody's teachers can at times be great for Melody's emotions; while doctors always end up hurting Melody's emotions. In addition, to further prove that doctors only hurt Melody, Dr. Hugely said,

Mrs. Brooks, it is my opinion that Melody is severely brain-damaged and profoundly retarded. (22)

In summary, many similarities and differences exist in the relationships between Melody and her teachers and doctors.

On Melody's eighth birthday, her parents gave her a golden retriever puppy. Melody named the dog Butterscotch after her much loved candy. Butterscotch was a good dog; she slept at Melody's feet every night and knew that Melody loved her even if Melody can't say it. A few months after Melody got Butterscotch she was sitting in the living room watching *The Wizard of Oz* and fell out of her wheelchair. Butterscotch made sure she wasn't hurt, and scratched at the door until Melody's mother came to verify on them. Sitting watching the movie afterwards, Melody wondered what she'd ask the Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* for. Watching *The Wizard of Oz* gave Melody a chance to feel about how her life would be different if she could wish away some aspects of her disability. She doesn't wish to be "normal," but just wishes that she could better express herself through song and dance. Butterscotch became a member of Melody's extended loving family. She was one more creature who cared for Melody, and went out of her way and made sure that Melody was safe and happy.

All these actions showed Melody how much her dad and her whole family cared about her and how much her success means to them. As a result, Melody felt much love and secured. Mrs. V and Catherine jointly helped Melody to find a Medi-Talker to allow her to better communicate with the world. However family comes with a sense of responsibility for one another. This meant that family members felt guilt when they believed they haven't done enough to help each other out. Melody's mother blamed herself for Melody's illness. She told Melody's father,

I'm the mother...It was my job to bring a child into the world safely,

and I screwed it up! Every other woman on the planet is able to give birth to a normal baby. There must be something wrong with me! (74)

When Melody's little sister Penny was hit by their mother's car, Melody blamed herself. She felt as though she should have tried harder to make her mother aware of that Penny was behind the car, and at the same time she worried that her own frustration with Penny in some way led to the accident. Melody was even more troubled that Penny would become brain damaged or physically disabled by the accident and would therefore endure the same hardships as Melody.

The bonds of family were significant and they help the characters in *Out of My Mind* deal with an unfriendly outside world. But family could also be a source of stress when family members worry they've by mistakenly hurt one another. Melody often understood she can't support her family in the same way they've supported her. But they made sure to let her know that they appreciate her, and that she was doing all she could. Although her family could be a source a pain. Penny, Catherine, Mrs. V, and Melody's

parents also make up her strongest safety net. Because they are bond together, in nature and by choice, Melody's family works to address any pain they've caused one another.



## Chapter Four

### Narrative Style and Techniques

Narratives are works that present an account of connected events. To put it merely, a narrative is a story. There are many types of literature that are considered narratives, including novels, dramas, fables, folk tales, short stories, and poetry. In addition to literature, narratives are found in cinema, music, and theatre.

Narrative techniques supply deeper meaning for the reader and help the reader use imagination to visualize situations. Narrative literary techniques are also known as literary devices. Before we look too closely at narrative techniques, it is important to understand that literary elements in narratives include such things as the setting, plot, theme, style or structure, characters, and perspective, or voice of the story, since literary techniques are best understood in the context of one of these elements.

Draper's style and tone in the novel *Out of My Mind* were informative and advocating. It was obvious that Draper wrote this story for a purpose. That was to make others conscious of the capabilities and the injustices to those with special needs. Draper dedicates this story *Out of My Mind* to her daughter who has special needs. Draper's used the didactic style and tone of the language and terms which is used in special education today. And provides information on varying disabilities. Draper provides awareness but does not ask for sympathy through her style and tone.

The point of view is of course first person through the mind of Melody. One get full insight into her brilliant mind hopes and dreams as she shares what turns out to be an autobiography of sorts. This point of view creates a great and exciting feeling as the reader enters the mind of a girl who was unable to speak but has so much to say. Draper



employs allusions, imagery and paradox in this novel *Out of My Mind*. The novelist's command over the language is very impressive.

Allusions are an essential part of understanding literature because they give a deeper understanding of an author's message. Draper skillfully draws upon allusions to give a story and form more meaning or to provide clues about her message. When Melody answered the questions asked by her teacher for the first time in a contest called Whiz Kidz, Melody felt extremely good. She thought that everyone will accept her and praise her for being intelligent. Unfortunately, that did not happen but the teacher decided to change the questions on the quiz, thinking that the questions were too easy if Melody was able to answer them. What the teacher suggested through this was the idea that Melody was mentally retarded and that the only possible way she could have got every question right was because the questions were too easy. Mr. Dimming told that,

If Melody Brooks can win the first round,

Then my questions must not be difficult enough!

We're all going to rally to win the competition! (155)

Mr. Kingsley explained that,

The questions this time will be a bit more difficult... (218)

This allusion showed just how Melody was treated in a condescending way more than often and how she was affected in a negative way by their suggestions.

Imagery is the literary term used for language and narrative that appeal to our five senses. In this novel *Out of My Mind* Draper used imagery to appeal to our sense of smell, sight, taste, touch, or hearing.

Melody after getting her medical device, she was able to converse with her family and with those around her and her mother was overwhelmed to see just how smart her daughter was. In this scene, Melody's mother portrayed her own daughter as a special needs child, a person who achieved a great success when she managed to learn a few more words. Mrs. V disagreed with Melody's mother who claimed that she should not be so amazed to see her daughter function like a normal child. This idea highlighted the fact that Melody's mother did not see her as a normal child but rather as a special needs person who needed to be treated different.

A paradox is an apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement in sense that, superficially, cannot be true but also cannot be false. Here, in this novel *Out of My Mind* Draper used paradox, this was evidenced through Melody. Melody had trouble in communicating with others because she was incapable to make them realize her. Because of that, Melody hoped that Elvira, the communicating device, would help her integrate in good way and hoped that it would also help her make new friends. Paradoxically however, after getting Elvira, Melody claimed that there were times when she felt even more isolated than before because it made her realize that in some cases, the reason why some children were avoiding her was not because they feared they could not talk with her but because they didn't want anything to do with Melody.

In this novel *Out of My Mind*, there are two major terms mentioned, one is Cerebral Palsy and the other is Synesthesia. Cerebral Palsy is a group of permanent movement disorders that appear in early childhood. Cerebral Palsy is considered a neurological disorder caused by a non-progressive brain injury or malformation that occurs while the child's brain is under development. Cerebral Palsy primarily affects

body movement and muscle coordination. While Cerebral Palsy is commonly referred to as "CP" and described by loss or impairment of motor function, Cerebral Palsy is actually caused by brain damage. This brain damage is caused by brain injury or abnormal development of the brain that occurs while a child's brain is still developing – before birth, during birth, or immediately after birth.

The word "cerebral" refers to the brain's cerebrum, which is the part of the brain that regulates motor function. "Palsy" describes a paralysis of voluntary movement in certain body parts. Cerebral Palsy affects body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture and balance. It can also impact fine motor skills, gross motor skills and oral motor functioning.

Cerebral palsy is a disorder that affects the body's ability to control its movements. The name comes from cerebral, which means something related to the brain, and palsy, a loss of motion. Cerebral palsy is caused when part of an infant's brain develops abnormally during pregnancy, or when an infant is injured before, during, or right after birth. The disorder cannot be cured, but it does not get worse over a person's lifetime. Everyone with cerebral palsy has a somewhat different set of symptoms, from weakness in their arms, to tremors, to a complete loss of movement. Melody Brooks, the protagonist of *Out of My Mind* was born with cerebral palsy, and as an outcome her body is very stiff, which makes it hard for her control her motions, and made it impossible for her to speak.

Melody explained that,

I can't walk.

I can't talk.



I can't feed myself or take myself to the bathroom.

Big bummer. (3)

Because she had cerebral palsy, which made her body stiff, affected her stability, and prevented her from holding anything in her hands. She could use a TV remote and operate an electric wheelchair, but she needed the wheelchair to move everyplace. Melody told,

I have spastic bilateral quadriplegia, also known as cerebral palsy.

It limits my bod, but not my mind.

We all have disabilities.

What's yours? (168)

Melody's imagery of her disability was in stark contrasts to her clear and amusing narration. She knew that, based on her looks, most people think she was not engaged with the world. Her narration made clear, though, that she was always engaged and observant.

Synesthesia is a state in which one sense makes a person experiences another sense. In *Out of My Mind*, for example, Melody was synesthetic; when she heard music she could see colors and smell scents related to the song. The most common form of synesthesia involved associating particular letters of the alphabet, words, and numbers with colors. However, everyone experienced synesthesia differently and had a different mixture of related senses.

Melody could remember being a baby, being bathed by her mother and watching her dad records her on his camcorder. She realized now that her father was waiting for developmental milestones, like her first steps, which she never took. She was hyper-aware of the world around her, and she was able to recall it many years later. She



remembered that her parents played music, which was extra special for her because she had synesthesia. Melody also emphasized the importance of her parents, whose love and concern have made her life more acceptable.

A motif is a recurring symbol which takes on a figurative meaning. It can be seen in books, films, and poems. In fact, almost every text commonly uses the literary device of the motif. There are nearly five motifs in this novel. A common motif in the novel was the idea that Melody's mother tried to protect her from the whole thing that could hurt her. While Melody's father did everything he could to make sure that his daughter was experiencing the world just like any other child would experience. Melody's mother continued to want to shield her daughter from the outside world and went to enormous lengths to make sure that she was never put in harm way.

The second motif in the novel is the idea that the disabled children in the school where Melody was attending and everyone in the school is disregarded by the healthy children. Melody uttered the pain she felt experiencing this and tried to transmit to other children who might have felt the same. This idea that the handicapped children were treated differently was a common motif in the novel.

The third motif is that, Melody mentioned that her school had a custom of decorating and then played with a Styrofoam snowman every winter. Both Melody and other children hate the snowman and dislike intensely being forced to play with it every winter. The reason why they hate playing with it was because the snowman reminded them that they were unlike from the rest of the children and that they must be treated in a special manner. This distinction only made it harder for the disabled children to be able to act like normal children in a normal environment.

The fourth motif in the novel is that the idea that Melody is underestimated by everyone around her. Melody had a tough time convincing her peers and even her teachers about her merit and even her parents had a hard time believing in her and in her capabilities. In spite of making her think like she wants to give up, their opinion only made Melody want to try even harder and made her want to succeed even more.

Last motif is that the idea that Melody never felt as if she was part of a group. No matter what she does, Melody always felt left out because she can't take part in every activity the group takes part in, like eating, going outside and doing various other activities. This made Melody felt strange as she felt like she was always watching from the outside what was happening but never really being a part of the group.

Irony is a term for a figure of speech. Irony is when something happens that is opposite from what is expected. It can often be funny, but it is also used in tragedies. Dramatic irony, when the audience knows something is going to happen on stage that the characters on stage do not.

Melody reveals from the starting that she loved both music and language and that her fondest memories are of her parents chatting to her and putting music for her. Ironically, however, her disability made it not possible for her to fully convey her enjoyment or to indicate to her parents that she was mentally advanced even though her body struggled to carry out basic activities.

When Melody was old sufficient to be enrolled in school, her mother took her to a doctor to evaluate her mental capabilities. During the assessment, the doctor asked Melody a number of questions and made her execute a number of tasks, each task more meaningless than the other. Bored by the doctor's tests, Melody put on her "handicapped



face", making the doctor trust that she was indeed mentally challenged. While primarily Melody's plan was to annoy the doctor, her plan backfired when the doctor recommended that Melody be put into a special needs school or even sent to a nursing home since there was no hope for her. After hearing this, Melody did her best to indicate to the doctor that she was mentally capable but ironically, the doctor was no longer willing to listen to her. Fortunately for Melody, her mother was not so quick to listen to what the doctor had to say. Her mom told,

And what's more,

I think you're wrong

I know you are!

Melody has more brains hidden in her head than you'll ever have,

despite those fancy degrees from fancy schools you've got posted all over  
your walls! (25-26)

Melody's mom also told the doctor that,

You're not so intelligent,

Sir-you're just lucky!

All of us who have all our faculties intact are just plain blessed.

Melody is able to figure out things, communicate, and manage in a world  
where nothing works right for her.

She's the one with the true intelligence! (26)

When Melody heard that she was going to attend a normal school, she was eager, thinking that she will learn new things and her life will become better. Ironically, Melody points out that this was not the case since the teachers assigned the special class did not

suppose them to be intelligent enough to be learned. Because of that, Melody revealed that she learned more from TV shows than she did from the teachers at her school.

Melody talked a lot about how her parents were overprotective and how they would be careful around her, not putting her in risk and always making sure that she was cuddled. The reason why they did that was that they wanted to make sure that Melody was always out of danger since she could not control her movements. Ironically, however, Melody learned how to take care of herself not because she was overprotected, but because a woman named, Mrs. V. She took Melody and put her in an environment her parents would not want her to be. This made Melody push her restrictions until she eventually learned and ended up having some sort of mobility and was able to do things her parents never thought her capable of.

Melody remembered that the third teacher was not familiar to teaching disabled children and she did not think them to be capable of learning anything. Because of this, she never tried to dare them and she continually taught them the alphabet even though the vast majority knew how to read and write. Thus, one day, the children rebelled and they acted in an unmanageable manner to the point where the parents had to be called in. Ironically, instead of siding with the teacher, the parents became revolted when they saw the way in which their children were treated and thus demanded that their teacher treat them in a more noble way.

Imagery, in a literary text, is an author's use of vivid and descriptive language to add depth to their work. It appeals to human senses to deepen the reader's understanding of the work. Powerful forms of imagery engage all of the senses. In this novel *Out of My Mind* Draper used powerful imagery.



Melody talked about her childhood experiences and how, since she was trapped in a wheelchair, she was always seen as a person incapable of doing anything. Melody revealed how the image most people had about her that was of a feeble and little girl was not how she wanted to be remembered by the people she met. Melody revealed that while her body did not develop properly, she had a pleasing face and yet she was not remembered for her face but rather for her physical deformities.

Melody was sent to a school where the students with disabilities are mixed with the normal students. Thus, every day when she went to school, Melody was able to see healthy, normal children, playing and having fun while she had to wait in a spot in her wheelchair. The image of the playing children was hard for Melody because they were a living reminder of all the things she will never be able to do and of the life she will not be able to enjoy.

The only way through which Melody was able to communicate with other children was through her Plexiglas board that she had attached to her wheelchair. Melody was happy that she can express some basic feelings through it, but at the same time she was annoyed because she was unable to fully express her views and desires because she is restricted to using the limited number of words and expressions on her board. The board was thus a visual depiction of her limited vocabulary and also a visual representation of her limitations and how her disability influences her life.

After talking about the ways in which Melody was perceived by the vast majority of people, she then talked about how for a person in her life, she was just a normal child. The person in question was a neighbor of Melody's parents, a woman named Mrs. V. In comparison with the other people, Mrs. V saw and treated Melody as a normal child,

someone capable of learning just like any other person and just another child who, even though having difficulties, can achieve everything a normal child would achieve. Melody liked Mrs. V because of her opinion of her and because in Mrs. V's mind, Melody was not the picture of hopelessness, but rather just another normal child.

The literary terms like allusion, irony, tone and symbolism are expressed amazingly by Sharon Draper throughout the novel. Motifs discussed the major roles played in the novel which gives more effectiveness to the story. The usage of symbols enables to explore the mentality of Melody in the entire novel. Thus the entire novel *Out of My Mind* is informative and advocating.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

American literature is a literature written or produced in an area of the United States. Its preceding colonies for more specific discussion of poetry and theater, during its early history. American was a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present day United States. Therefore, its literary tradition begins as linked to the broader tradition of English literature. However unique American characteristic and the breath of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition. The New England colonies were the centre of early American literature. The revolutionary period contained political writings by Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine in the post war period, Thomas Jefferson's united states declaration of independence solidified his status as a key American writer. It was in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that the nation's first novels were published with the war of 1812 and an increasing desire to produce uniquely American literature and culture, a number of key new literary figures emerged.

The Contemporary period in American literature, identifies its basic characteristics. The Contemporary period in American literature begins at the end of World War II and in order to understand this literature and how it developed, we need to look at where it came from. With writers like Hemingway, Gertrude Stein and T.S. Eliot, the Modernist period between the 1920 to 1940 explored the ways that truth is not straight forward rational or clearly defined but rather how it is completely influenced by human perception. Their writing brought us deeper into the workings of the human mind as a means to get at reality.



A disability is a destruction that may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some mixture of these. It to a large extent affects and may be present from birth or during a person's lifetime. Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and involvement restrictions. Impairment is a difficulty in body function or structure; an activity restriction is a trouble encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a difficulty experienced by an individual taking part in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex experience, reflecting the contact between features of a person's body and features of the humanity in which he or she lives.

Disability is a contested idea, with different meanings in different communities. It may be used to refer to physical or mental attributes that some institutions, particularly medicine. It may refer to limitations imposed on people by the constraints of an ablest society. Or it may serve to refer to the identity of disabled people. Physiological functional capacity (PFC) is a related term that describes an individual's presentation level. It determines one's ability to execute the physical tasks of daily life and the ease with which these tasks are performed. PFC declines with advancing age to result in weakness, cognitive disorders or physical disorders, all of which may lead to classifying individuals as disabled.

The novel *Out of My Mind* written by Sharon M. Draper, a New York Times bestselling author. The story was written in first person, which highlights Melody Brooks, a girl with cerebral palsy. An award-winning author Sharon Draper wrote the novel *Out of My Mind*, the story of a bright girl who cannot speak or write. Melody was not like other people. She cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory; she



could commit to memory every detail of all she had ever experienced. She was more brilliant than most of the adults who try to identify her and smarter than her classmates in her integrated classroom. The very same classmates who dismissed her as mentally challenged, because she cannot tell them otherwise. But Melody refused to be a defined cerebral palsy. She was strong-minded to let everyone know it...somehow. In this breakthrough story, evocative of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, from multiple Coretta Scott King Award-winner Sharon Draper, one will come to know a brilliant mind and a courageous spirit who will change forever how they look at anyone with a disability.

The cover page itself is symbolic. It shows a goldfish jumping out of a bowl. It represents Melody going out of her mind when being stuck in her head so long. The goldfish represents Melody, and the bowl symbolizes her mind. There is also an incident in the novel where Melody watches her pet goldfish jumping out of the fish bowl for freedom. The cover of the book is both literal and a metaphor which shows how Melody feels trapped in her mind.

Stephen Hawking, who became her hero, Melody exposed that her inner strength and intelligence were more steadfast than most of the humans around her. She became an activist for herself, even as Draper challenges those who read her story to become activists for those who are different. Although she was unable to walk, talk, or feed or care for herself, she could read, think, and feel. A brilliant person was trapped inside her body, strong-minded to make her mark in the world in spite of her physical limitations. Draper knows of what she writes; her daughter, Wendy, has cerebral palsy, too. And although Melody is not Wendy, the realism of the story is clear. Told in Melody's voice, this highly understandable, convincing novel quickly established her willpower and

intelligence and the almost impossible challenges she faced. It also revealed her parents' and caretakers' courage in insisting that Melody be treated as the smart, sensitive child she was, and their perceptiveness in understanding how to help her, give confidence to her, and discourage self-pity from others. Unkind teachers, pitiless classmates, Melody's unattractive clothes, and bathroom issues threaten her spirit, yet the brave Melody shined through. This was a book which enriches and upsets, and also defies age classification for an upper-elementary student.

Melody was born with cerebral palsy. Even though at age 10, she never spoke a word. She was a brilliant fifth grader trapped in an uncontrollable body. Her world was superior by insight and intelligence, but gypped by physical limitations and misunderstandings. She will never sing or dance, talk on the phone, or whisper secrets to her friends. She was not complaining, though; she was planning and fighting the odds. In her court are family, good neighbors, and an attentive student teacher. Pitted against her was the "normal" world: schools with limited possessions, cliquish girls, exterior assumptions, and her own disability. Melody's life was tragically problematical. She was mainly placed in the special-education classroom where education means being babysat in a room with repeated cartoons and nursery tunes. Her supportive family sets her up with a computer. She learned the power of thumbs as she taps on a special keyboard that finally lets her "talk." When she was transitioned into the regular classroom, Melody's indubitable involvement enables her class to make it to the national quiz team finals. Then something happened that caused her to miss the finals, and she was shocked by her classmates' actions. Kids will promote from being introduced to Melody and her brave,



candid, and compelling story. It spoke volumes and reveals the quiet strength and guts it takes to overcome disabilities and the misconceptions that went with them.

Mrs. V, who takes care of Melody while her parents work was unwavering that Melody will learn as much as possible, and she works tirelessly to develop the girl's vocabulary. Eventually, with the help of a communication device, Melody manages to show her teachers and classmates just how much she knew. Melody's understanding skill being trapped in a minimally functioning body. Draper's smooth style enhances the story, and there's a romantic element to the notion that Melody was not simply capable but actually gifted. The drama was overplayed, with Melody's abilities improbably superlative. Melody's school experiences were somewhat outdated, and her classmates were little more than a collection of clichés, from the special needs kids who were unfailingly kind and noble to the normal kids who are straightforwardly rude. Draper was a master of melodrama, though, and Melody's story undoubtedly doesn't lack that; she may not be a chiefly realistic character, but she was an interesting one, and her dilemma will do its work of making students think twice about their classmates, associates, and siblings with special needs.

The first half of the book catalogues Melody's struggles from her aggravation with learning the same preschool lessons year after year to her inability to utter a craving for a Big Mac. Draper's daughter has cerebral palsy. So she writes with influence, and the rage behind Melody's narrative was perfectly illustrated in scenes signifying the startling ignorance of many professionals, teachers, and classmates. The lack of tension in the plot was set on halfway through when Melody, at age 10, received a talking computer, allowing her to "speak." Only those with hearts of stone won't blubber when Melody tells



her parents "I love you" for the first time. Melody's off-the-charts smarts are revealed when she tests onto her school's quiz bowl team, and the story shifts to something closer to *The View from Saturday* than *Stuck in Neutral*. A dreadful event at the end nearly plunges the story into melodrama and steers the spotlight away from Melody's willpower, which otherwise drives the story.

Draper's novel *Out of My Mind* enlightens the readers on the difficulties of being disabled. Her unique way of presenting Melody's character is worth mentioning. Melody's successful journey through her difficulties and her wonderful sense of patience and perseverance amidst all hardships is an eye - opener to the readers. Draper has evenly structured the novel with a view to insist hope, courage and confidence to the desperate and depressed.

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**Gender Hegemony and Marginalization in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

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affiliated to

**MANOMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**THOOTHUKUDI**

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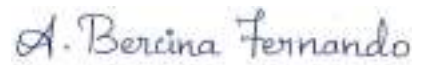
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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Gender Hegemony and Marginalization in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Bercina Fernando".

**BERCINA FERNANDO A.**



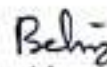
## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Gender Hegemony and Marginalization in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Bercina Fernando A. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Gender Hegemony and Marginalization in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*** analyses the emotional, financial and sexual complexities of Indian urban family and deals with women as marginalized subjects who are oppressed sexually, socially and culturally.

The first chapter deals with a short biography of Mahesh Dattani discussing the general characteristics of his works and his predominant place in the realm of Post-Colonial Indian Drama in English.

The second chapter deals with Dattani's keen and acute insight into the struggle and position of marginalized women in a middle class household.

The third chapter consolidates the male world by stitching the various strands of masculinities that are existent in the Indian society.

The fourth chapter throws light on women in the Indian scenario who are stunted in terms of development of their independent identities through the symbol of bonsai.

The fifth chapter sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceeding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Drama, as a dynamic art form, is present in almost every society through the ages. It is the most wide-ranging, the most polyphonic of all the arts, representing life as well as a way of seeing it. The drama of India has a universal history, originality, identity, longevity and a universal presence. It has a very distinct identity of its own specific aesthetics, artistic objective and creative methods, which are relevant even today. From the time of composition of *Natyashastra* (450 B.C) in India, it was the performance, which was of prominent importance rather than the written text. It is the reification of human action or performance and universalization of the hidden truths of the human situations. It enacts man's relationship with man, which is fundamental to every social science.

The tradition of Indian English drama flourished amid the clouds of cultural diversities and linguistic variations. India is basically a land of rich cultural heritage having a glorious tradition of art, culture, drama, dance and performance. It was only during the British set up in India that the genre Indian drama written in English started getting popularity. Krishna Kriplani has attributed that the modern Indian drama “owed its flowering to foreign grafting” (40).

The Modern Indian Theatre inspired by urban traditions is predominantly influenced by western traditions with the persistent quest to seek an identity of its own. It had little to do with the tradition of classical Sanskrit drama. Even inside cultural milieu, it was the synthesis of the various traditions- the rural and traditional theatrical performance like *Ramlila* and *Raslila*, the religious performances like dances of *Devdasis*, the tradition of *Puppet Plays* and the tradition of *Yatra Plays* in Bengal. With the migration of English community and their urban settlements in

Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, Indian elitists started exposing western literature and drama. By the end of the nineteenth century, drama designed on the lines of western models began to be performed, catering the interest of the upper classes. Sacrificing the traditional classical and religious spirit, drama started its regeneration as a powerful political tool, an insidious attempt to subvert the existing oppressive political order. Besides political order, it also began to look inwards and exposed to the issues of social injustice and corruption within the greater Indian society. Along with native tradition, the western impact inspired, the dormant, critical impulse in the country to bring Indians face to face with new forms of life and literature and to open the way for a fruitful cross fertilization of ideas and forms of expression. The awareness of a new theatrical tradition inspired the creative efforts for translations and adaptations from Sanskrit and English drama. The cumulative effect of foreign influences, classical Sanskrit drama and Indian folk tradition prepared a ground for the making of a tradition of Indian English drama. Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya prepared a native tradition of Indian English drama and established it as an authentic mode of creative expressions.

Rabindranath Tagore with his poetic impulse and speculative insight carved out a new passage of the tradition of Indian English drama. The central issues presented in his plays are philosophy, humanitarian sensibility, protest for the violation of ethical values, propaganda against oppression, concern for injustice in social and political fields and uncompromising idealism of human relationship. His plays *Muktadhara* (1922) and *Red Oleanders* (1925) have universally been acclaimed as the plays of protest against political oppression and the merciless exploitation of the resources of earth. *Natir Puja* (1932) and *Chandalika* (1938) are powerful social tragedies representing the voice of subalterns. Tagore's dramatic art in spite of wide

variety, easy sweep of thought, poetic cadence, profundity of thought, has been a subject of hostile criticism for its lack of theatrical effectiveness. In spite of certain objections, the fact is to acknowledge that without the dramatic achievements of Tagore, there would have been no independent native tradition of Indian English drama. He set the direction of theatrical tradition rooted in Indian life and Indian ethos. R. K. Ramaswami finds a depth and gravity of purpose in his dramatic art, "... more than anything else, he has shown the way both in respect of ideas as well as of methods, by which the soul of Indian could be realized and revealed in the realm of dramatic creation and representation" (25).

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya also enriched the tradition of Indian drama. He started his dramatic career with *Abu Hassan* in 1918. In *The Window and Parrots* (1937), he dramatizes the lives of poor. Harindranath skillfully assimilates the art of symbolism with realism. However, Chattopadhyaya failed to emerge as a strong voice. His philosophical perceptions and poetic creed became hurdle in the way of fine living characters and strong dramatic situations. The contribution of these three eminent Bengali writers- Aurobindo, Tagore and Chattopadhyaya, established the tradition of Indian English drama but they failed to explore new horizons in Bengali Theatre.

Up to post-independent era, drama in English in Indian soil could not flourish as a major current of creative expression. The dramatists were not successful to evolve an independent dramatic convention to suit Indian climate. In spite of regular dramatic performances, drama was monopolized by Indian regional languages. The tradition of poetic and philosophic drama started by Tagore and Aurobindo, was subsequently shaped in the hands of G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb and Pritish Nandy.

In the post-independence dramatic scene, Asif Currimbhoy emerged as the most potent force to enrich the tradition of Indian English drama. He produced nearly about thirty plays on the variety of themes related with Indian life and culture. He made an amazing dramatic representation of the issues like history, current Indian politics, socio-economic problems, religious controversy, philosophy, art and psychological problems. Currimbhoy developed the practice of producing documentary evidences of events instead of exposing the dramatic conflict of the ideologies hidden in them. Whenever he presents free rein to his imagination, his dramatic art falls into crude and contrived symbolism. Currimbhoy's dramatic art has been a subject of criticism for the lack of structured plot, embellished language and balanced characterization.

Pratap Sharma expanded the horizon of Indian English drama by exposing the theme of sex in his two plays: *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970) and *A Touch of Brightness* (1970). In *A Touch of Brightness*, he exposes the atmosphere of Red Light District in Bombay. In spite of the novelty of the subject, it was condemned for sensational superficialities to feed the passion of western audience. It is a dramatic rendering of an innocent temple dancer who was sexually harassed by a fake Sadhu. In *The Professor Has a War Cry*, he dramatizes the mental insecurity of a young man who is a Kathakali dancer. The revelation of the horror of his own life that he is an illegitimate child of a mother, raped by a Muslim and English man, he lost control over himself. He resolves to avenge the injustice done to his mother by his unknown father who was a professor. Pratap Sharma presents strong dramatic situations appropriate to produce the tragedy of permanent impressions. He is widely appreciated for his keen sense of situation and effective dialogues in his dramas.



Contemporary Indian drama, deviating from classical and European models, is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not an offspring of any specific tradition. It has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the history of World drama by reinvestigating history, legend, myth, religion and folk-lore with the context to contemporary socio-political issues. A cumulative theatrical tradition evolved by Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad, prepared the background of contemporary Indian English theatre.

The Post Modern era brings advancement in the fields of drama as it introduces new changes in the Indian English drama which adds more dimensions to it. The new writers came up with a fresh and different approach towards life as well as theatre. R. K. Dhawan states: “Very recently Indian English drama has shot into prominence. Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused life into this branch of writing” (10).

In the theatrical scenario of contemporary India, it is seen that both men and women playwrights have taken important initiatives by representing the crimes committed against women through their literary works. This conscious awareness as to the injustices done to women is evident in the writings of male playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, and Mahesh Dattani to name a few.

Girish Karnad belongs to the first generation of post-independence Indian dramatist group. His plays are not typical realistic representations, but writer like Karnad often thrives on a pre-colonial past. In the capacity of a writer, director, and actor, he substantially contributed to enrich the tradition of Indian English theatre. His major plays are derived from Indian history, legend and folklore. His well-known plays are *Yayati* (1961), *Tuglaq* (1962), *Hayavadana* (1970), *Nagamandala* (1972). He borrowed his plots from history, mythology and old legends but with

intricate symbolism, he tried to establish their relevance in contemporary socio-political conditions. He thus invents a structure in which the use of folk conventions is ironic and reflective as well as practical and natural.

Vijay Tendulkar's plays have given Indian theatre a rich and challenging repertoire. In association with Girish Karnad, he changed the dramatic tradition of well made plays consisting of three acts. He set the stage for a new tradition by mingling expressionistic technique of dramatic art with the framework of naturalistic play. From the very first play *Grihasth* (1955) to *Safar* (1992); his plays have given Indian theatre a rich and challenging repertoire. Death and violence are the recurring themes in the closed, claustrophobic interiors of Tendulkar's naturalistic plays. A diseased and dying social order, where men are prepared to descend to any level to further their ambitions, is symbolized in his play *Vultures* (1970). In *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1978), the theme of the mock trial is that of infanticide and it ends with the threatened abortion of Leela Benare's foetus by Kashikar's verdict. The thematic concerns in Tendulkar's plays are based on a broad canvas of social, psychological, political, physiological, economical and psychosexual issues in contemporary times. And violence is often a strong leit motif his plays. The plays *Chimanicha Ghar Hote Menache* (1960), *Kaljanichi Shalai* (1968), *Ek Halti Mulgi* (1967) reflects Tendulkar's concern with authority and the idea of exploitation of individual. He presents a fictional reality in which the reality of life acquires sharp focused characters having rare dramatic power. Most of his major plays have translated and performed in Hindi and other regional languages. In 1971, he was honoured with Natak Akademi Award for his contribution in the realm of Indian drama.

Badal Sircar too is a prestigious name in the realm of contemporary theatre. He used stage to represent the existential attitude of modern life. Popularly known as 'barefoot playwright', he represents New Theatrical Movement in India. He has created an appropriate 'people's theatre', a theatre supported and created by people. It aims at bringing new awareness on socio-economic issues. He adopted theater as a mode of social change. His earlier plays *Evan Inderjit* (1962), *That Other History* (1964) and *There's No End* (1971) are based on political, social, psychological and existential problems. His purpose was to present concrete truths about what is happening in the villages at grassroots levels. With his unconventional approach, he made Indian theatre free from the burden of monotonous things. He has not only broken the dichotomy between the actors and audience but reduced the drama to its barest by dispensing with conventional story, plot, characters and dialogue.

Mohan Rakesh perceived drama as a complex art involving the uniform contribution of actors, scenic effects, lights and music and effective stage direction. He was a dramatist who essentially wrote in Hindi and later his plays were translated into English. As a playwright, his main concern was to portray the crisis of contemporary man caught in the web of uncongenial surroundings and the persistent threat to human beings. Mohan Rakesh perceived drama as a complex art involving the uniform contribution of actors, scenic effects, light and music, and effective stage direction. He felt the need for reorganizing the conventional theatre, because theater should record the experience of the real relationship. In *Laharon Ke Rajhans* (1963), he reflects on the problem of relations between man and women, ego clashes, divided self and ongoing illusions and nothingness. His protagonists are alienated and are aware of their lives as having been maimed, blighted and devoid of the very springs of life.

Besides, women dramatists also tried to enrich the soil of Indian drama by projecting the inner world of feminine psyche in the theatre. They expressed their resentment against the politics of exploitation on the basis of gender discrimination. The issues like subjugation of women, the horrors of dowry deaths, female infanticide, and violence against women, identity crisis and prostitution have successfully been presented through dramatic performance.

Manjula Padmanabhan is the first Indian to earn international fame with her *Harvest* (1998), a futuristic play that deals with the exploitation of human body in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Padmanabhan projects a dehumanized, terrifying world in which mothers sell their sons for the price of rice. Manjula Padmanabhan's play *Lights Out* (2000) deals with the issue of collective sexual violence (gang rape) and people's indifference towards the victim, based on a real incident that took place in Santa Cruz, Bombay in 1982. The play is resonant with sexual violence perpetrated on women by a group of four people at regular intervals, and records the reaction of a small group of upper-middle class people towards that gang rape. With the help of fictional characters, who are representative of a stereotyped upper-middle class mentality, Padmanabhan has drawn our attention to the bitter reality about women's lives in contemporary society and also people's apathy towards it, and moral callousness that breeds violence against women.

An equally important name among Indian English women dramatist is Mahasweta Devi, the Bengali writer and activist. Her important works are *Aajir* (1986) and *Water* (1972) and in them the most recurrent themes surrounds the subalterns for their basic rights. All her plays express the playwright's deep concern for the untouchables who are denied for their fundamental rights. These women



playwrights have something distinct to offer to the audience. They have given new dimensions by infusing new type into this genre.

However, Indian English drama remained very weak in comparison to Indian English fiction and poetry. The reason for this conspicuous paucity is obvious enough. First of all, writing plays happens to be generally more difficult than writing fiction. Then, the writing play in English is more difficult than writing plays in regional languages. Even if the plays are written in English, the chances of performance of such plays are very rare in the Indian context. Also if the performances of such plays are arranged, the response of the audiences is restricted to the intellectual class. Secondly, if Indian drama in English is still in its infancy, the publication of plays is even more so. Publishers will take plays seriously only if they have been produced, but producers will touch plays only if they are commercially viable. And this leads to the unsuccessfulness of the “living theatres” in our country. Owing to the spectacular success of Indian English fiction, drama in English remains a lesser genre and did not find its true voice until the arrival of Mahesh Dattani.

Dattani is taken to be the true successor of all these playwrights and responsible for the revolutionary progression of English drama. He emerges as a compelling playwright who projects the postcolonial dichotomy at various levels. He keeps women at the centre of his dramatic world and may be called avant-garde feminist. He was greatly influenced by Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Madhurye.

Dattani is a versatile genius: a director, actor, playwright, dancer, and choreographer. He started his theatre activity, writing plays and directing them after 1980s. The literature of 1980s and 90s focused on the issues like male hegemony,

suppression of women, gender bias, and violence on women, Indian patriarchal family system, joint family, and marginalization of women, problems of eunuchs (hijras), plight of homosexuals, lesbians, and socio-political problems of urban-metropolitan Indian.

Dattani who has been acknowledged as a 'playwright of stature' has given a new direction to Indian English drama. He has written more than eighteen plays which are different in themes, tone and treatment. He received the prestigious Shaitya Akademi Award for his contribution to Indian drama in 1988. His plays deals with serious and sensitive issues like communalism, homosexuality, female infanticide, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, conditions of eunuchs in Indian society. In *Collected Plays*, Dattani says:

I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally (5).

Dattani with a huge bulk of drama appeared on the literary scene as the most potent force to mould and modify the established conventions of dramatic art. He set the direction of New Drama. He expanded the horizon of Indian drama by including radical themes like homosexuality, gender issues, the new dynamics of man and woman relationship, the persistently growing frustration and nothingness in the middle class life and tradition. He holds a mirror to the changing social scenario of India.

The dramatic canvas of Dattani is coloured with real life conditions and the vivid experiences related with urban cosmopolitan and middle class Indians. In

*Where There's a Will* (1986), he explores the dichotomy between male and female roles within the archetype of family managed by male members. The play *Tara* (1995), in the background of the conflict of familial relationship, he shares the anguish of gender discrimination in society.

Dattani, in his play, *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (2013), takes up the issue of the eunuchs. He enters into a no man's land. The subject matter is discussed with compassion, untouched by other Indian Writers. This play is a study of the marginalized community in India, its suppression, and feminism. It deals with a wealthy man's love to a beautiful hijra and the consequent murder. In the course of the investigation, the dramatist, through the character of Uma Rao, a Sociologist Research Scholar, presents the voice of a woman for the identity and freedom of the eunuchs. Dattani establishes women at the centre of his dramatic world. His portrayal of lead character clearly suggests the role of education as a liberator of women from male hegemony.

The play *Do the Needful* (2013) is an argument on the issues of gender and alternate sexuality. In the play *Dance Like a Man* (2014), Dattani expresses his resentment for close fisted gender roles in the conventional social framework where passion of an artist is quashed against the restrictions imposed on individual according to their gender roles.

Dattani's representation of oppression as a theme is stronger and louder when it comes to his depiction of women. His plays dramatize largely the issue of gender discrimination and female oppression by patriarchy. In handling woman as the marginalized subject, he explores a wider area of oppression - sexual, social and cultural. Dattani's *Thirty Days in September* (2013) is a family play which deals with sexual guilt and obsession. The play depicts the plight of Mala and her mother

Shanta who were exploited physically by Mala's uncle in her infancy. The girl becomes physically vulnerable to the company of men for sexual gratification. The play analyzes the dilemma of the girl as she grows up; it shows how incestuous relationship ruins the lives of girls at the tender age. Sonal in *Where There is a Will* is oppressed by her demanding husband who verbally abuses her; Tara in *Tara* is discriminated by her own family, due to which she is doomed to be lame.

The play, *Bravely Fought the Queen* (2003) is set around an Indian family in which the male authority is represented by two sons Jitin and Nitin, the co-partners of an advertising agency. Baa is a widowed old woman who is still haunted by the violence inflicted on her by her late husband; Alka is a woman trapped in a marriage where her husband is a homosexual; and Dolly is physically abused by her husband almost on a daily basis. The claustrophobia of domesticity and confined space is apparent through their Dolly and Alka, the two sisters married to two brothers. This play is a dramatic representation of the emptiness and shame in the lives of its cloistered women and self-indulged cloistered men lost in the web of terrible secrets, deception and hypocrisy. The play aims at tearing the veil of the filthy realities and gruesome truths those lie behind the presence of conservative Indian morality. Besides the issues of gender and sexual, identity, Dattani also exhibits his concern for sexual abuse, alcoholism, adultery and homosexuality. The playwright explores the dark area and the silent sufferings of females with an insight and human concern.

Mahesh Dattani with originality of vision, fearless conviction, awareness of the predicament of human destiny and a remarkable innovative conception of the chemistry of stage and audience, has given a new direction to the current of Indian theatre. In Dattani's dramatic world, drama instead of being an expression of art has become a realization of life and it is a preface to the tradition of popular Indian



theatre. For such a comprehensiveness, balance and unconventional conception of drama, the International Herald Tribune praised him as, “one of India’s best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in India” (Sharma 3).

## Chapter Two

### Struggle of the Marginalized Gender

Gender identity is one of the prominent themes of contemporary Indian Writing in English. Until late 1990s, the marginality of the sexual minority remained an area unexplored. With the advent of Mahesh Dattani, this hidden Indian society that is controlled by the sexual minority stands exposed with its ugly faces of gender hegemony and discrimination.

Mahesh Dattani's plays are the mirror of contemporary Indian Society. They discussed the undercurrent of social life. The play, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, has a multi-layered thematic technique. It portrays the complexity in the husband - wife relationship, mother - daughter relationship and mother - son relationship. It deals with three generations and reflects the inhuman treatment meted out to women of these three generations.

The playwright has divided the play in three acts with titles for each. Act I entitled *The Women* deals with the women characters in the play which are Baa, a widow woman and the mother of Jiten and Nitin; Dolly, wife of Jiten; Alka, wife of Nitin; Daksha, daughter of Dolly and Jiten; Lalita, wife of Sridhar, an employee in Nitin and Jiten's office. Act II entitled as *The Men* is dominated by men characters of the play as Jiten, Baa's elder son; Nitin, Baa's younger son; Sridhar, an employee in Jiten and Nitin's office and Praful, brother of Dolly and Alka. Act III titled as *Free to All* is the combination of the activities of the men and women characters.

The play deals with three couples, Dolly and Nitin, Alka and Jiten and Lalitha and Sridhar, each existing in a hierarchical relation with others. The play centres on Trivedi family with their two brothers Jiten and Nitin and their wives Dolly and Alka. Both the brothers are genetically right descendants of their tyrannical father who always

tortured their mother physically causing deep hatred in Baa. Jiten, the elder son exercises control over the family as son, brother and husband. He is sadistically aggressive and kicks her wife brutally even in her pregnancy. In the same way the younger son Nitin subjects his wife to psychological torture by inflicting sexual deprivation.

Dattani's presentation of women in a fractured social space that constantly shifts them to a patriarchal space of control is interesting. His keen and astute insight into the position of women in a middle class domestic household as 'marginal' is worthy of appreciation. *Bravely Fought the Queen* presents the ways in which exploitation is now couched in terms of culture and refinement. Act one begins as a comedy of manners, in a hypocritical illusory surface of the mask, on a fashionable but ill-maintained living room of Jiten and Dolly. Dolly is locked in a loveless marriage with an uncaring husband. In this Act the focus is on Dolly who sits filling her nails abstractedly and having a mud mask, a symbol of pretence and falsity, on the face. Alka, her sister, enters with full make-up and sari – a preparation for going out for the evening with her husband Nitin, for which Dolly is also getting ready. This is a projection of image of housewives in a stereotypical manner.

The action starts with the arrival of an unexpected visitor, Lalitha, who says that she had been asked by Jiten Trivedi, the boss of her husband Sirdhar, to meet Dolly that very evening to discuss the masked ball where "everyone will be in costumes! And will have masks on!" (8), to be held as an event-launch for ReVaTee, a new range of coloured coordinated nightwear and underwear of women. This again is a symbolic representation of society where everyone will be in costumes and masks to live in the forced harmony of stereotypical societal ideologies. And with this revelation, the

unusual change of plan is introduced that the dinner is called off is announced by Lalitha.

When the play begins, Dolly and Alka are dressing for a party. There is no matter of their own wish. They are preparing because their husbands want them to go with them. After sometime, the plan of going out is cancelled by the husbands without asking the consent of their wives. Jiten, Dolly's husband even don't tell her directly about the cancellation of going out. She comes to know about it through Alka, her sister and she reacts, "He never told me! He never told me anything!" (22). As Michael Walling puts it in *Collected Play*:

This is a play about performance; and uses the theatre to demonstrate how, in a world of hypocrisy, acting becomes a way of life.

Paradoxically, it is only by the overt performance of the theatre that such acting can be exposed for what it is. (230)

With this revelation, the whole act of becoming suitable for the role of a wife is ridiculed by Dattani, and the dark secrets under the surface level begin to be unfolded, even after the continual negation of revealing her personal tragedy by Dolly as she wants to fit in the social identity given to her which keeps her to be always masked.

LALITHA. Afraid?

DOLLY. Afraid I would crack my mask. (4)

But Dolly could not prevent the cracking of mask of happiness and harmony that social order ensures for patriarchy to continue for a long time as like other women she also used to be afraid of her husband, afraid of being tortured by him.

Being neglected by her husband Jiten, Dolly tries to fulfill her desire for love and care by a secret lover in Kanhaiya. Kanhaiya (who may be illusory or real) is a nineteen year old grandson of a friend of the vacationing cook who stays in the



servant's quarters outside the house and who comes for clandestine trysts in the kitchen. She is taught to bear up every humiliation, torture, and exploitation within the four walls of her house away from public gaze. The most tragic thing in her life is her own daughter Daksha, who delivers prematurely, beaten by her brutal husband when she was in her advanced stage of pregnancy.

Dolly is a meek and pale character; she is the victim of patriarchy. She has to suffer at the hands of her husband. Her husband, Jiten resembles his father. Such cold-blooded beating of Dolly in pregnancy period results in the deformed birth of her daughter, Daksha. She does not want to tell the reality of Daksha to anyone and says she is under training of a dancer. That's why she talks very little to anyone to hide the reality of Daksha. Alka complains to her this nature, "At parties, you just sit in a corner sipping your lime juice and speak when spoke to. You refuse to mix, you refuse to be interesting. You are just not . . . an interested party. That's why they don't take us out more often" (20). The real plight of Dolly is revealed by Alka in the play, "Having leach for a husband. A saint for a brother and a leach for a husband" (83). Her husband has no time for her. Her loneliness is revealed by Alka, "Poor Dolly, sitting by herself, looking pretty and . . . wastes. With only a half-dead mother-in-law for company" (35-36). In her loneliness, Dolly takes interest in listening Naina Devi's thumari. She also creates an imaginary character, Kanahiya as her lover. Alka gives Dolly two options on which they can talk before Lalita, one is Kanahiya and the other is Daksha. Dolly prefers to talk about Kanahiya. But the story of Kanahiya told by Dolly and Alka to Lalita was not the real truth. Dolly herself says, "She knows about Kanhaiya. That's all. So let's keep it that way. . . The half-truth and nothing but the half truth" (74).

All the characters of the play are very lively and true to life. All the three women in the play, Baa, Dolly and Alka suffer in their own ways. Baa is a widow

woman and the mother of Jitin and Nitin. Her husband was of dominating nature. L. Amritashwori Devi writes in “Women as Victims in Mahesh Dattani’s *Bravely Fought the Queen*”, “Baa's husband was a dominating and violent man who had not only prevented her from singing but also used to beat her up again and again. He also ill-treated their sons. His nature towards Baa and their sons was so rude and brutal that she becomes affected even after the death of her husband whenever she recalls him of making her unable to live in the present” (190). Baa met him before her marriage and came to know about his dominating nature, “You want me to sing only for you? I will sing for everyone! Why are you so angry” (69). Baa was ill-treated by her husband in her youthful days. Her husband was a very brute. She had to face humiliation physically as well as psychologically at his hands. But an Indian woman does not want to reveal her miserable plight to everyone. That’s why when Baa’s husband beats her, she cries not to hit on the face, “Hit me again. The children should see what a demon you are. Aah! Jitu! Nitin! Are you watching? See your father! No! No! Not on the face. I beg you. I beg you! Hit me but not on . . . aaaah!” (57). Face is a mirror which presents the miseries of a person very clearly. But a woman wants to cover her misery and does not want to reveal it to everyone.

Sujata Sen in *Gender Studies* says, “Women tolerate all the torture silently keeping it all within themselves in order to keep the family fabric and prestige intact” (101). Baa suffers from the disloyalty of her husband. He abandons her in favour of another woman. The old Baa unknowingly married an already married man. Her husband, after giving birth to three children, deserted her to live with his former wife. Thus, she is the victim of man’s debauchery. She was thus left alone to defend for herself and her three children. The Indian society is unnecessarily cruel to such lonely women. She must have faced many problems in bringing up and educating her children.

Alka, the wife of Nitin is the victim of patriarchal society. Alka, the younger daughter-in-law has her own cross to bear; her husband has a homosexual relationship with her own brother, Praful, who has planned this marriage to carry on this relationship, right in the house and outside the house. First, she suffers at the hands of her brother, Praful and then her husband and mother-in-law. Praful is very cruel to her. Once, when she comes back home from school on a neighbour boy's scooter, for that Praful burns her hair on the stove, "He lit the stove and pushed my face in front of it! I thought he was going to burn my face! He burnt my hair. I can still smell my hair on fire" (32). Here the pity is she is not realizing the fact that she is being tortured. She is more concerned about her face. Face is an identity of both Baa and Alka. Her husband has homosexual relations with her brother Praful even before his marriage to her. In this way, her life is devoid of any love. She dilutes herself in wine to get rid of her loneliness. She remains in intoxication all the time. In this state, once at the dinner time, Baa insulted Alka's family before Praful, at this she remarks, "Your sons are so different from one another. They are both petty like you, but otherwise... Do they have different fathers" (31). She has been thrown out from the house by her husband for these remarks.

Linda L. Lindsey in *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* says, "Husband and male kin literally held the power of life and death over women" (106). After this incident Dolly tells Alka, "For three months I was in agony after your husband threw you out. Praful came twice begging and pleading with Nitin to take you back" (31). Alka's husband is gay and maintained a relationship with her own brother Praful. Thus, Alka, who longs for her brother's acceptance for herself, silently suffers her fruitless marriage with Nitin.

The challenge for the characters in the first act is to carve individual spaces out of their oppression and live lives of their own. Alka and Dolly represent modern women with all the symbols of modernity but are subjugated to mere non entities in the four walls of their house. They have their own imaginary world which is completely isolated from the world of men.

Germaine Greer in *The Whole Woman* comments on the women of Indian families:

Women are afraid of man. Women can be routinely insulted and humiliated for years on end, repeatedly raped and sexually abused and yet keep silence, made to endure a life of kicks and blows from a husband, because they are afraid. They endure unending agonies because they have been made to believe that if they run away, they will be followed and much worse will be done to them and to their children. The beaten women does not call the police because she knows that sooner or later, once the police have finished with the man who is oppressing her, he will return and do something unimaginably worse than any of the abominable things he has already done. The woman paralyzed by the terror exists in her own mind as well as that of her abuses to be abused. She can see no way out, no possible rescue, because fear has blinded her.

(272)

The first act remains focus on the home-confined identity of women. In the second act there is a fine exposition of the world of men representing the outer space of the business world and third act lays bare characters and their two worlds. The fissure between conventional and modern cultures having thrown up a new social landscape, the play races towards a brave culmination, laying bare the gruesome truth that lie



behind the pretence of conservative Indian morality. The play concerns itself with question of gender, sexuality, alternate sexuality and identity, although the approach is perhaps secondary to the more open themes of gender differences and the rupture between the male and female world. While the main setting of the play is the politics of the Indian joint family, it constantly point at the division of and the dominance of the one over the other.

Daksha, the third generation of the Trivedi family, is also the victim of patriarchy. Her mother, Dolly was kicked by her husband in her pregnancy. The result of it is the premature birth of Daksha with a deformed body. Her father even does not mention her name before anyone. Dolly is shocked as Jiten has not mention Daksh before Lalita and says to herself, “He doesn’t mention Daksha, but he mentions my tailoring” (10). Dolly even does not want to mention her daughter to anyone. In the words of Alka, “She hardly ever mentions her daughter to anyone. . . She does not tell anyone that her daughter is training to be a dancer! She is going to be a famous dancer, isn’t she?” (34). Even Alka’s description of Daksha is also incorrect, actually Daksha is under physiotherapy.

Dolly and Alka’s mother is the greatest victim of patriarchy. Their mother has three children: two daughters, Dolly and Alka and a son, Praful. Her husband is already a married man having four children. He deceived her for not telling her about his first wife and later left her and started living with his former wife. Dolly comes to know about it later, in the words of Dolly, “My mother didn’t even know about his first wife till later. She was deceived too!” (96). But in Indian society, nobody blames that man but only the woman. She has to suffer twice firstly at the hands of such husband and then at the hands of the society. In this play also, Baa does not say a single word for

Dolly and Alka's father who has deceived their mother but calls their mother a whore. A woman even can't understand the problem of a woman.

The past of a person affects his life badly. But when it is the past of a woman it affects her more than a man. This is the case with Dolly and Alka. Their father was not living with their mother. He lived with her former wife and four children. At the time of their marriage, Praful, their brother, told their in-laws that their father was dead. But after their marriage, Baa came to know about the reality of their father through a letter from her cousin in Ahmadabad. She insulted Dolly and Alka by calling them the daughter of a mistress or a keep. In the words of Baa, "Your mother is a keep . . . a mistress! My sons have married the daughters of a whore!" (96). Dolly has to pay a great price for the revelation of this past. Baa even tells Jitin, "Throw out her as well. Whore!" (96). Baa instigates Jiten to beat Dolly who was even pregnant at that time and the result of it was the immature birth of Daksha. L. Amritashweri Devi points out about Dolly in "Women as Victims in Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*", "So, she suffers not for her own fault but for Praful's. She suffers because she is a woman. The husband who himself is a cheater and is disloyal to his wife and who enjoys with whores can not bear his wife's being a whore, that too is only imposed on her by the society" (193). But it is not easy for a man to accept his mistake. He always tries to make responsible for that to a woman. Jiten does the same, he makes responsible to Baa for his beating Dolly. But Dolly does not accept it easily and says, "They were your hands hitting me! Your feet kicking me! It's in your blood! It's in your blood to do bad!" (97). Alka is thrown out from the house by Nitin after the revelation of her family secret. In this way, both the sisters have to suffer at this revelation.

Jitin and Nitin, both the brothers are adulterous to their wives. They usually bring whores and enjoy the life with them. In the words of Jitin, "It's a regular thing for

Nitin and me. Driving out. Picking a couple up”(67). Sridhar, Lalita’s husband, on the one hand presents himself a reputed person and faithful to his wife. When Jitin asks him to bring a whore for him then he says, “I-I’ve got a reputation to. . . I mean what if someone sees me and tells my wife?” (68). But on the other hand, he himself indulges in adultery. To the question of Jitin about the status of the whore, he says in a very low voice which can’t be heard by Jitin, “She is great. I had her on the back seat. You can have my leftovers” (72).

In the eyes of the Jitin and Nitin, a woman is a commodity and an enjoyable thing. In the words of L. Amritashwori Devi, “Men can never think women as human as they are and they are always victimising them (women) because they need to show their superiority over them” (193). In the press ads of their ReVaTee, a new range of colour-coordinated nightwear and underwear for women, they present a woman as a sexpot, “You’ve got the model lying on a bed and the signature is ‘Light his fire with ReVaTee” (52). In reality, woman for them is only a useful commodity. To get the women’s response on this ad they have filled up a questionnaire from them. Sridhar tells Nitin and Jitin about the answers of the questionnaire, “They all said- in different words of course- but most of them used one word for to describe it- offensive. They all find it highly offensive” (53). At this Jitin thought that it is the men who bought things for them, “Men would want to buy it for their women! That’s our market. Men. Men would want their women dressed up like that. And they have the buying power” (54).

Dolly shown wearing a mask reveals her complete ignorance of her husband’s business obliquely suggesting her oblivion about her husband’s deceptive ways and conduct. Dolly says, “I am afraid I don’t know much about my husband’s work” (5). Her unconscious use of the word afraid again and again hints at her neglected being in her own house. The mask of pretence suppresses the dormant queen of Jhansi inside her

and prevents her to resist against the tyrannies of her husband and Baa. She lacks the courage to fight the oppressive system. She tolerates the violence of her husband which leads to the premature birth of their spastic daughter Daksha. Her silent seething undercurrents of rebellion are evident in her involvement with Kanhayiya, an imaginary cook. She is able to cope with this sordid world.

The suffering of women at the hands of men is an age old suffering. In the present context the suffering of women may be different from the suffering of Baa, Dolly, Alka, Daksha, Lalita and, Dolly and Alka's mother but women always suffer at the hands of men. L. Amritashwori Devi rightly remarks, "The subjugation, the torture or the way our women suffer may be different but the age old system of dominance over women by men will never end and they are and will always be victims in our male chauvinistic society" (196).

Thus the play presents the plight of women in the society. The three generations of women have no difference in their plight. All these three generations have to suffer at the hands of men. Indian society is patriarchal society where women's rights are curtailed like the bonsai. She has no life of her own but her life is related to the male counterparts of the family. Baa, Dolly, and Alka all of them have to lead a life in which their husbands have the authority to deal with them. Daksha is a victim of this patriarchal system even by birth that is born with a deformed body because of the ill-treatment given to her mother by her father in her pregnancy. Jiten and Nitin, both the brothers are adulterous to their wives and Jiten even beats his wife in her pregnancy. Thus, the play presents that women are suffering from generations at the hands of men.

All the relations in the play are maintained strictly under the dictates of patriarchy. The gender division is neatly worked up by Dattani in order to show how man-woman relationship is skewed up under patriarchal hegemony. The familial space



is presented as an even more fraught, as the characters struggle under the domination of individual as well as the institution of marriage. They are trapped in stereotypical roles in familial space- those of the ideal husband, faithful and docile wife, responsible and caring brother and loving mother. Although women play a vital role in patriarchy, the patriarchy always relegates them to the margins. Thus, Mahesh Dattani's plays show how people are marginalized based on sexuality.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Hegemonic Masculinity**

The emergence of Gender Studies and Queer Theory in the 1990s which has been popularized in Indian academic circle in more recent times has resulted in the Indian authors, dramatists, filmmakers and critics addressing gender issues more explicitly and exhaustively. It is not that Indian culture was blind and ignorant to gender issues like women's liberation and rights, homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, androgyny and so forth, but India as a modern nation still felt uneasy to examine the sexuality question until the 90s. While talking about gender equality, mainstream society still refers to women's liberation and emancipation; critiquing patriarchy and its dominance over women while seldom are touching upon subjects like lesbian and gay rights and emancipation of transgender people. Patriarchy and patriarchal dominance has become synonymous with subjugation and oppression of women; and the relegation of the female sex into subservience. However, one pivotal aspect that we tend to overlook is the manner in which men become victim of their own patriarchal power structures and order.

Since the advent of the feminist movement, the patriarchal subjugation of women has been widely discussed, researched, analyzed and documented. However, the covert ways in which the male has, on occasion, felt restricted and bereft of agency by the same patriarchal structures, have gone virtually unnoticed. (Sengupta and Chatterjee 8)

Over the years, patriarchy with its omnipresence has emerged as a self-perpetrating monster which feeds upon its own men, only to be reborn from their ashes with greater vigour and more strength. It has generated and established certain

parameters and paradigms of being a ‘man’; certain codes, attributes, attitudes and essentials for displaying one’s ‘maleness’, failing to conform to which, one is rendered disempowered and pushed to the lower ranks of the hierarchy, created and regulated by patriarchy. Therefore, the very notion of a society, where males occupy the centre-stage and females are relegated to the margins suffer a subversion, as gender is all about performativity and there are further hierarchies, stratifications and divisions within the category of ‘men’ or patriarchy itself.

The theory of multiple subjectivities in the category of ‘women’, proposed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, has led to the development of an analogous theory of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ which refers to a culturally normative ideal of male behaviour. One has to understand ‘hegemony’ here in the Gramscian sense, that of a ‘consented’ oppression. The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ arises from the notion that there is a hierarchy among men and masculine behaviour, created by patriarchy. Certain codes and attributes have been offered by the patriarchal order to display one’s ‘maleness’. Raewyn Connell in “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” points out about hegemonic masculinity as, “It is . . . a widespread research finding that certain masculinities are more socially central, or more associated with authority and social power, than others. The concept of hegemonic masculinity presumes the subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities . . . ” (846).

Connell goes on to say that, “the fundamental feature of the concept remains the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities” (846). In a patriarchal set up, hegemony is perpetrated through various ideological state apparatuses like family, peers, educational and social institutions, religious organizations, media and so forth. Therefore the patriarchal world does not even spare

men and is equally oppressive to their being as well. The sociological privilege, apparently enjoyed by men, thus, has many subtleties and nuances.

John Beynon in his *Masculinities and Culture*, which is a discussion on the cultural construction of masculinity, says: “Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up; rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways” (46). While discussing the multiplicity of masculinities, Connell comes up with four variants of masculinity – hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, complicit masculinity and marginalized masculinity. This chapter dissects the various strands of masculinity with which Mahesh Dattani sews his play *Bravely Fought the Queen*. Dattani, who has been famous for representing ‘fringe’ issues on the stage, plays out a very subtle gender politics, mostly against the backdrop of the Indian family. Amongst other issues, questions of identity, sexuality and gender occupy the centre stage.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani explores the hierarchy and plurality of masculinities through the characters of Sridhar, Praful, Jiten, Nitin, and their dead father. Jiten is introduced in the second act with his arrogant demeanour, domineering temperament and overbearing attitude, dictating terms to his younger brother and their secretary, Sridhar. His dominance over Sridhar stems from the fact of being economically superior. Jiten’s masculinity is recognizably hegemonic; he has a luxurious office at his disposal, a comfortable couch next to his desk and a well stocked bar for catering to his intoxicating trips. His disposition and attitude is capitalist and therefore, patriarchy stands out as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. Jiten’s discussion with Nitin and Sridhar about the ReVaTee model acquaints the readers with his attitude to women. In the eyes of Jiten, a woman is a



commodity and an enjoyable thing. The ReVaTee account is nothing more than an erotic spectacle; an exhibition of female sexuality where the subjectivity of the model disappears under the overwhelming vision of the male gazes; reduced to the status of a sex-object to satiate the lust of voracious men. Jiten's hegemonic masculinity in his business field is revealed when Jiten rebuffs Sridhar's objection of the ReVaTee account being 'offensive' by saying:

JITEN. Men would buy it for their women! That's our market. Men. Men would want their women dressed up like that. And they have the buying power. Yes! So there's no point in asking a group of screwed-up women what they think of it. They'll pretend to feel offended and say, 'Oh, we are always being treated like sex objects.'

SRIDHAR. They'll screw us! If we don't come out with a campaign idea that works, we'll be dead . . . This is a professional suicide. (54)

Jiten's masculinity is also recognizably hegemonic in his family. Family as a social institution in which gender inequality clearly works, is a context whereby violence against women and also children is prevalent. Family is "the crucial site of women's oppression, the space where, unheeded by the world outside, women are at the mercy of fathers or husbands; where the law of 'patriarchy' hold its most primitive form" (Pilcher and Whelehan 44). Family is structured in such a way that man is the breadwinner and the head of the household and woman is the caregiver and source of emotion. Moreover domestic labor which is conducted by women is not financially rewarded; thus, men as the sole provider of the family gain power and make women dependent on them economically. Similarly, Jiten's higher position in his family gives him the power to impose violence and force.

Women usually suffer under patriarchal social system. They are normally guided by the patriarchal code, and motherhood and wifedom are the dual crowns of womanhood; nothing more, nothing less. This is indicative of the fact that women are not seen as individuals but as the conditioned "other" to the male 'subject' (Beauvoir xxii). Under such a system, a woman's identity is not her own but as somebody's mother or as somebody's wife.

Dolly, wife of Jiten, is portrayed as an isolated woman. She does not have an identity of her own. Jiten marries her not because of any attraction or love for her but only for the sake of the societal norms of marriage. He is neither loyal to her nor he tries to understand her. He never treats her the way she deserves. There is restriction in every aspect of her life. Here, Jiten is the symbol of patriarchal domination. Her mother-in-law induces Jiten to beat Dolly in the advanced stage of pregnancy. As a result, Daksha is born premature at seventh month, and she is mentally retarded. Thus Daksha too, is victimized. Here, Daksha stands as a symbol of Jiten's violence and torture on Dolly. Dolly suffers because of the norms of the patriarchal society in Indian. In the hands of patriarchy she suffers torture, violence and ill-treatment. Her husband's lack of concern for her results in some psychic problem. As Devi comments about Dolly in *Five Plays*, "Dolly suffers not for her own fault but for Praful's. She suffers because she is a woman" (193). Her husband is a cheater and disloyal to Dolly. Jiten victimizes her because he wants to show his superiority over her. Dolly has decided to remain within patriarchy all along. And, her disabled child Daksha is the symbol of her unfulfilled selfhood. From Jiten's dominating behaviour it is revealed that he powerfully exercises 'hegemonic masculinity' in his family. It is obvious that like all other things, the women too belong to their men. There is a sense

of ownership associated with the relationship between men and women within the family institution.

In the second act Nitin's predicament appears calm, composed and placid, surrendering to his brother's commands and mandates. Although, Nitin seems to back Sridhar's views on the ReVaTee model, he fails to put up a staunch resistance against Jiten's oppressive and audacious temperament. Initially, Nitin refuses to accept this business plan by resisting that, "I'm more worried about the money. . . We already owe the banks and the finance corporation. . . If it is a private borrowing, we are sunk for the rest of our lives. . . Thirty-six per cent. . . Jitu we can't afford the interest" (42-43). But, eventually he accepts Jiten's business plan. The reason for Nitin's dormant behaviour is exposed towards the end of the final act, where he reveals his homosexuality," I used to sleep on his cot. And he would sleep on a mattress on the floor, beside me . . . At other times I would lean forward to look at him. Close enough for my breath to fall gently on his face. And he would open his eyes . . . I loved him too. He was attractive" (100). Nitin's sexual orientation excludes him from the patriarchal premise; he is pushed to the lowest strata of masculinity where he exhibits values, principles, and behaviour that are at odds with those expected from a 'man'. He comes to embody the last category of masculinity, 'subordinate masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 829-859). 'Subordinate masculinity' includes things like being overly emotional or acting in a feminine way, or not being heterosexual. In this play, Nitin stands as the abject of his brother, Jiten. The code of conduct for men established by the power structures of patriarchy corrodes the mind, spirit and sensibility of its own creators, rendering them victims and passive individuals, silently suffering due to their own faults.

Alka, wife of Nitin, is a spirited young woman in her early thirties and also the victim of patriarchal society. Her husband, Nitin has homosexual relations with her brother Praful even before his marriage to her. In this way, her life is devoid of any love. Her brother tricks her and uses her as an instrument to maintain his affair with Nitin and she has to suffer her whole life because of it. Alka thus becomes deprived of desired marital bliss on account of deception practiced by her own brother. Consequently, Nitin has to cloak his homosexuality behind the institution of marriage, with Alka. Nitin's secret relationship with Praful is disclosed right at the end of the play. He emerges as a disempowered man, whose powers have been snatched by the 'hegemonic masculinity' that renders Jiten powerful.

Sridhar in opposing Jiten's views on the ReVaTee model and showing a more considerate nature to women's feelings stands as an embodiment of 'complicit masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 829-859), whereby, a man may not abide by all the traits of hegemonic masculinity but does nothing much to challenge it either. They do enjoy the prerogatives of being males as they do not seek the heteronormative presupposition of patriarchy.

Sridhar, unlike the Trivedi brothers, does not bully his wife, Lalitha, but nonetheless, each has their emotional vacuity to fulfill. Lalitha resorts to making bonsai while her husband is all too piled up with his professional work always. Sirdhar's professional preoccupation invades his private space and his private rhetoric is composed mainly of his official engagements. Lalitha confesses to Dolly: "That's all he talks about at home. Even my bonsais know about ReVaTee. But I don't really mind. It gives me. . . (*slows down as she realizes what she is saying*) something . . . to . . . do" (25). An acute and intense sense of emptiness remains garbed under the cloak of apparent glamour, dazzle and charisma of their existence; a certain kind of liberty



and freedom that is far from thought of the Trivedi women. Sridhar's personality is, however, positioned lower than that of Jiten in terms of his masculine behaviour. Sridhar appears more considerate and sensible to women's feelings which astounds the hegemonic masculine psyche of Jiten. His social position compels him to obey Jiten's dictates, even to the extent of fetching a prostitute for him; and he fails to stand up to him on every occasion. However, in the last scene he does offer a resistance to Jiten's overbearing masculinity after Jiten abuses his wife; a physical fight ensues and Sridhar vows to put Jiten behind the bars. But Sridhar's stance is also problematic: he too appears bossy and domineering in moments of crisis and dictates terms to Lalitha when the commotion breaks out in the Trivedi household.

Dattani, thus, consolidates the male world by stitching the various strands of masculinities that are existent in the society, under the common banner of 'men'. *Bravely Fought the Queen*, thus, is not only about the subjugation and oppression of women but also critiques the discontentment of males and describes the hardcore patriarchy present in Indian society. The symmetry of behaviour that patriarchy expects from its residents indeed turns out to be fearful for some while unbearable for others.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Bonsai Existence**

The major circumstance of all theatre is human experience, and the key principle of all drama is human action. By dramatizing human experience, playwrights draw the attention of a community to certain characters, revealing their fear and dreams, their mistakes and successes, and their joys and deaths. Vision begins as an experience of an artist, who extends it into an artwork and ultimately projects it in such a way that it affects the experience of the viewer. When the audience began to find similarity between the actor and themselves and began to think that if the characters were not so irretrievably located in their specific spaces they could perhaps find a way out. And this realistic presentation of the world shocks the audience into considering their own lives.

Dramatic techniques are used in multiple ways by playwrights to convey different angles of the story, whether it is lighting pattern, which is used to follow the dialogue or music to show the play's mood. These techniques are valuable tools that enable the playwright to conjure up a fake reality, but believable enough for the audience to accept it. It can also include irony, foreshadowing, symbols and imagery. It is therefore apt to analyze some of the techniques used by Mahesh Dattani in his plays performed on the stage more for the live audience.

Dattani always lays emphasis on theatre and the performance of the actor, not on printed words. All his plays are experimented on the stage and some of his plays were staged first and printed afterwards. As Michael Walling puts it in *Collected Plays*, "To Mahesh, a play is never really finished. Plays only really happen in the theatre, as ephemeral events. The apparently permanent printed text is just one approximation to what might occur when the piece is performed" (229).

Mahesh Dattani is a realistic playwright and bold enough to reflect his own time truly with his brilliant and innovative techniques in theatre. He uses divided stage settings at different levels to unmask the distorted psyche of modern man and to picture the whole society and its troubles in this mechanized world. Apart from multi-level sets, various symbols and symbolic devices are used, often with the use of masks to unravel the hidden conflicts within the mind of the character. The technique of flashback and flash forward is used to move the plot backward and forward to illustrate a considerable or a highly disturbed time sequence on the stage. And the present chapter demonstrates how Dattani makes use of the symbols in his play, *Bravely Fought the Queen* with a new insight and perspective.

Initially, things look calm and composed in *Bravely Fought the Queen* but Dattani's skilful use of symbols lends a relentless pace to the engaging plot, thereby revealing the existence of each protagonist. One of the most potent symbols used is that of the bonsai. 'Bonsai' is a Japanese term which means 'tree-in-a-tray'. Bonsai is the art of miniaturization of trees by growing them in containers. The art of bonsai cultivation is practiced for purely aesthetic purposes. This is in contrast to the general practice of cultivation which aims at utility-based activities like production of food and medicine. Hence, 'bonsai' is a non-beneficiary, non-productive practice and the finished product is a piece of decoration which resembles a tree but lacks its benefits.

The cultivation of the bonsai is a practice which alters the natural growth and development patterns of the tree by using certain techniques like leaf trimming, pruning, wiring, clamping, grafting and defoliation. It involves a systematic routine to fashion the tree as per the designer's plan. The designer cuts, grafts and strips the specimen in order to impose his plan and design. The main aim of the designer is to

simulate the features of a true tree. Thus, one can interpret the art of ‘bonsai’ as the art of imposing order on a miniature subject, for the purpose of pleasure.

Likewise patriarchal control denies the woman an independent existence. In the patriarchal system, a woman derives her identity from the man who controls her. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dolly asks Lalitha, “Whose wife are you?” (5). Dolly’s identity is dependent on her husband’s; in the way a bonsai specimen needs a stem cutting in order to come into existence. This notion is similar to the Christian theological belief that Eve was born from one of Adam’s ribs.

Exposed to an alien environment from the family, some ‘person’ acts as a ‘catalyst’ to reveal dark secrets of the family’s relationships and its generational conflicts. Lalitha, in *Bravely Fought the Queen*, acts as a ‘catalyst’, as the true revelations and deconstruction begins with her entry into the Trivedi’s household. Lalitha’s habit of nurturing bonsais become the dominant metaphor for Dattani, to unveil the attitudes of the power-ridden society towards women and to explore the self and identity in the play. The stunted growth, the bizarre shape, the grotesque reality of the bonsai become resonant in the existence of all the characters of the people in this play. The bonsai is the most significant symbol for it relates to most of the characters and echoes their inner thoughts and feelings.

In semiotics, symbol is a sign. A symbol is defined as “. . . a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself” (Abrams 2006). When Lalitha comes to meet Dolly, she brings an orange fruit-bearing bonsai as a present. To Lalitha, the fruit-bearing bonsai reminds her of a ‘child-bearing’ woman. Lalitha longs for a child inwardly, but is forced to curb her feelings. This is because her husband Sridhar’s aim is to buy a flat and then have children. In fact, Lalitha has learnt to shape her life, its preoccupations



and interest according to Sridhar's tastes. Denied an active work life Lalitha clings on to her husband's work and deludes herself into believing that she is deeply interested in it. For Lalitha, "the emptied out female self, shut out from the general intercourse provided by an active work life, is left with no alternatives but to feign interest in her husband's work, and believe in gaining a sense of self-worth from such an association" (Bourdieu 117).

The bonsai may also be viewed as a symbol of how patriarchy controls women. This is evident when Lalitha says, "Anyway, then you plant the sapling in a shallow tray-you have got to make sure the roots don't have enough space to spread. You still have to keep trimming them as they grow. . . Here comes the best part. You can shape their branches into whatever shapes you want-by pinching or wiring the shoots" (18-19).

The 'bonsai' symbol is true for a woman who is a creation like a bonsai, as her desires are constantly trimmed and cut so that they spread only to a particular level and cannot attain the required height. Their roots are not given ample space to stretch. Alka, Dolly and Lalitha are all bonsais of different kind. But the bonsai is especially the representation of Dolly's tortures, to whom Lalitha actually presents the tree as a gift. Even its bearing fruits are inedible like Daksha and it turns into a dwarf, which is stunted in every way and yet surviving. As Lalitha says, "You stunt their growth. You keep trimming the roots and bind their branches with wire and . . . stund them. . . You can't call them fully grown-but when they've reached their dwarfed maturity, they really look bizarre" (16-18).

Consequently, all these trimming and cutting makes bonsai pretty and expensive object, as the women in this play appear in the eyes of Jiten; continuously trimmed in different ways to create the desired effect.

Because a woman is denied an independent existence, Dolly is seen as a commodity that is to be enjoyed by the patriarch. The ReVaTee ad campaign, launched by Jiten and Nitin's agency, works on the irrational belief that a woman is an object of desire and her role is to please her partner. During the survey regarding the advertisement, women strongly refute this unrealistic, "tasteless and degrading" notion (58). But to the patriarch, Jiten, his wife is a commodity, the 'trophy wife', an ornamental piece of decoration in the household and at office parties. Dolly is a specimen of the reduced and limited 'bonsai' existence. The belief that a woman is an object of desire is perpetuated by patriarchal society, and many women actually adopt this belief unthinkingly. The fashion of wearing corsets and that of foot binding actually prove how women have been brainwashed into torturing their bodies only to appear attractive to their partners. They are like the bonsai trees that are bound and grafted making them more aesthetically appealing to the eye but less functional due to disfiguring. This is an instance of how insidiously patriarchy works.

The patriarch, in order to establish his power and control over his subjects, resorts to domestic violence. The U.S. Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) defines domestic violence as a, "pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner" ( n.p.). It can take many forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, economic, and psychological abuse. In the play, Jiten's father usually pester his wife, Baa, in order to establish his dominance over her. The episodes of domestic violence have left such deep psychological scars on Baa's mind that she has lost her sense of time and place. Baa sees the picture of her husband in her elder son, Jiten and thus automatically develops repulsion towards him. The stunted growth of the bonsai plants is simulated in Baa, the matriarch of the household. Baa makes her

presence felt only by the ringing of a bell; she has not recovered from the fear psychosis that her late husband has successfully imbibed in her mind with his physical abuse of her. Baa is a living embodiment of the past. She reveals that her life with her late husband was a pathetic one.

Dolly is exploited in almost the same manner as Baa. She is trapped in an abusive marriage with Jiten, who maintains a simultaneous life with prostitutes. Dolly and Jiten's daughter, Daksha, a victim of domestic violence even before her birth, is born as a disabled child. When Dolly says, "Daksha was born - two months premature. With the cord around her neck!" (97) the audiences are reminded of the bonsai tied with wire to stunt its growth. Daksha is a living proof of the "grotesque" (62) nature of the dominating and abusive patriarch, Jiten. Daksha lives the reduced and limited 'bonsai' life because of her father's cruelty towards her mother. Daksha is an invisible victim of the atrocities of men. She represents the deformed, retarded growth of female psyche resulting from dehumanization of women in society.

*Bravely Fought the Queen* is a play which consciously uses the metaphor of the bonsai to connect its characters with the bonsai at every level and expose their role in relation to it. When Lalitha describes the process of growing it she unconsciously seems to chart the process through which society conditions, fashions, clips and arrests the spontaneous and complete maturing of its women. Lalitha's description is applicable to Baa, to Dolly and Alka, to Daksha, and to Lalitha herself. All of them are saplings at the hands of male figures who seek to curtail their full growth and lead to the growth of grotesque artificial plants, with miniature inedible fruits, capable of being exhibited for their aesthetic appeal but unable to serve the real purpose of natural trees, to provide shade, fruits, flowers and shelter to the organic world. Thus like the bonsais, the women in the play are incapable of realizing their full potential.

Baa misses her chance to cultivate her talent. Dolly could not enjoy the wholeness of motherhood. Alka is deprived of experiencing maternity. Lalitha deludes herself to believe that her husband's work and decisions are her own and Daksha is been denied a normal life at the fetal stage all because of the intervention of the stunting process of patriarchal force. Hence, three generations of women, Baa, Dolly, Alka and Daksha are the victims of chauvinism.

The bonsai symbol is used by Dattani to compare with women in the Indian scenario who are stunted in terms of the development of their independent identities. As Lalitha says, "Oh no. It's completely resigned to its new shape. I suppose something happens inside it and . . . it decides to change its size. All it needs now is a little nourishment occasionally. . ." (33). The bonsai symbolizes Dolly. It also points to Alka, who like the bonsai is fed on frugal meals, without love and care, the essential nutrients of life. She gets no nourishment from her marriage. The women finds the bonsai attractive because they too have become "resigned to their new shape" (33). The female bonsais of the play become a silent and subtle weapon with which Dattani exposes the invisible process through which society wires, twists, clips the heart and soul of women. Thus, "the symbolic connotations of the metaphor of the bonsai produce the effect of a larger reality in which the female is pinned down under a monolithic edifice of patriarchal injunctions" (Bourdieu 104).

The bonsai plant which appears in the play is an apt symbol of the entire family which has not 'grown' normally but stiffed and suffocated. The issues raised by Dattani in his plays are enhanced by his innovative techniques of the stage settings and other theatrical elements. As Dattani addresses in *The Hindu*, "The function of drama, in my opinion, is not merely to reflect the malfunction of society, but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for



normal in our world. It is ugly, but funny” (2). Thus, the themes of continual subversion of men by women emotionally in Dattani’s *Bravely Fought the Queen* also correlated with his plot and stage settings and therefore functions to complete each other.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Drama, as a dynamic art form, is present in almost every society through the ages. It is the most wide-ranging, the most polyphonic of all the arts, representing life as well as a way of seeing it. The drama of India has a universal history, originality, identity, longevity and a universal presence. It has a very distinct identity of its own specific aesthetics, artistic objective and creative methods, which are relevant even today. From the time of composition of *Natyashastra* (450 B.C) in India, it was the performance, which was of prominent importance rather than the written text. It is the reification of human action or performance and universalization of the hidden truths of the human situations. It enacts man's relationship with man, which is fundamental to every social science.

In the theatrical scenario of contemporary India, it is seen that both men and women playwrights have taken important initiatives by representing the crimes committed against women through their literary works. This conscious awareness as to the injustices done to women is evident in the writings of male playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Kamad, and Mahesh Dattani to name a few.

Dattani is taken to be the true successor of all these playwrights and responsible for the revolutionary progression of English drama. He emerges as a compelling playwright who projects the postcolonial dichotomy at various levels. He keeps women at the centre of his dramatic world and may be called avant-garde feminist. He was greatly influenced by Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Madhurye.

Dattani is a versatile genius: a director, actor, playwright, dancer, and choreographer. He started his theatre activity, writing plays and directing them after

1980s. The literature of 1980s and 90s focused on the issues like male hegemony, suppression of women, gender bias, and violence on women, Indian patriarchal family system, joint family, and marginalization of women, problems of eunuchs (hijras), plight of homosexuals, lesbians, and socio-political problems of urban-metropolitan Indian.

Dattani with a huge bulk of drama appeared on the literary scene as the most potent force to mould and modify the established conventions of dramatic art. He set the direction of New Drama. He expanded the horizon of Indian drama by including radical themes like homosexuality, gender issues, the new dynamics of man and woman relationship, the persistently growing frustration and nothingness in the middle class life and tradition. He holds a mirror to the changing social scenario of India.

Without adhering to any established dramaturgy, Dattani has created a dramatic tradition of his own by bringing theatre close to real-life experiences. He exhibits a keen awareness and penetrating insight into the socio-psychological spectrum of human behaviour that affects human relationships at personal and interpersonal levels and adds new dimensions to the area of his theatrical canons. The main area of his focus is, of course, the human relationships. Within the periphery of theatre, Dattani dramatizes human pursuits and desires that determine the dynamics of relationships inside and outside the family. Besides depicting the 'visible' social reality, Dattani's preoccupation with the 'invisible' issues inspires him to provide space to the marginalized sections of society like the gays and the eunuchs. While bringing out their psychological fears, guilt and pressures, Dattani also highlights the roles of the creeping influences of societal set-up that consciously or unconsciously determine the fabric of human relationships around them.

Dattani's plays reveal the intricate family relationships with authenticity and accuracy. He is a dramatist who reveals how some family members, motivated by their whims and desire to control, abuse others within the precincts of family. Patriarchy has been depicted in his plays as a system of domination and control over the family members to impose the will, needs and desires of the patriarch, i.e. the head of the family. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, through the characters of Jiten, Nitin and Praful, Dattani shows how prejudiced patriarchal figure functions in families. Dattani explores the psychological, social and cultural causes of their actions and the effects of these actions that produce corresponding results. Dattani condemns dishonesty and hypocrisy in relationship which may ruin the lives of people around.

Every act is named as per the gender of the characters present therein. Act I entitled *The Women* deals with the women characters in the play which are Baa, a widow woman and the mother of Jiten and Nitin; Dolly, wife of Jiten; Alka, wife of Nitin; Daksha, daughter of Dolly and Jiten; Lalita, wife of Sridhar, an employee in Nitin and Jiten's office. Act II entitled as *The Men* is dominated by men characters of the play as Jiten, Baa's elder son; Nitin, Baa's younger son; Sridhar, an employee in Jiten and Nitin's office and Praful, brother of Dolly and Alka. Act III entitled as "Free for all" is very symbolic and suggestive. There is a free flow of emotions and passion, anger and hatred, blaming and counter blaming. The women express, assert, and move freely in this act. Dattani presents a kind of familial court in which contention and counter contention takes place till the truth is revealed. The Trivedi brothers are dismissed as scheming and gay, violent and unfaithful. The dramatist disproves the idea of varied spaces for man and woman showing them human beings equal in all respects.



Dolly, wife of Jiten, is portrayed as an isolated woman. Jiten marries her not because of any attraction or love for her but only for the sake of the societal norms of marriage. Jiten is neither loyal to her nor he tries to understand her. He never treats Dolly the way she deserves. There is restriction in every aspect of her life. Here, Jiten is the symbol of patriarchal domination. Dolly's mother-in-law induces Jiten to beat her up in the advanced stage of pregnancy. As a result, Daksha is born premature at seventh month, and she is mentally retarded. Thus Daksha too, is victimized. Here, Daksha stands as the symbol of Jiten's violence and torture on Dolly.

Dolly suffers because of the norms of the patriarchal society of Indian. In the hands of patriarchy she suffers torture, violence and ill-treatment. Her husband's lack of concern for her results in some psychic problem. As Devi comments about Dolly in *Five Plays*, "She suffers not for her own fault but for Praful's. She suffers because she is a woman" (193). Her husband is a cheater and disloyal to Dolly. Jiten victimizes her because he wants to show his superiority over her. Dolly decides to remain within patriarchy all along. Her disabled child Daksha is the symbol of her unfulfilled selfhood.

Alka, the wife of Nitin is the victim of patriarchal society. Alka, the younger daughter-in-law has her own cross to bear; her husband has a homosexual relationship with her own brother, Praful, who has planned this marriage to carry on this relationship, right in the house and outside the house. First, she suffers at the hands of her brother, Praful and then her husband and mother-in-law. Praful is very cruel to her. Once, when she comes back home from school on a neighbour boy's scooter, for that Praful burns her hair on the stove, "He lit the stove and pushed my face in front of it! I thought he was going to burn my face! He burnt my hair. I can still smell my hair on fire"(32). Here the pity is she is not realizing the fact that she is being

tortured. She is more concerned about her face. Face is an identity of both Baa and Alka. Her husband has homosexual relations with her brother Praful even before his marriage to her. In this way, her life is devoid of any love. Alka's husband is gay and maintained a relationship with her own brother Praful. Thus, Alka, who longs for her brother's acceptance for herself, silently suffers her fruitless marriage with Nitin. The presence of Dolly and Alka are taken for granted. They are expected with their constant presence at home, to understand the requirements of the ones who are really in charge.

John Beynon in his *Masculinities and Culture*, which is a discussion on the cultural construction of masculinity, says, "Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up; rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways" (46). While discussing the multiplicity of masculinities, Connell comes up with four variants of masculinity – hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, complicit masculinity and marginalized masculinity.

In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani explores the hierarchy and plurality of masculinities through the characters of Sridhar, Praful, Jiten, Nitin, and their dead father. Jiten is introduced in the second act with his arrogant demeanour, domineering temperament and overbearing attitude, dictating terms to his younger brother and their secretary, Sridhar. His dominance over Sridhar stems from the fact of being economically superior. Jiten's masculinity is recognizably hegemonic even in his work-place. His disposition and attitude is capitalist and therefore, patriarchy stands out as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity.

Jiten's masculinity is also recognizably hegemonic in his family. Jiten being the sole provider of the family gains power and makes women dependent on him

economically. So, Jiten's higher position in his family gives him the power to impose violence and force. Jiten marries Dolly not because of any attraction or love for her but only for the sake of the societal norm of marriage. Jiten beats her up in the advanced stage of pregnancy as a result; Daksha is born prematurely at seven month. Her disabled child Daksha is the symbol of her unfulfilled selfhood. Jiten powerfully exercises 'hegemonic masculinity' in his family.

Nitin's sexual orientation excludes him from the patriarchal premise; he is pushed to the lowest strata of masculinity where he exhibits values, principles, and behaviour that are at odds with those expected from a 'man'. He comes to embody the last category of masculinity, 'subordinate masculinity'. Nitin has homosexual relations with her brother Praful even before his marriage to Alka. In this way, Alka's life is devoid of any love. Her brother tricks her and uses her as an instrument to maintain his affair with Nitin and she has to suffer her whole life because of it. Alka thus becomes deprived of desired marital bliss on account of deception practiced by her own brother. Consequently, Nitin has to cloak his homosexuality behind the institution of marriage, with Alka. Nitin's secret relationship with Praful is disclosed right at the end of the play. He emerges as a disempowered man, whose powers have been snatched by the 'hegemonic masculinity' that renders Jiten powerful.

The patriarchal system with its subtle manifestation in the Trivedi household tries to render Dolly and Alka passive. In this connection Angelie Multani comments, "Dattani's keen and astute insight into the position of women in a middle class domestic household as 'marginal' is worthy of appreciation. Dattani presents the ways in which exploitation is now couched in terms of culture and refinement" (78). In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, Dattani explores the marginalization of women and also

their attempt to articulate their voices against the patriarchal politics that subjugates the women and makes them worth for nothing. “By exploiting layer upon layer of performance, of unreality, Mahesh allowed his actress a route to emotion in its rawest form; the pain, the anguish in the blood-knot of the family which is his constant theme” (Walling 229).

The play depicts the emotional, financial and sexual complexities of Indian urban family. The women of the play are exploited in a multiple ways. Dolly and Alka in *Bravely Fought the Queen* are capable of challenging the oppressive authority of their husbands and ultimately show the gestures of resistance and defiance. But, their voice remains unheard. Often, the female voice is stifled, silenced, thwarted, muffled, passivized by the very structures of power that patriarchy owns and controls. The fact is that even today women are expected to be subordinated to men.

*Bravely Fought the Queen* is a play which consciously uses the metaphor of the bonsai to connect its characters with the bonsai at every level and expose their role in relation to it. When Lalitha describes the process of growing it she unconsciously seems to chart the process through which society conditions, fashions, clips and arrests the spontaneous and complete maturing of its women. Lalitha’s description is applicable to Baa, to Dolly and Alka, to Daksha, and to Lalitha herself. All of them are saplings at the hands of male figures who seek to curtail their full growth and lead to the growth of grotesque artificial plants, with miniature inedible fruits, capable of being exhibited for their aesthetic appeal but unable to serve the real purpose of natural trees, to provide shade, fruits, flowers and shelter to the organic world. Thus like the bonsais, the women in the play are incapable of realizing their full potential. The bonsai plant which appears in the play is an apt symbol of the entire family which has not ‘grown’ normally but stifled and suffocated. The issues



raised by Dattani in his plays are enhanced by his innovative techniques of the stage settings and other theatrical elements. As Dattani addresses in *The Hindu*, “The function of drama, in my opinion, is not merely to reflect the malfunction of society, but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world. It is ugly, but funny” (2). Thus, the themes of continual subversion of men by women emotionally in Dattani’s *Bravely Fought the Queen* also correlated with his plot and stage settings and therefore functions to complete each other.

The irony of the title, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, lies in the fact that none of the two women, Dolly and Alka, are unable to transform their humiliating positions. Marxist feminists insist that without financial independence a woman’s subjugated condition can never change. Having no opportunity for earning their livelihood, Dolly and Alka remain forever in their stunted state of bonsai looking beautiful but inwardly unfulfilled and lonely. Unlike Lakshmi Bai, who actively attempts to win her rights through battle, Dolly and Alka’s yearning for love, emancipation and dignity remains a passive dreams.

Dattani employs a range of theatrical techniques successfully. The multi-layered reality in the play, suggested by the split stage, moves constantly into an internalized reality. Dattani writes with a dexterously veiled acidity, employing a language that uses both simplicity and serration, pressing the word to its limits, flanked by equally pungent, loaded silence. *Bravely Fought the Queen* dramatizes the emptiness and sham in the lives of its cloistered women and self-indulgent, unscrupulous men, blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, standing on the brinks of terrible secrets, deception and hypocrisies. Dattani is a creative genius able to deal with these complex issues with seriousness and insights.

Dattani is certainly a new and unconventional voice in the Indian theatre scenario. The echo of his theatrical art both in terms of form and content anticipates his prominence in the theatrical world at global level. The flexibility and ease of expression, breaking the barriers of tight fisted dramaturgy and initiating a penetrating insight into the psycho-relationship spectrum of human behaviour affecting human relationship at personal and interpersonal level, would add new dimensions to the area of theatrical canons. In Dattani's dramatic world, drama instead of being an expression of art has become a realization of life and it is a preface to the tradition of unconventional popular Indian theatre.

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**Ascension to Maturation: An Analysis of Adolescence in**

**Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the reward of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

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**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Ascension to Maturation: An Analysis of Adolescence in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

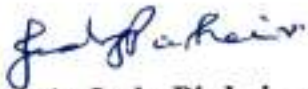
THOOTHUKUDI

*R. Iswarya*  
ISWARYA R.



## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Ascension to Maturation: An Analysis of Adolescence in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Iswarya R. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Ascension to Maturation: An Analysis of Adolescence in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*** analyses the futile attempt to escape from conventional femininity, which is perceived as a trap of impotence and submissiveness, in an adolescent and an adult character. Carson McCullers' sexual ambivalence and her growing identification with masculinity were reflected in which she explored the identity of women in the conservative patriarchal society.

The first chapter **Introduction** transacts the reference of the American literature, biographical details of Carson McCullers, her contributions to the literature and the review of the novel *The Member of the Wedding*.

The second chapter **Alienation in Adolescence** endeavors to describe the protagonist's personal crisis and love relationships, to the restricted spaces she is familiar with: small town in the Deep South, with their sidewalks, bars and stores, intimate spaces such as houses and kitchens.

The third chapter **Obsession in Maturation** depicts protagonist's obsession to belong to a group which gives a desired relief from her present state of segregation.

The fourth chapter **Acceptance in Realization** portrays the crisis of identity undertaken by the protagonist through the symbol of the wedding and her acceptance about the reality.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the features of the project. It affirms the message of acceptance and companionship of people in order to lead a normal life.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The World of Literature is a world where there is no reality  
except that of the human imagination

-Northrop Frye

Twentieth century literature in America may be described as a literary renaissance. The old ideas that governed literary composition in the nineteenth century were set aside for more daring and experimental modes. This trend was felt in fiction, poetry, and drama. One great force behind this was the magazine of Verse-Poetry founded in 1912. This afforded original writers an outlet for experimental poetry. Under the editorship of Harriet Monroe it was one of the first little magazines and a part of the 'Chicago Renaissance' early in the century. It published the works of such leading American and English poets as Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Hart Crane and Robert Frost. This magazine was responsible for popularizing the revolutionary poetry, by patronizing the daringly original poets.

In Drama the innovations were brought about the genius of the theatre Eugene O'Neill. Rebelling against the lifeless romantic dramatic tradition, O'Neill introduced into the theatre fresh life and vitality. His plays like *Beyond the Horizon*, *Emperor Jones*, *The Harry Ape*, *Desire under the Elms*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and *Long Days Journey* brought about a revolution in the American theatre turning to Greek drama, Elizabethan plays and the European drama practiced by Ibsen and Strindberg. O'Neill created a kind of drama that won the admiration of the whole world. He brought into the theatre, the intensity of emotion and the mighty sweep of passion best seen in classical tragedy. He stretched the length of the play and gave it mammoth



dimensions. Realism, romantic naturalism, symbolism, expressionism all were tried by O'Neill in his incessant search for satisfying dramatic expression. And his success has been universally acknowledged.

In fiction too the twenties was a time of experimentation and searching for new values and a quest for the meaning of life. Altogether these years of change of reform, of youth and promise. Political reasons also operated behind all this. America had by this time discovered herself as a world power and the novelist who published their works in the 1920's grew up in the years of national confidence and maturity. The First World War and America's involvement in the War however, put an end to this optimism and sense of well being. America's isolation was no longer possible and the nation was swept in to the horror and ugliness of War. Many of the young men with talents experienced the horror of active warfare and while returning they found themselves ill-at ease in their home country. They set themselves against the self satisfied attitude of their nation which had no viability now that the war had altered the picture. The young writers were thoroughly disillusioned by what they felt to be the provincialism of Americans and in disgust many left their country and settled in Europe. This move away from America resulted in a period of stock-taking and a rapid technical development. Even the writers of America who stayed at home, began to discover problems of national rather than religious interest.

Gertrude Stein in Paris gave a great impetus to this literary movement. Paris was the centre of the intellectual ferment at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gertrude Stein's Salon in Paris was the favourite haunt of those who had been self-exiled and she was a great influence in twentieth century literature. Her own style was notorious for its violation of all rules, and she inspired the young writers and gave them the impetus to free themselves from the shackles of traditional rules of narrative

writing. Scott Fitzgerald, Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway were those to whom she gave her valuable advice-‘Simplify! Simplify!’. Many held her the century’s most radical innovator.

Fitzgerald who immortalized himself as the author of *The Great Gatsby*, *This side of Paradise* and *the Beautiful and the Damned* also proved to be an effective spokesman of the age. Critics have agreed that he was the spokesman of the 1920’s, the age of confusion, “ self confused and self-doomed voice of his generation”(27). As soon as his *This side of Paradise* was written, he became a prominent luminary on the literary horizon. Within a few months it become the undergraduate’s Bible and he was the acknowledged leader of the Torrid Twenties, laureate of the Jazz Age and its excessive accent on youth. *The Great Gatsby* received high praise from eminent writers. H.L. Mencken praised its fidelity to life, its effective exposure of “the florid show of American life-the high carnival of those who have too much money to spend and too much time for the spending of it. T.S. Eliot welcomed it as “the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James”.

John Steinbeck’s novels express the theme of the urbanized or industrialized America’s secret longing for land. This appears in his first novel *To a God Unknown* in which the hero goes to California in search of land and presents his strongest statement about man’s relationship to the land-“I have a hunger for land” he says. This is true in Steinbeck’s masterpiece *The Grapes of Wrath* where the Joad family move from Oklahoma for the west coast-Steinbeck’s novels oppose many social evils. The writer rebukes a money-worshipping society in which the decencies-honesty and pride-have succumbed to materialism. With his proletarian sympathies, Steinbeck gave realistic studies of life among the depressed economic classes of the United States, especially the itinerant farm labourers of California *Pastures of Heaven*, a

collection of short stories about the inhabitants of the valley of that name, evinces for the first time Steinbeck's interest in the simple-minded who he described as the "Unfinished Children of nature". *Grapes of Wrath*, is the best example of proletarian fiction of the 1930's.

Sherwood Anderson is yet another great name associated with the Chicago literary renaissance. His book *Winesburg Ohio*, a collection of related short stories dealing with individuals in a typical Midwestern town, brought him recognition as a leader in the revolt against established literary traditions. Anderson's style, though later criticized as artless and sentimental was, considering his time, a significant breakthrough to an individual and original expression. The message of Anderson was that the walls erected between people by the worship of materialistic success could only be broken down by love, creative human relationship and a return to a personal involvement in one's craft.

One among the twentieth century novelist is Carson McCullers. Carson McCullers was born as Lula Carson Smith on February 19, 1917 in Columbus, Georgia, US. She was born to Lamar Smith, a watch maker, jeweler Vera Marguerite Waters. Long periods of convalescence proved to be the inspiration behind her writing. Her first published work was an autobiographical piece called *Wunderkind* which was about a musical prodigy's painful life experiences. It tells the story of a girl who realizes at age 15 that she is not the musical prodigy her parents told her she was. She quite music and loses her friends and her parents' affection. The story first appeared in December 1936 issue of *Story Magazine*. For two years from 1935 till 1937, she divided her time between Columbus and New York in order to work on her studies and writing. She also worked at several jobs to support herself. In New York in 1937, she married Reeves McCullers. But neither was suited to heterosexual

monogamy , and theirs was a difficult union. They divorced in 1940 but remarried in 1945.

Critic Robert F. Kiernan once noted that McCullers was:

An eccentric, self –centered women, preoccupied with money, with literary success, and with the satisfaction of her own emotional needs...But the failings of her life were the material of her art , and all of her characters share her egocentricity and suffer the pangs of its attendant loneliness.(347)

She published her debut novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* in 1940 when she was only 23. It explores the spiritual isolation of misfits and outcasts in a small town of the United States South. McCullers told a desperately sad story about a deaf – mute, John Singer who cares for a mentally impaired deaf – mute, Spiros Antonatoulos. Four town – people adopt Singer as their confidante. They believe Singer is sympathetic, but in fact he listens merely to be polite and does not understand them. Antonatoulos is sent to an insane asylum and Singer commits suicide.

The novel explores the inability of human beings to soothe others' loneliness. None of the characters are capable of giving the love and understanding the others need. One of the character is a black doctor who is frustrated at his inability to make progress in race relations in the Southern town. Another is an adolescent girl who dreams of becoming an orchestra conductor but is doomed by her family's poverty to a lifetime of working in a dim store: the character is modeled after McCullers. The novel was highly reviewed by critics and was also a huge commercial status success.



The very next year, the novel *Reflection in a Golden Eye* was released. The novel had first appeared in a serialized format in the October – November issues of the Harper's 'Bazaar' in 1940. The book dealt with issues such as homosexuality, sadism and fetishism. This novel shattered expectations, mostly because of its unconventional subject matter. In *Golden Eye* the characters' non – standard sexual behavior was clear. Set on an army base in the south in the 1930s, the novel is about the relationships among Captain Penderton, a bisexual, impotent man; Major Langdon, who is having an affair with Penderton's wife; the two wives; a homosexual houseboy, Anacleto; and Private Williams, who has relation with a horse. The novel is full of perverse scenes and ends with a murder. Most critics found the characters grotesque and unsympathetic.

Then McCullers completed her long novella, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. Cast in terms of a folktale with a nameless narrator, it is the story of a female giant, Amelia Evans, who is in love with Lymon, a hunchback. Evans runs a café in a small southern town. Her husband, Marvin Macy, returns from prison and starts a relationship with Lymon. The story ends in a brawl between the married couple and the destruction of the café. Many critics considered the story McCullers's finest work, approaching the level of myth. Tennessee Williams said it was "among the masterpieces of the language"(87).

In 1946, the novel *The Member of the Wedding* was published. It took five years to complete the novel. Again set in a small southern town, it concerns an awkward, lonely adolescent girl, Frankie Addams. She tries to become a member of her brother's wedding party to overcome her isolation, but her father prevents her from riding in the newlyweds' car. More realistic than her previous works, *The*

*Member of the Wedding* is a sympathetic portrayal of adolescent misery. It won a great reputation from critics and the public. McCullers adapted it for the stage, and it had a successful run of 501 performances in New York in 1950, winning several important awards. In 1952, it was made in to a film of the same name, starring Julie

In 1947, she suffered a series of strokes which left her blinded in the right eye and partially paralyzed. She could type with only one hand, and produced only a page a day. In 1948, in despair over her physical condition, McCullers attempted suicide but failed; she never tried again. But her husband was also suicidal because of his lack of success in a career and their unstable marriage. In 1953 he suggested a double suicide while they were living in Europe. She fled to the United States, and a few weeks later he killed himself in a hotel in Paris. McCullers returned to live with her mother, who died in 1955.

McCullers personal difficulties greatly diminished her literary output. In 1953 she wrote a television play, *The Invisible Wall*, for CBS. Her second and last stage play, *The Square Root of Wonderful*, was a failure in 1958. Her final novel was published in 1961 titled *Clock without Hands*, it returns to the themes of homosexuality and racial bigotry. A critical and commercial failure, *Clock without Hands* is the story of the bigoted Southern patriarch Judge Clane, who is raising his orphaned grandson Jester. The Judge, who still believes in the principles of the old Confederacy, wants to send Jester to a military school, but Jester is more interested in music and flying and in his grandfather's mixed-race male secretary, Sherman Pew.

The same year *Clock without Hands* was published, McCullers had breast cancer surgery. In 1964, her second and last television screenplay, *The Sojourner*, aired on NBC. That year, her books of poems for children, *Sweet as a Pickle* and

*Clean as a Pig*, was published. Another children's book, *Sucker*, was published in 1986.

In 1967, McCullers suffered another stroke and soon she died on September 29, 1967, at the age of fifty. She was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. That same year, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* was released as a Hollywood feature film. Directed by John Huston and starring Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor, the movie was a flop despite its big names.

*The Mortgaged Heart*; the Previously Uncollected Writings of Carson McCullers, came out in 1971. Another volume of short stories, *Collected Stories*, was published in 1987. In 1989, *The Member of the Wedding* enjoyed a revival at the Roundabout Theatre in New York. That same year, *Ballad of the Sad Cafe* was made into a film, with Vanessa Redgrave as the giant woman and Keith Carradine as her husband. The film was a failure.

McCullers career was short, but it was filled with daring and unusual work. Critics may disagree on her place in American literature, but clearly her writings were unique in their treatment of isolation, loneliness and people who were outcasts from conventional society. "No one has written more feelingly than her about the plight of the eccentric," Kiernan contented, and "no one has written more understandingly than she about adolescent loneliness and desperation."

*The Member of the Wedding* is the first novel devoted exclusively to the discomforts of a girl's adolescence. Carson McCullers maintains the girl's point of view throughout the novel. She structures the reader's perception of the actions of the plot from this point of view alone, forcing the readers to see the world from Frankie's uncomfortable point of view. McCullers was able to finish the novel with the help of a



Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Institute of Arts and Letters grant, and several summers at Yaddo, a writers' colony in New York. Much of the material for the novel is autobiographical. The town in which Frankie lives is based on McCullers's hometown of Columbus, Georgia. McCullers's father, like Frankie's, was a jeweler, and her family had employed African-American servants in her childhood home. Many of Frankie's feelings of awkwardness are drawn from McCullers's own memories of what it was like to be twelve years old. She, like Frankie, felt like a gangly misfit whose tomboyish ways made it difficult to fit in with boys or girls of her age.

In choosing the age of twelve, the margins of childhood and teenage years, McCullers is able to focus on the uncomfortable state of "becoming". Frankie Addams doesn't yet know what she will become. When she, Bernice, and John Henry tell stories about what they would do if they were the creator of the world, Frankie's world is a mixed world. She likes Berenice's idea that the world be peaceful and that there be no wars, but she found difficult to give up the romanticism of war heroes, so she creates a war island where people who want war can go so that they can be heroes. She also imagines a world in which girls can change to be boys and back again and boys can do the same. To an extent she found hard to decide whether to name her cat Charles or Charlina and she calls it a Persian even though it's a short-haired cat. Like her life, her imaginary world is an adolescent's world of inbetweenness.

Part of the problem of being in the flux of becoming is the fact that Frankie is unjoined. She does not belong to any club. The girls she played with just the summer before are now too old for her and they won't let her join their club. The army won't



take her and the Red Cross won't accept her heroic offer of blood for the wounded soldiers. Even the time of year is an in-between time. She spends her time with Berenice Sadie Brown, who lives in constant longing for her lost love Ludie with men who share random characteristics of him like a smashed thumb or a winter coat. Her other companion is John Henry West who has fallen in love with the pin head girl at the freak show and who fantasizes about a world of half boys, half girls. Frankie also has many other thoughts of becoming something else and she plays out these fantasies in dress up costumes, in daydreams, and in talk. She dresses up in a Spanish shawl and walks around town acting as if she could speak Spanish.

When she hears of her brother's upcoming wedding, she sticks on to the idea of becoming part of the wedding, a member of a unified group. A wedding is the ultimate and permanent joining of opposites. Janice and Jarvis will not only get married, but they will also leave on a honeymoon. Frankie has fantasized about leaving town all summer, furthermore she imagines becoming a famous world traveler. Now she imagines that she will join the wedding and go on a fabulous world-wide honeymoon with her brother and his new wife. But when she arrives at the wedding, she is disappointed at every turn. The bride doesn't wear a wedding dress, but a day suit. Her brother treats her like a child. Except the bride's father no one talks to her and he asks her repeatedly what grade she's in as if her school status is her only claim to an identity. When the bride and groom get ready to leave, Frankie tries to leave with them and is brought up short by their refusal to take her. Even though Berenice has been telling her all week that her plan to join the wedding is impossible, she has kept it as a fixed idea of the only possible exit from her in-between life.

Yet the novel climaxes before the wedding when Frankie encounters adult sexuality. The scene at the Blue Moon with the red haired soldier is one of the most poignant scenes of the child's encounter with adulthood. Frankie realizes that there is something wrong with the unnamed soldier only after her first encounter with him when she comes home Berenice asks if the man was drunk. This thought has not occurred to Frankie. She never finds out what his problem was, why he doesn't recognize that she is a little girl dressed up in an older girl's clothes. Whatever his problem, he takes her up to his room with the clear intent of having sex with her. Frankie is nervous about going with him, but she has set herself on a path and is unwilling to get distracted from it. When he begins to kiss her, however, Frankie comes into herself and runs away. It is at this moment that Frankie comes into her own. She doesn't realize this change in herself, as evidenced by the fact that she still goes to the wedding, carrying out her plan to its failed ending. Perhaps it is both events together that push Frankie out of childhood and into teenage life, leading her for her new romance with the wonderful Mary Littlejohn.

With Mary Littlejohn, Frankie finally finds a place of belonging and connectedness. At the end of the novel, Frankie, now Frances, leaves behind her constructed family. John Henry is dead and Berenice is broken by the injustice of the universe and the racism of the judicial system. Frankie and her father will live in a new house with John Henry's parents and the reader can imagine that this family life will give Frankie more stability for embarking on her future life as a world traveler.

McCullers is among the writers associated with the southern gothic style of writing. This style features settings in the American South and characters that are bizarre, grotesque, and outcast. Although the novels do not take place in draft castles,



mazes, and dark woods, the same themes derived from these settings appear in southern gothic writing. These themes include isolation, confusion, and the search for meaning. McCullers is ranked among the most respected writers in the southern tradition. She is often compared with William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams. Today, critics continue to revisit her few novels as important writings. Critics consistently praise *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *The Ballad of the Sad Café* and *The Member of the Wedding* as her best works.

While most critics praise *The Member of the Wedding*, others claim that McCullers ends the story with the plot developments that are too convenient. Louis D. Rubin Jr. of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* finds Frankie's sudden acceptance of womanhood unrealistic and John Henry's death gratuitous and contrived. Edmund Wilson of the *New Yorker* writes in 1946 that the book was "utterly pointless" and lacked a sense of drama. It was this that incensed McCullers that she was inclined to take Tennessee Williams advice and adapt the novel as a play.

Lawrence Graver, in *American Writers*, explores the structure of *The Member of the Wedding*. He observes that the novel is divided in to three parts, a structure that calls attention to the rhythm of the novel. He explains,

In Mrs. McCullers book, the rhythm...follows the familiar journey of adolescent initiation: the stirrings of dissatisfaction, jubilant hope founded on misplaced idealism, and disillusionment accompanied by a new wisdom about the limits of human life.(245)

Other critics have linked this three-part structure to that of a sonata, a type of musical piece often has three parts. Based on biographical information about McCullers, these commentators believe that in *The Member of the Wedding* the author bridges her passion for music with her passion for writing.

The character of Frankie continues to be scrutinized as a portrayal of adolescent against in the South. Judith Everson, in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 173: American Novelist Since World War II*, observes that Frankie is "an adolescent 'everyman' in her awkward, agonized movement toward maturation. Yet at the same time, as feminist critics remind readers, she bears the specialburden of girlhood, which complicates her transition to adult status"(148). In this respect especially, the book is often compared to *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, a book that features another adolescent tomboy, Mick Kelly. According to Louise Wrestling of Southern Humanities Review, both characters dramatize "the crisis of identity which faces ambitious girls as they leave childhood and stumble into an understanding of what the world expects them to become"(339).

Rubin writes that he finds the character of Frankie the more realistic of the two. He explains, "Frankie Addams is the most appealing of Mrs. McCullers' people; I like her better than Mick Kelly because she is less strident-less written, I think, to a thesis"(265). He adds that "her struggles with pre-adolescence are entirely convincing and wondrously done-up to a point"(265). Rubin believes that when Frankie and Berenice have their "surrealistic, mystic visions of pain and misery" after the piano tuner begins working, Frankie's character loses her realism. He maintains that, at this point, the novel "drops off the deep end into distortion for the sake of distortion".

Most critics point to *The Member of the Wedding* as McCullers most realistic and most accessible novel. The book is praised for its writing style, depth, tone, and insight. Graver declares, "The novel is one of the few sentimental comedies to escape the charge of being maudlin; stylistic, it is the freshest and most inventive of her novels and stories"(143). A contributor to *Feminist Writers* explains the importance of



the novel by praising McCullers for her "analysis of maturation, race, and gender in *The Member of the Wedding*, perhaps her most perfect novel...In *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers brings a world too often seen as unimportant- a black woman, a clumsy, masculine girl, and a young feminine boy". In a 1946 article, George Dangerfield of *Saturday Review of Literature* comments on the books utmost delicacy and balance. In the *New York Times*, Isa Kapp expresses her delight in McCullers language, citing its "Freshness, quaintness, and gentleness"(113). Fifteen years after the novels publication, Rumer Godden, in *New York Herald Tribune Books*, calls it a masterpiece, adding that the book has retained its appeal and become universally popular. The forthcoming chapter speculates the life of the protagonist, who is alienated from the world that surrounds her. Her state of isolation, both from the members of the family and the society.

## Chapter Two

### Alienation in Adolescence

Adolescents are not monsters. They are just people trying to learn how to make it among the adults in the world, which are probably not so sure themselves.

-Virginia satir

The rich literature which followed the First World War revealed a more complex image of youth, an image quite frequently of disappointment, or failure, or of violent experience. It was not always a hopeful view of adolescent beginning, and, despite its undeniable energy, it is required to understand the past rather into the future. One thinks first of Gertrude Stein's Melanctha, who appeared in *Three Lives* as early as 1909; then of Tarkington's Willie Baxter, *Seventeen*(1916); Scott Fitzgerald's Amory Blaine, *The Side of Paradise*(1920); Hemingway's Nick Adams, *In Our Time*(1926); Thomas Wolfe's Eugene Gant, *Look Homeward Angel*(1929); Faulkner's Quentin Compson, Ike McCaslin and Charles Mallison *The Sound and the Fury*(1929) *The Bear*(1942) and *Intruder in the Dust*(1948); and Steinbeck's Cal or Aron, *East of Eden*(1952).

After Second World War the image of adolescence persisted, often assuming a regretful or fanciful or frankly regressive character. It celebrated the lonely, the freakish, the simple and delicate children of earth. The new writers showed a kind of personal intensity, a sense for the lovable, the nasty and the ridiculous where innocence was concerned, which are inclined to criticize. In Jean Stafford's *Boston Adventure* and *The*

*Mountain Lion*; Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding*; Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and *The Grass Harp*; and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Nine Stories*, the image of adolescence throws a new light on the permanent conflict between the self and the world to which Freud assigned a significant role in any culture.

The cult of adolescence is not an accident. Quite to the contrary, its history reverts to some of the most basic wishes in American experience. Behind it lies the American Dream, the vision of youth, hope and the open road. It is a vision that has given the American novelist distinctive force and has left on the American character an unforgettable impression. The changes which have overtaken this vision are clearly reflected in the mirror of adolescence. But adolescence is not only a mirror of the past. It also commands a present and future interest. The idea of adolescence in literature is both form and vision, a complex symbol of the felt contradictions which history imposed on the American Dream had to be modified if it were to remain viable, the first acknowledgement of guilt.

It was after the Civil War, which so rudely violated the faith of a perfect nation, as Howells, Whitman and Adams were all to testify, that the hidden innocence and experience in American life became conscious and explicit. In the light of historical experience it was natural that the adolescent should exercise his appeal on the tragic imagination: in his life, as in the history, the misleading notions of the new start and clean schedules are exemplified, and the ambiguities of initiation are dramatically portrayed. The adolescence is no longer simple or ignorant since Innocence has come to be rejected



in the favor of Experience, and the pursuit of happiness has made way for the greater elegance of damnation.

The cult of adolescence developed on the top of the second cycle of American literature, beginning with Twain, which Robert Spiller defined as a result of their continental conquest. But strong as the idea of adolescence is in the American tradition, its hold on the European mind in the last hundred and fifty years suggest a wider background of intellectual, social and historical conditions. It is necessary to take some account of these conditions since their counterpart in American society had a share in promoting adolescence and in controlling the meanings it came to appear for the readers. In a broad sense, Romanticism, Naturalism, Primitivism and Freudianism have all contributed to the development of what must appear a singularly contradictory ideas.

The bearing of Romanticism on the idea of adolescence was the earliest and most direct. The bright Romantic gifts of self-consciousness and introspection, of individual rebelliousness and heroic posturing, of innocence and disillusionment, were gladly taken over by adolescents, in life as in letters. In the United States however the European strain of romantic agony was tempered by the spirit of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman.

The impact of Primitivism on adolescence was of a different nature: the candor it proposed was of the naked emotions rather than the naked fact. Under the influence, literature set itself to explore those instinctual gestures and primary sensations which adolescents favored. The most recent intellectual influence on the idea of adolescence came from Freudianism. It was to be expected that an increased awareness of subconscious motives, of the power of the libido, of the conflicts between the reality and



pleasure principles and of Oedipal ambivalences should focus the writer's attention on the adolescent, whose life is so clearly the historical locus of these essential forces.

In Carson McCullers's fiction, the grotesque characters are victims of their obsessions. An obsession is a confusion of reality and fantasy. Laying stress on the imagination in the creation of the grotesque, Carson McCullers suggests that the imagination combines memory with insight and reality with dream. Such a combination produces a "tenderness"(285). She terms this tenderness, a "divine collusion". In this connection, Wolfgang Kayser emphasizes that the confusion between fantasy and reality is the hallmark of the grotesque and adds that the grotesque is "an attempt to exercise control over the demonic elements in the world"(181). He suggests that each individual to ward off the demonic elements which disturb his life arranges for himself a confusion between fantasy and reality and creates an obsession to live with. It gives him a release from the deep rooted fears. He further suggests that in the grotesque "reality and illusion are so knotted that deceptions are constantly created and genuinely dramatic style developed on the basis of the same dichotomy of illusion and reality"(135). Also, in the grotesque, the "accent lies on the discrepancy between the internal and external life"(146). Disharmonious external life and harmonious internal life are melted into an obsession which provides an immediate outlet to the bolted fears and emotions.

David Madden, focusing on McCullers's fiction, outlines the need of her characters for obsessions:

Being by nature a solitary spirit, each man, perhaps in his nethermost subliminal regions of being, desires privacy first, and from the dichotomy

effected by this paradoxical conflict arise anguish and despair and the continuance of loneliness in which he thrives. In solitude emerge those very private entreties about self and others that compel one to share or seek sympathetic understanding, either because these institutions are terrifying perplexing or sublimely beautiful.(129)

Madden highlights two things: one, isolation of the characters and the other conflict between the society and the individual, which, according to him, are responsible for the generation of obsessions.

Obsessions are the result of a sense of isolation and omission felt very strongly by McCullers's characters: "The characters move in a similar psychic and material realm in which each is painfully lonely isolated from society by its conditions and their own constitutions, each is obsessed with one single idea, purpose or personality trait"(131). Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding* is excluded from everything that surrounds her. She is deeply isolated. She is motherless and though many a time Bernice, the Negro Cook, acts as a mother substitute yet the feeling cannot go for ever. Her father is not home very often and even if he is, he is extremely busy to respond to her talks. Her only other companion is the six year old cousin, John Henry. A number of events in the last summer have been terrible for Frankie. They have precipitated her anxiety and gradual draw back. She has been very moody, e.g. Berenice calls her moodiness as foolishness, "just foolishness"(49).

Frankie has been afraid of seeing a light at a distance or of hearing a noise at night. She has been then going home and walking up and down in worry. She has been

man...the left side was a woman...half the face was dark bearded and the half bright glazed with paint. Both the eyes were strange"(27).

Frankie had been shaken to see all the abnormal creatures at the fair. She now feels that all of them had looked at her in a secret way and tried to contact their eyes with her. She feels they had been saying silently "We know you"(27). She is full of strange thoughts. She asks herself whether these freaks ever get married. John Henry agrees with her saying they have never seen such unpleasant creatures in their lives. Frankie is afraid now as she thinks her growth is also abnormal. She begins to measure her height. She is twelve years old and yet five feet nine inches tall; and if this rate of growth continues she will be nine feet tall at the age of eighteen. She would become an abnormal-She could be a "Freak"(25). "Do you think I will grow into a freak?", she asks Berenice. "Certainly not, I trust Jesus", (28) replies Berenice. But Frankie does not have Berenice's faith. Again and again she asks herself where she could possibly go to become the kind of person she envisions herself. Berenice dismisses her doubts. She further questions Berenice if she is beautiful. Berenice evades the questions advising her to clean herself and scrub her elbows. It only adds to the impact of the freak show.

Frankie develops the feeling that she is ugly like the creatures of the show and wishes that she were dead. Her fear is compounded when she analyses that all other twelve years old girls and ladies can walk under the arbor but she cannot. Her fear is psychological. She does not know what causes this fear but she is afraid. She feels like leaving the town: "I doubt it...I have been ready to leave this town so long. I wish I did not have to come back here after the wedding, I wish I was going somewhere for good. I wish I had a hundred dollars and could just light out and never see this town again"(12).



Not only this, this very consciousness created in her the feelings of contempt and hatred for herself. She admits, "I wish I was somebody else except me". Another cause behind this feeling is the carelessness by the society. She thinks that the world is full of uncompromising and strange people who don't allow her desires to be fulfilled. Often she questions herself and ponders:

Things she had never noticed much before, began to hurt her...She would stare at the lights and listen to the voice, and something inside her stiffened and waited. But the light would darken, the voices fall silent, and though she waited, that was all. She was afraid of these things that made her suddenly wonder who she was, and what she was going to be in the world, and why she was standing at that minute, seeing a light or listening, or staring up into the sky alone. She was afraid, and there was a queer tightness in her chest.(32)

Her father does not care much about her. She wants to sleep with her father. But he politely rejects her, "Who is this great big-long-legged twelve years old blunderbuss who still wants to sleep with her old papa?"(32). In order to take revenge for this rejection and other imagined slights, Frankie tells Berenice that she would destroy the town. Frankie vaguely admires her father, but finds him too preoccupied with her watch repair and jeweller's business to supervise or nurture her in any meaningful way. When she tells him that she will not come home after the wedding, he does not listen, but querulously demands to know what has happened to his monkey wrench screw driver. At times Frankie cannot endure even Berenice and John Henry: Because they are part of the ordinary world she wants to rise above and because they know her very well; Because for



them she is a daring little girl and they do not believe her plans and in fact ridicule them. It compounds her self doubts who she is. If she is too tall and if she is hopelessly evil. She moves about the house aimlessly. She tries to shock everyone by cutting the calluses off the soles of her feet with a butcher knife. She sulks, sits on the bottom steps of the back stairs and often picks up fights with Berenice and John Henry. In fact, in the heart of hearts, she remains isolated:

She was an I person who had to walk around and do things by herself. All other people had a we to claim, all others except her. When Berenice said we, she meant Honey and Big Mama, her lodge, or her church. The us of her father was the store. All members of clubs have a we to belong to and to talk about. The soldier in the army can say we, and even the criminals on chain gangs. But the old Frankie had no we to claim, unless it would be the terrible summer we of her and John Henry and Berenice and that was the last we in the world she wanted.(53)

Above all, Frankie's awareness that she is "a member of nothing in the world"(7) exaggerates the isolation. She fears this rejection so much that she thinks herself a social outcast. She is very disappointed at not being admitted as a member of the club house situated in her neighbourhood. All the teenaged girls are members of this club. She cannot join them because she is too young-she is just twelve. The girls of the club enjoy parties with boys on Saturday nights and she feels disturbed, lonely and isolated. An inferiority complex grips her as she thinks that they do not entertain her deliberately. She emphasizes that it is because her companions have been spreading it all over the town that she smells bad and she uses "smelling ointments"(18) and perfumes. She feels so

jealous of their company that she feels like killing them: "Oh if I could shoot everyone of them with a pistol"(18). Such a strong feeling continues despite an assurance by John Henry that she smells sweet. She cannot come out of her complex and sheds tears tricking up to her mouth liberally.

Frankie is divided between the child and the adult aspect of her personality. She likes to be an adult without being female. Her encounter with the soldier that evening makes her see that she has crossed the line and feels insecure in the company of John Henry. She cannot share her experiences with him because he is only a child. She is likely to be victimized by the law and such a thing cannot be shared with a child even if he takes an oath: "If I tell, I hope God will sew up my mouth and sew down my eyes and cut off my ears with the scissors"(163). He is unreliable. "She cannot explain her crime to John Henry because she is still a child"(89). She cultivates a desire to become an adult, an earning member of the family like an adult. She is burning with the desire to attain recognition and all the privileges of adulthood. As she reaches her father's store where water coolers and watches are repaired, she imagines herself as an adult person sharing the burden of work with her father.

As she sits at the store, a little crowd of people watches her from the street. She imagines them saying that Frankie Addams works for her father and earns fifty dollars a week. She repairs the hardest watches in the store and visits the World Club with her father. She thinks people would say: "Look at her. She is a credit to the family and a big credit to the whole town"(78). Her imagination reveals her intense desire for recognition and adulthood. It is also evident from her feelings of joy in the earlier part of the soldier episode. She is extremely tall and considered to have reached the age of puberty. She

becomes an object of attraction for the soldier and is invited to an hotel. The soldier looks at Frankie from the top of her head "down the organdie best dress, and to the black pumps she was wearing"(81). She then touches her down the heart. She realizes that she is working with the soldiers who generally walk with the grown up girls. She continues following the soldier to one of the closet in the hotel. She is compelled to have beer with him and is left with no choice. She cannot understand the peculiar expression in the stares of the soldier. He reaches out towards her and catches a piece of her dress and wishes to fix a date for 9o'clock that very evening. Frankie is ecstatic and feels like telling every girl that a soldier has invited her for a date. She thinks if he knew she was not yet thirteen, he would never have invited her or probably never have joined with her at all. She keeps the date and undergoes the dangerous experience of an attack to abuse her. The pangs of adulthood are in the offering. She realizes the harder way that it is different to be an adult and it is different to be an adult as well as a woman.

Another incident reveals that she is hesitant to remain a child. When her brother and his fiancée gives her a doll, she is outrageous. "Frankie stared at the doll for a minute. I don't know what went on in Jarvis's mind when he brought me that doll. Imagine bringing me a doll: and Janice tried to explain that. She had pictured me as a little girl. I had added up on Jarvis bringing me something from Alaska"(24). She is nervous and asks Berenice to take the doll some where else, out of her sight. Her rejection of the doll reveals that she wishes to be a organdie dress, heavy lipstick and sweet serenade perfume. She cannot change her hairstyle but wants to have long bright yellow hair.



When the feverish obsession catches her, she immediately adopts a new name- F. Jasmine- because women who are part of a wedding changes their names as they enter a "joined life"(83). After the Sunday celebration, she will be united in a Ja Trinity- Jasmine, Jarvis and Janice; and the lovely Frankie will no longer exist. Her rechristening herself means a new identity, a new personality. F. Jasmine is a long and well worded honourable name to her. Berenice can understand very well the reason behind Frankie's desire. She cautions her:

Because things accumulate around your name... You have a name and one thing, after another happens to you, and you behave in various ways, and do things, so that soon the name begins to have a meaning. Things have accumulated around your name. If it is bad and you have a bad reputation, then you just can't jump out of your name and escape like that. And if it is good and you have a good reputation, then you should be content and satisfied.(134)

"But what has accumulated around my old name? Nothing"(134), Frankie is hasty to question. Berenice reminds her that she finished in the B Section of the seventh grade and found the golden egg at the Baptist Easter Hunt, but Frankie interrupts her impatiently: "But those things are nothing. See? They are not worthwhile, nothing ever happened to me"(135). Frankie dislikes everything that surrounds her name. She does not want any of the meanings associated with her name. It is because she wants to have a new identity. Something is about to happen to her, something that will give her an identity. She will be a member of the wedding and this obsession will give her a new identity. She wants to remove now all the leftovers of her old identity, her name being first.



After her obsession has her an adult identity, she rejects all games of childhood. Earlier she would wear a sombrero and go around pretending that she was a Mexican: "Me no speak English-Adios Buenos Noches- abra pokie peckie poo, she had jabbered in mock Mexican. Sometimes a little crowd of children gathered and the old Frankie would swell up with pride and trickery- but when the game was over, and she was home, there would come over her a cheated discontent"(73). She leaves now all these far behind. By changing her name from Frankie to F. Jasmine, Frankie tries to prevent her feminine identity. But this attempt is ambiguous and filled with dangers as "it is generally a male practice to use an initial and a middle name"(128). Barbara White concludes therefore that Frankie is unconsciously subverting her outward attempt to become more womanly. The imminent chapter ruminates about the protagonist's desire to be a part of the society and about her obsession which is expressed through the idea of wedding.

## Chapter Three

### Obsession in Maturation

Human connection is the most vital aspect of our existence, without the sweet touch of another being we are lonely stars in an empty space waiting to shine gloriously.

- Joe Straynge

McCullers's novel questions the role of young women in the South during the 1930's. Her portrayal of Frankie is of an aggressive, adventurous tomboy with an unresolved story. Frankie does not take part in any rituals involving becoming a "belle" or a "lady". As Westling points out, "The girl who persists in her boyish freedom through adolescence becomes odder and odder, as social indulgence changes to disapproval. Dresses must be worn; manners must be restrained and graceful"(113). *The Member of the Wedding* reflects many instances and scenarios that were a part of McCullers's own troubled past growing up in the South. McCullers had difficulties with her Southern heritage and said she felt separated from Southern heritage. When McCullers was growing up in Georgia, she had difficulties fitting in with her peers and felt like an outcast even with her close friend, Helen Jackson, as Virginia Spencer Carr relays:

The fact that Helen Jackson and several others in the neighbourhood had a horse or pony and she did not, that many others on her block had a fulltime maid and her family did not, that some of the children seemed to have much more spending than she, than her family seemed less secure financially than those who lived around her- all became exaggerated

painful reminders that she was different, somehow an entity set apart from any group.(23)

This alienation is the same kind that Frankie feels when she realizes her brother is getting married and she is jealous of his relationship with Janice. In order to belong to a group, McCullers would often compete in athletic events with her classmates: These endeavors never ended up being a positive ones, because Carson was not particularly agile or athletic, causing her further frustration and humiliation, because she was "painfully sensitive on the inside, easily hurt, and she yearned to be accepted unquestioningly by the group"(24). Although Carson responded outwardly to teasing as if she did not care, inside she felt lonely and isolated, which is tied directly to Frankie Addams. Berenice characterizes Frankie's attitude as 'mean', and often times this characterization is justified as Frankie responds in an aggressive manner towards Berenice or John Henry. However, it is obvious that despite Frankie's "meanness", she desperately wants to "fit in" somewhere, but she does not understand how.

Frankie's obsession to belong to a group gives her the desired relief. It all begins when Jarvis and Janice visit to announce their wedding. It has a magical effect on Frankie. Frankie suddenly starts feeling connected. Her feelings undergo a radical change. She stands in the doorway and the first sight of her brother and the bride shocks her. For her they make a wonderful couple and generate in her a feeling she can "not name"(8). In their company she is fascinated. They are "the two prettiest people" she had ever seen(38). Her obsession relieves her of the pressures of self doubts. She wants to "sociate the two of them together"(23) and become a member of the wedding. She feels that "a part of her was with them"(38). Now, Frankie cannot bear "this part of her oneself



going away, and further away”(38). She must join them. She must be a member of the wedding. “At last she knew just who she was and understood where she was going”(57). She is to be a member of the wedding and the three of them would go into the world and they would always “be together”(57).

For the first time after the scared spring and the crazy summer, “She was no more afraid”(57). She is relieved of the acute detachment. When she hears of the wedding in a moment of epiphany she decides that her brother and his bride are her “we”, a realization that causes her “squeezed heart” to suddenly open and divide(56). She tells John Henry that she is going off with them after the wedding and “to whatever place that they will ever go...It’s like I have known it all my life, that I belong to be with them. I love the two of them so much”(57). She tells Berenice that she intends to include the whole human race, and she is determined to become the sum of all she imagines.

Obsession gains in her mind. She feels connected with everything she sees. “Because of the wedding F. Jasmine felt connected with all she saw and it was as a sudden member that she went around the town ... It was the day when, from the beginning, the world seemed no longer separate from herself and when all at once she felt included”(59). Frankie feels everything in the town has taken a new colour; “A curious fact about this day was a twisted sense of the astonishing, the unexpected, did not make her wonder and only the long known, the familiar struck her with strange surprise”(60). Frankie is so excited that she cannot express her feelings “in words”(66). She tells about it to each and everyone she meets. For the first time she feels for her father: “All of a sudden it seemed to F. Jasmine that she saw her father for the first time”(62).



Frankie's obsession fills her with hopes and aspirations. She develops a sense of belongingness. The night before the wedding is extremely beautiful for her. She no longer feels isolated. Frankie loves her brother and bride. She feels that she would be a member of the wedding. She thinks that the three of them would go into the world and they would always be together. Frankie dreams of pleasant things and no longer feels lonely and afraid. Two years ago Frankie he felt that the whole world was strange to her and everything was dull, monotonous and boring. Last year when Frankie had spent an evening at the sea, the ocean seemed to her empty and like a foreign place. But now a night before the wedding, when Frankie is filled with pleasant dreams, the ocean known as port Saint Peter, seems familiar as though she had known it all her life.

Earlier Frankie was filled with all doubts and questioning about the wedding. Now these doubts no longer exist. Now this bitterness is no longer there. Frankie realizes that she had been stupid who wanted to sleep with her own father. Previously Frankie felt that her father did not love her. Now Frankie has forgotten all the complaints against him. "She wanted to speak some sorry words and love for her father"(63). In the past, she was unconcerned about the minor things lying in the household. Now she at once answers to her father that the "monkey wrench" and the screw driver that he was asking for were actually borrowed by her and were lying in the backyard. It reflects her belongings to everything she comes across.

Frankie is now full of new hopes and aspirations. She tells her father that she has to buy wedding dress, some wedding shoes and a pair of pink stockings. Frankie recalls the voices of the neighborhood children trying to dig a swimming pool two years before. She hears a sweetness in the sound and she is touched, though she was unconcerned

about them in the past. The Portuguese Barman at the Blue Moon Café, a lady sweeping the front porch of a boarding house, a little girl two years her junior, and a red headed soldier who offers to buy Frankie a drink and makes a date to meet her that evening: She explains her obsession to all. She goes straight to the story, as a circus dog breaks through the paper hoop and as "she talks her voice became clearer, more definite and sure"(70). So much so that the story becomes a song: "The telling of the wedding had an end and a beginning, a shape like a song"(74). While repeating her plans she feels "snatches of orchestra minutes, march tunes and waltzes"(73). She does not bother about its effects. Frankie in fact reassures herself only through repeating the plans of the wedding. She picks up the soldier to tell her plans, as earlier she watched the soldier in the company of young girls with a sickened heart. She is no more jealous and has developed a sense of recognition:

But now on this day before the wedding, all this was changed: her eyes as she looked into the soldier's eyes were clear of jealousy and want. Not only did she a connection between herself and total strangers of that day, there was strangers of that day, there was another sense of recognition.(72)

Frankie then meets some men mending the road on her way. She chooses the tractor man to hear her plans. She turns towards the mill section where she would find more listeners to tell about the wedding. A sense of satisfaction overtakes her after explaining her obsession to so many people. Her obsession gives her recognition and honour. Frankie imagines herself flying aeroplanes, travelling and winning gold medals for bravery. She cannot join war as a Mariner because she is very young. She decides to donate blood to the wounded soldiers to attain recognition. Frankie feels proud that her



blood would run in the veins of Australians and fighting French and Chinese all over the whole world. In this way she would establish her kinship with all the people of the world. She is eager to acquire honour. She visualizes great things that she would be doing for mankind.

"She could hear the army doctors saying that the blood of Frankie Addams was the reddest and the strongest blood that they had ever known. And she could picture ahead, in the years after the war, meeting the soldiers who had her blood, and they say that they owed their life to her and they would not call her Frankie, they would call her Addams"(31).

Red Cross would not accept her blood as she realizes immediately because she is too young. Frankie's obsession, thus, enables her to bring her self out from self absorption and connect her with the whole world. She does not wish to be joined to a person but to that which joins all people. In her private meditation, she moves through the show, closely entwined with Janice and Jarvis and knows that, united in a mystical trinity they will have "thousands and thousands of friends" and will belong to "more clubs than anyone can keep track of"(139).

Frankie fears greatly her own individuality because she perceives a solitary person to be the one who has "stopped, unprotected, into a universe which is indifferent and hostile to human pretensions"(90). Her joining with others will give her protection, direction and allow her to move "safely into the new and unknown"(90). Frankie will be joining clubs and going to parties. She will be interviewed for the newsreel as an eye witness and will become part of an organized society. Her obsession provides the much

needed socialization. At times freedom tempts her but she resists it with all her strength because she fears "unrestricted individuality"(90).

I am F. Jasmine Addams. And you are Berenice Sadie Brown. And we can look at each other, and touch each other, and stay together year in and year out in the same room. Yet always I am I and you are you. And I can't ever be anything else but me, and you can't ever be anything else but you. Have you ever thought of that!(136)

Berenice also admits the disadvantages of independence when she comments on the inevitable loneliness of the so called free personality:

We all of us somehow caught. We born this way or that way, and we don't know why. But we caught anyhow...And may be we want to widen and bust free. But no matter what we do we still caught. Me is me and you is you and he is he. We each of us somehow caught all by ourself...Everybody is caught one way or another. But they done drawn completely extra bounds around all concerned people. They done squeeze us off in one corner by ourself. So we caught that first way I was telling you, as all human beings is caught. And we caught as coloured people also.(141)

Frankie's desire to be a member of the whole world through the obsession of wedding is her metaphysical longing to escape the limitations of the self. While the trio plays the game of imagining a world according to their needs, "Holy Lord God Frankie Addams"(115) creates a world wherein everyone has an airplane and motorcycle,



everyone belongs to a world inclusive club, everyone can change sex at will, and everyone may upon a request, go to a war island long enough to become a hero safely and without suffering. Clearly, wedding and the world associated with it symbolized this of her intense desires. Her dreams of the wedding confirm her illusion that she is gaining experience and communing with the world at large. Through her obsession, Frankie creates "her own community, a genderless reciprocal living contest that shares lovers and children and experience so that the person becomes a 'shared self'-self as a part of some sharing whole"(21). It represents "the timelessness of human interaction and the capability of the truest of human power to transcend all boundaries"(21).

John B. Vickery echoes Wagner's sentiments when he says: "The vision of all men forming one loving family on the earth forms the bridge between God's promise and man's faith. As such it is the necessary root of man's existence"(14). Frankie's envisioning of human brotherhood has been called an "absolute love"(161) by Frank Baldanza. It reminds the reader of the love the old man feels in one of McCullers's short stories, "A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud", who says: "I can love anything..."(156). Frankie sees this love as "one of newly risen lightness, power, entitlement"(66). But this love is based on an illusion and is likely to be abandoned as the later events prove. But Frankie loves the idea, the idea of the wedding"(97). She is seeking nothing less than a 'common denominator of all humanity", which Berenice is incapacitated to understand.

Frankie is completely abandoned at the wedding. Her plans of accompanying the couple to move around the world come to nothing. Her brother Jarvis addresses her as "blow-legged Frankie"(170) and gives her a dollar and his bride Janice gives her a kiss. It cannot satisfy Frankie and it does not. Frankie wishes to express her plans of joining

them to the world trip. She wishes to express her desire in the following words which remains unuttered: "I love the two of you so much and you are the we of me. Please take me with you from the wedding, for we belong to be together"(170). Frankie also imagines if she could have written her message on a typewriter in advance and would have read it and taken her along. But the participation in the wedding remains a dream or a show unmanaged by her in which she was supposed to have no part. Frankie realizes that they are not going to take her on the honeymoon. She cannot bear such thoughts. Her heart is saying time and again: "You are the we of me"(172), but Frankie cannot utter these words. Her obsession is shattered. Frankie is so disillusioned that she does not want to talk to anyone; "All I wish in the world, is so for no human being ever to speak to me as long as I live"(174). She is disturbed at being treated as "too young"(171). She is overawed by the "beautiful grown girls"(170). Unable to word out her feelings she collects her suitcase and climbs into the wedding car:

You are the we of me, her heart was saying, but she could only say aloud: "Take me!" And they pleaded and begged with her, but she was already in the car. At the last she clung to the steering wheel until her father and somebody else had hauled and dragged her from the car, and even then she could only cry in the dust of the wedding company to hear, for the bride and her brother had driven away.(172)

On the way back, Frankie boards a bus with her father, Berenice and John Henry. She desires the bus shall fall in a river or collide with a train. She sees desolate images from the window of the bus: "red empty crossroads with deep red gulches on either side ... rotten gray snacks set in lonesome cotton fields"(174). Frankie "now hated everyone



and wanted only to spite and shame"(168). She had decided earlier that she would shoot herself with her father's pistol if the bride and her brother did not take her with them. Frankie cannot pull the produce because "deadness was blackness, nothing but pure terrible blackness that went on and on and never ended until the end of all the world"(178).

Frankie decides to run away: "The wedding had not included her, but she would still go into the world"(175). She bids farewell to her father saying in a letter that she is going to leave the town because it is inevitable. Frankie says: "I cannot stand this existence any longer because my life has become a burden...The whole thing is an irony of fate and it is inevitable"(175). Frankie does not know where she is going. There is a train at 2o'clock and she would take it and the train would probably go to Chicago or New York. All these are however only motions of protest. Frankie knows before she reaches the street corner that her father has awakened and will soon be after her. Her plan of hopping a boxcar seems unreal even to her; "It is easy to talk about hopping a freight train, but how did bums and people really do it?"(177). She admits to herself that she is "too scared to go into the world alone"(181). Frankie resigns herself, the world seems too "enormous"(183) to fight: "Between herself and all the places there was a space like an enormous canyon she could not hope to bridge or cross"(183). Frankie again feels disconnected. She watches the Portuguese proprietor of the Blue Moon Café with whom she had felt a magical bond the day before: "As he gave an owner's look around the place, his glance passed by her in a casual way and there was in those eyes no feeling of connexion"(184).

For Frankie the world now is "enormous and still and flat"(183). She is no longer connected with or close to it. Her disillusionment is as great as her obsession was. But the obsession is very vital to her life. Consequently a new obsession must take over. Her new obsessions are not that strong as she is now a member. She is now "the most intimate friend"(187) of Mary Littleton, a girl she hated earlier. She along with her new friend reads Tennyson, looks at art novels, and talks about taking a trip around the world in a few years. She does not even mention wedding. She is no more an afraid and unjoined person. She is more confident and as Lawrence Graver has noted, "just a bit too much like everybody else"(35).

Human connection is a strong, deep or close association between two or more people. Human beings are naturally social and shaped by their experiences with others. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, humans need to feel love and acceptance from social groups such as family and peer groups. Relationships are also important for their ability to help individuals develop a sense of self. One's emotions and behaviours are shaped by preceding relationships. Healthy relationships are built on a foundation of secure attachments. Humans are social creatures and there is no other behavioral process that is more important than attachment. In this novel, Frankie also desires to belong to a group. In spite of her feminine nature she wishes to behave like a tomboy. This tomboyishness isolates Frankie from everything. She is not admitted as a member of the club house situated in her neighbourhood. Frankie being a motherless child was taken care by a negro cook named Berenice. She never receives love even from her father. Her only companions were her feminine, Berenice and her six years old cousin, John Henry to whom she hesitates to share everything. Later, Frankie gets obsessed with the idea of



being a member in her brother's wedding. With this obsession Frankie began to feel connected with everything she sees all over the world. Her isolation gets replaced by her obsession. But after the wedding, Frankie's obsession gets smashed and her dream to belong to a group remains as a dream forever. Towards the end Frankie decides to spend her time with her new friend Mary Littlejohn whom she hates first. She feels her connection with Mary and decides to move all over the world as a traveler. Throughout Frankie desires to stay in connection in one or the other way in order to find her own identity. The next chapter describes about the protagonist's transformation from alienation to the acceptance of reality.

## Chapter Four

### Acceptance in Realization

Every woman that finally figured out her worth, has picked up her suitcases of pride and boarded a flight to freedom, which landed in the valley of change.

-Shannon L. Alder

Carson McCullers has conveyed the crisis of identity of Frankie Addams through the symbol of the wedding. The wedding which is an obsession for Frankie is an obsession for all humanity which tries to join together various identities into self-created false pictures. Jeromes Burner says "when the prevailing myths fail to fit the varieties of man's plight, frustration expresses itself first in mythoclasm and then in the lonely search for internal identity"(83). Obsessions are McCullers stylistic choice to express the intense search for an internal identity where several identities merge in order to create harmony. Wedding, Frankie's obsession is a symbol of such an internal identity and it is also the harmony achieved with the mixture of various identities. In wedding Frankie – the child and Frankie – the adult merge as well as Frankie the male and the female merge. In wedding Frankie as a lonely individual combines with her transindividual identity. Wedding as an obsession enables McCullers to expose many critical issues concerning human beings in general and girls in particular.

Wedding enables McCullers to forefront feminine issues. Frankie does not want to be a girl instead she wants to behave and act like boys against her outward identity of the female, and against social wishes. She seeks an internal identity through the wedding where she mingles her male and female aspects. As Barbara White has put it: "Frankie's plan to join the wedding is also a desperate attempt to preserve her identity. Her wedding

fantasy is a symbolic way of resolving her conflict of wanting to be an adult but not wanting to be a woman"(138). Frankie transmits her "androgyny" into a "fantasy"(138). Wedding is a symbolic struggle of Frankie against the inferior status of women. Simone de Beauvoir while commenting on feminist issues remarked that the young girl "is too much divided against herself to join battle with the world; she limits herself to a flight from reality or a symbolic struggle against it"(133). Along with Frankie's odd eating habits, her self disfigurement and her running away from home are all representatives of this symbolic struggle.

Frankie's change of dress also shows a concern for feministic issues. She is a tomboy and likes to wear clothes of a boy. Once she wears a dress, she loses her physical freedom. It is her pink organdie dress and perfume which make her feminine and also a sexual prey for the soldier. If she had been wearing shorts and a undershirt, she would not have excited the soldier so much. Her dress, her lipstick, shoes and purse make her a female and she immediately become insecure. Frankie wishes to run away: "I have been ready to leave this town so long ... I wish I had a hundred dollars and could just light out and never see this town again"(12). Oliver Evans has rightly called it a tendency to escape. She says: "Paralleling the desire to escape from the prison of the self and to become identified spiritually with others is the desire to escape from familiar surroundings to places that are remote and exotic"(106). Frankie's boyish ways are all right till she is a girl. But once an adult, she is expected to behave as per her gender norms that was fixed by the society. "As a girl the tomboy is charming, but as an adult she is grotesque"(113). Frankie's continuing tomboyishness makes her experience grotesque. Further the society disapproves of all womanish ambitions producing a fear



that "to be female and dare to achieve is to venture into the dangerous territory, to violate one's gender, to become a kind of freak"(113). As a result the images which find intrusion into Frankie's obsession of the wedding are only of freaks.

After she has broken her obsession, she chooses a friend of her own sex, Mary Littlejohn. She has suddenly springd back from her earlier experience. She now to some degree realizes the meaning of the encounter with the soldier-who is the meaning of desire. Her thinking of marrying the same soldier and travelling the world with him are signs of a compromise a girl has made. She now encourages talks about sex and love which earlier she had dismissed as "nasty lies". She is very happy to visit the fair with her friend, Mary. She avoids the freak pavilion this time, which had so fascinated her and John Henry, the year before. She no longer feels any association with the freaks, for because she is secure in her new feminine identity. She is moving towards an acceptance of conventional femininity. In fact, wedding represents Frankie's desire to be an "autonomous adult" and her protest against the "secondary status of women"(140). Wedding as an obsession becomes a "parable enforcing sexual conformity"(140) which is most remarkably exploited by McCullers as a efficient stylistic choice.

Through the obsession of wedding, McCullers was able to express her view of life as a "tragicomedy in which the funniness and the grief coexists in the same line"(64). While Frankie's obsession and her views about the world fascinate and amuse the reader, her fate which hangs in balance make the reader even to empathize with her. Not only Frankie but the reader also gets carried away into the aura of the wedding. It is the wedding which maintains the interest of the reader and it can be said that McCullers has been extremely successful in her choice of obsession as a stylistic choice. The reader very



explicitly can feel that Frankie has been denied her right and the society has been too rude to her.

In the words of Erikson, "each successive step in an individual's psychological development is a potential crisis because of a radical change in perspective"(142). The participation in the wedding brings a radical change in Frankie's perspective. But now she accepts her feminine role. Frankie's desire to be a part of the wedding has been taken as symbolic of some kind of infantile wish also. Irving Buchen in "Carson McCullers: A Case of Convergence" suggests that adolescence in McCullers's fiction can be coupled together with incest. He thinks that by becoming a member of the wedding, Frankie wants to be a "voyeuristic observer of parental sex or an active participant in the bed of her brother-surrogate for that of her father"(25). He adds that her obsession is a result of the dictum that incest is a taboo. She in reality incest cannot be indulged in, she will remain unfinished and unsatisfied and even this "secret desire for a forbidden incestuous wholeness"(25) will continue to haunt her even in adult life.

Buchen's view, though honourable in its own right, is not proved by the text as Frankie throughout the novel dislikes the mentioning of sex, till her dream is crushed by reality. Wedding has been a traditional fate of the girl and it is also appropriate that Frankie does not restrict thoughts of love, sex and marriage. If the wedding provides her relief from isolation it is also the marriage of a man and a woman, which prompts Frankie to anticipate her own destiny as an adult girl. Instead of stopping her ears as she used to do when Berenice talked of love and marriage, Frankie now encourages Berenice to talk and listens to her carefully. With a marriage, the girl officially becomes an adult. But Frankie wants to change her female destiny. She does not want to marry because it

imposes only restrictions. Nor does Frankie attempt to acquire in her brother and sister-in-law a new set of parents, for then she would be a child again. She fears the crisis of being neither a wife nor a child but an adult equal. Frankie's plan to join the wedding is a non-realistic way of solving her conflict. When she is dragged screaming from the honeymoon car, her dream is crushed.

In her obsessions, Frankie's adult life may be understood. Chester Eisinger agrees to such a view when he admits that Frankie is innocent and only her innocence allows her to think of joining the wedding(255). It is her innocence which bears an attack from the soldier and a continuous attack from Berenice's talks of sex and love. In a way, the wedding becomes a symbol of Frankie's innocence. McCullers very dynamically remarks:

Consciousness of the self is the first abstract problem that the human being solves...After the first establishment of identity there comes the important need to lose this new found sense of separateness and to belong to something larger and more powerful than the weak lonely self.(265)

Carson McCullers has represented this need in the form of obsessions. John B. Vickery in his essay points out that in McCullers's fiction, the main character have a "three fold role the lover, the quester, and the dreamer"(13). He feels all her characters have an essential kinship as "each of them pursues a dream in a world that is impatient with dreamers"(13). And those dreams represent the quest as well as the image of the world they live in. It can be clearly seen that "Frankie's dominant mode of coming to terms with the world is feeling and her prime mode of acquiring experience is



dreaming"(220). Frankie's dream, her obsession, the wedding, satisfies all her needs of the time.

"Carson McCullers", according to Vickery, is "primarily interested in the drama that is enacted within the soul of the lover and which its source in the painful discovery of the self as a sharply defined and limited ego"(13). As the ego limits, the individual tries to harmonize it with the outside world. It is done through dreams. Dreams and reality are knotted "not simply for the sake of irony but as a poignant illustration of man's need to seek, to love, and to dream"(14). Man's dreaming and faith in obsessive illusions is an effort to harmonize himself: "Unwillingly to confront life in its complexity, seeking to shut out the 'Dreadful', they construct a limited world which they deem to be safe, but which to their confusion and despair becomes a prison, a prison the furnishings of which are grotesquely twisted and constricting"(463). It is the fate which Frankie tackles, she feels the world to be a prison which squeezes her.

McCullers's characters dwell in and out of tune with the world which shows off only conflict and cacophony. It is meaningless and harsh. Man feels insecure. He creates an inner world where his metaphysical longings are reflected. In the case of Frankie's obsession, this is very much evident. Frankie constantly questions herself about her identity in the world. Her questions are of metaphysical significance. She then catches the obsession and forgets her. Though her illusion is crushed later, it gives her a sense of superiority: "For it was just at the moment that Frankie understood. She knew who she was and how she was going into the world. Her squeezed heart suddenly opened and divided. Her heart divided like two wings"(56).

Frankie, in the end, does not bother about these questions. She is least concerned with the moral isolation. It is clear from her unsympathetic attitude towards Henry, her six years old cousin. She completely ignores Henry who has been her companion in the early part. She immediately refuses when he very innocently puts up a question: "you want me to eat supper with you?"(56). Now her relationship with John Henry lacks warmth. She is least concerned about his disease and is happy to visit the fair at a time when Henry lies screaming and dying in a dark room. She is even careless about her only playmate's death. John Henry comes in her frightening dreams. He looks like an escaped child "dummy from the window of a departmental store"(189). His expanded legs are moving stiffly only at joints and his expanded face is visioned coming towards her until Frankie shouts with terror. Henry is reduced to only a skeleton. She is bitter even to Berenice. She talks apparently with her new friend and very sarcastically ignores Berenice's farewell party. There is a serious loss of sincerity and affection on her part. On one hand it suggests that she has failed "to develop in any genuine sense"(82) and on the other it shows the strength of her obsession. She is so much absorbed that nothing seems to move her.

Earlier she had ignored the death of uncle Charles in the earlier part of the novel. At first when the news reaches her, she thinks it is terrible to be dead. She then reflects on the old man's pain and goes sad. Though the news leaves a great impact on her mind yet immediately she realizes that uncle Charles would have to die the very day before the wedding. She feels his death may endanger her plans as the wedding may be postponed for a time. She blames Berenice for communicating the news of death to her. She feels that the news of death has spoiled her joy. Many other incidents show that the obsession



is very strong for Frankie. For example, Berenice, constantly reminds her of the dangers in her planning:

The argument that afternoon was, from the beginning to the end about the wedding. Berenice refused to follow F. Jasmine's frame of mind. From the first it was as though she tried to catch F. Jasmine by the collar, like the law catches a no good in the wrong, and jerk her back where she had started-back to the sad and crazy summer that now seemed to F. Jasmine like a time remembered long ago. But F. Jasmine was stubborn and not to be caught. Berenice had flaws to find in all of her ideas, and from the first word to the last she did her terrible level best to try to deny the wedding. But F. Jasmine would not let it be denied.(93)

Berenice tries to advise against Frankie to see the uselessness of her illusion. She explains about her marriage failures, but to no effect. She likes the sound of Berenice's voice: "The words flowed into one another and her voice began to sing...[and] it was not so much the happenings she mentioned as the way she told about these happenings that made F. Jasmine understand"(100). But she does not see any connection between her situation and that of Berenice. Her obsession is so strong that she refuses to see how Berenice's situation is related to hers. She rejects Berenice when she insists. She puts two fingers in her ears. Frankie is moved by Berenice's experiences but the strength of her obsession does not allow her to think about the uselessness of her idea. Not only Berenice's warnings but other things also shake Frankie. She visits a soothsayer, who predicts a trip for her but also a return. Her obsession is so powerful that she refuses to think even for a moment that Jarvis and Janice will not wish to share their honeymoon

with her. She simply fails to see it as a possibility. Ultimately the reality forces her to accept it. It is all the more painful for the struggle with which she has opposed it.

Obsession is so vital to Frankie's life that when the wedding is over, another obsession must replace it. She now plans to be a poet and a traveler. Eleanor Wikkborg remarks that Frankie's ambition into the world is forced into more "realistic but prettier mould of a project"(14). She now plans to go around the world as an onlooker rather than as a participant. Frankie's "new obsession of becoming a great poet or a world authority on radar is as unrealistic as any of her old ones"(14). Oliver Evans has described the situation beautifully:

But a thoughtful reader will wonder if Frankie at the end of the story is not replacing one impossible ambition with another: how likely are her dreams of becoming a great poet or world's 'foremost' authority on radar or even of travelling around the world with Mary Littlejohn to be realized? When they collapse, or when she outgrows them, others will take their place and so on. The material of the dream will change, but not the necessity for it.(123)

Obsessions are a stylistic choice of McCullers. Through them she puts into practice her conviction that true reality can be presented through only a blend of imagination and reality. She does so to reflect the psychological aspects of the grotesque. Frankie's quest for identity, is conveyed through her obsession for the wedding of her brother Jarvis with Janice. Frankie's obsession conveys her fears of isolation in the world. She is haunted by the visions of being a criminal and a freak. She sees a freak



show and develops a feeling that she is ugly like the creatures of the show and develops a feeling that she is ugly like the creatures of the show and wishes that she were dead. She feels she is too big to be a normal person. She thinks that the world is full of stubborn and strange people who don't allow her dreams to be fulfilled. She has feelings of disapproval and hatred for herself. So much so that she tries to shock everyone by cutting the hard skin off the soles of her feet with a slay knife. She also tries to shoot herself. Her complexes are compounded by her desire of being a bisexual against the social norms. She desires to be a tomboy. She is divided between the social demand of having a sense of reason and her own distressed need to visualize about a connection with something larger than herself. It is this paradox visualized in her obsession of the wedding. As soon as she catches this obsession she starts feeling connected. She is now determined to become the figure of all she imagines. She expects to include the whole human race into her obsession. Her obsession fills her with new hopes and desire. It gives her the much wanted genderless identity. It reflects that her problem is not only of sex awareness but also of sex determination. She drifts between two sexes which melt in to her obsession of wedding. Wedding involves two sexes, hence it becomes an appropriate symbol of Frankie's quest for identity and a skillful stylistic choice. The following chapter summarizes the entire aspects which are discussed above where, the protagonist becomes the conflict between serious ambition and the pressure of conventional femininity and her realization of her own individuality.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

In Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, a twelve year old white southern tomboy named Frankie Addams all of a sudden falls in love with the idea of her brother's wedding one summer during World War II. From the beginning, Frankie dreams about joining the wedding. The novel mainly describes Frankie's desire to fit with others and her vital disappointment and failure. With prevalent images of proper femininity, Frankie's tomboyishness marks her as a type of alien and eliminates her from obtaining any membership. Her sense of not belonging to any group causes her a lot of pain that summer: "This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world"(7). Frankie becomes an "unjoined person who hung around in doorways"(7). Her only companions are her feminine, her six year old cousin, John Henry West, and Berenice Sadie Brown, the black cook and housekeeper who has taken care of Frankie since her mother's death. Being lonely and anxious she dreams of escaping the boring dullness of the Deep South.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers portrays a bolted Southern world in which an adolescent expresses her awkwardness and loneliness over the progression of limited months. The main character, Frankie desires to be something, but turned out to be something different. She has a boy's name and feels as if she does not belong anywhere. She has grown so tall that she looks like a freak among her peers. Throughout Frankie finds herself oscillating between the strange worlds of childhood and adulthood. She then feels that she has a hidden similarity with the members of the Freak show. In fact



Frankie's identification with freaks comes from her increased height. Every October, a traveling circus with freak show comes to the town. When Frankie enters the Freak Pavilion, she is confused by the freaks, for "it seemed to her that they had looked at her in a secret way and tried to connect their eyes with hers, as though to say: we know you"(27). Sensing her connection with freaks, Frankie asks nervously: "do you think I will grow into a Freak?"(28). Instead of drawing a firm line stating her normality and distinguishing her difference from the unfortunate beings such as The Giant, the Fat Lady, the Midget, the Wild Nigger, the Pin Head, the Alligator Boy, the Half-Man, the Half-Woman who pose their physical peculiarities in front of her, Frankie feels their secret association and she is horrified.

Freaks remind Frankie of her loneliness, fear, and unbearable experiences of segregation. The freak show in *The Member of the Wedding* represents the temporal straddling of traditional delight of bodily difference as awesome spectacle and the modern disillusionment of the pre-enlightenment body as medical specimen. Other than Frankie, John Henry is also obsessed with freaks. He likes to put on Berenice's hat and tries to walk in her high-heeled shoes. Another time he tries on Frankie's dress and the pink hat with the plume. Frankie has been violent against herself and the world: "I just wish I could tear down this little town. I am sick unto death. I feel exactly like somebody has peeled all the skin off me"(47). "It was the summer when Frankie was sick and tired of being Frankie. She hated herself and had become a loafer and a big no good who hung around the summer kitchen; dirty and greedy and mean and sad"(29). Frankie is also worried by the specters of being a freak and a criminal. She thinks that the world is full of

strange people who don't want to fulfill her desires. Frankie walks here and there aimlessly and questions herself;

She would stare at the light and listen to the voice, and something inside her stiffened and waited. She was afraid of these things that made her suddenly wonder who she is, and what she was going to be in the world and why she was standing at the minute, seeing a light, or listening, or staring up into the sky: alone.(32)

Even her father does not care about her. When she wants to sleep with her father, he politely rejects her, "Who is this great big long-legged twelve-year-old blunderbuss who still wants to sleep with her old papa"(32). Frankie is considered to be too big to sleep with her father any more. She began to feel bitterness against her father. She hates even to stay at her home.

Frankie is a girl without a place, a "member of nothing in the world"(7) her behavior and looks shows her as a stranger and awkward as she was grown "so tall that she was almost a big freak, and her shoulders were narrow, her legs too long"(11). It is very hard for her to receive the physical changes and growth poses many problems in front of her. Frankie is now afraid as she thinks her growth is also abnormal. She begins to measure her height. Frankie asks Berenice: "Do you think I will grow into a freak?"(28) Berenice answers: "Certainly not, I trust Jesus"(28). Frankie is too tall to play with children, but too young and mean to join the neighbourhood club house in which she was not a member and she watches them from the kitchen window. The member of the club were teenage girls "who were thirteen and fourteen years old. They had parties with



boys on Saturday night"(17). These girls refuse Frankie's entry into their club as a result of her tomboy nature. Frankie worries that she will grow into a freak. Frankie's confusion about her budding identity made her to feel isolated and lonely; to others she appears as an "unjoined person who hung around in doorways"(7) anxious for someone to invite her in. Frankie is oscillating between the freedom of childhood and the clearly defined sexual world of adults where she is unwillingly being forced to enter. Frankie's adolescence identifies with the freaks and the grotesque, and that grotesque cannot bear the outline of normal identity.

Then, one day, Frankie comes to understand that she can only grow and mature by coming into contact with others. Frankie's consciousness that she is a member of nothing in the world increases the isolation in her. In April, Frankie reads the war news in the paper about the world and dreams of running away from home. Her dream of adventure, which is denied to her because of her gender, is powerfully expressed: "She wanted to be a boy and go to the war as a Marine. She thought about flying aeroplanes and winning gold medals for bravery. But she could not join the war, and this made her sometimes feel restless and blue"(31). She then decides to join her brother's wedding and honeymoon. She finds her existence meaningful only in connection with the bridal pair. She falls in love with the very idea of a wedding and accepts the bride and the bridegroom as her "we of me"(172). But at the wedding itself, she is a mute onlooker, and the newlyweds rather violently rejects her from their honeymoon.

Instead of yearning a boyfriend or husband, McCullers chooses to have Frankie fall in love with the wedding itself. As Berenice teases, "Frankie got a crush!/ Frankie got a crush!/ Frankie got a crush!/ On the Wedd-ing!"(44). This queer desire to be not a

“bride” but a “member” challenges the traditional idea of heterosexual matrimony. Frankie believes that the wedding can liberate her from the stifling South, take her with the newlyweds to Alaska and the rest of the world, and make the three of them a vital part of the World War II effort:

‘Boyoman! Manoboy!’ she said. When we leave Winter Hill we are going to more places than you ever thought about or even know existed. Just where we will go first I don’t know, and it don’t matter. Because after we go to that place we are going on to another. We mean to keep moving, the three of us. Here today and gone tomorrow. Alaska, China, Iceland, South America. Travelling on trains. Letting her rip on motor-cycles. Flying around all over the world in aeroplanes. Here today and gone tomorrow. All over the world. It’s the damn truth. Boyoman!(138)

In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie does not view marriage as a narrow enclosure defined by heterosexual matrimony; her association of the wedding with the world suggests that she is more interested in a luxurious vision of alliance rather than a general marital relationship. Her desire to be related to “everybody” is shown in her enthusiasm for donating blood would be the Red Cross: “She wanted to donate a quart a week and her blood would be in the veins of Australians and Fighting French and Chinese, all over the whole world, and it would be as though she were close a kin to all of these people”(31). After she has the epiphany of going away with the newlyweds, she feels the unexplainable connection between herself and other strangers. This “connection” is granted by her wedding dreams. Frankie’s wedding dream is distinctly



curious because it is not a desire for unity, purity, or wholeness but instead it symbolizes openness to unassimilated otherness without holding back the differences.

Frankie's obsession gives her the much wanted genderless identity. In a way, the wedding an obsession of Frankie, is also an indicator of the crisis of identity she undergoes. Frankie's primary concern is her sexual identity. She is an adolescent "when one is no longer a child nor yet an adult, and even one's sexual identity is ambiguous"(102). It is symbolized by Frankie's execution "around in doorways"(7) which means "always upon threshold of things, but never really inside them"(102). As already pointed out, Frankie is motherless and Berenice fails as a mother substitute. She therefore does not have any female role model to look upto. She in the absence of a "feminine protagonist", defines herself in "masculine terms": It precipitates crisis as "social pressures force" her to "abandon masculine dependence and accept a feminine identity increasingly fraught with anxiety"(111).

Frankie's attraction for the hermaphrodite Half Man Half Woman at the freak show is just because of this feeling. Many incident in the novel reflects that Frankie does not wish to accept her feminine role. As a younger child, she had accidentally walked in on the love making of a man and his wife who were boarders in her house. She failed to guess what they were doing and concluded that they were having a fit. Even at the age of twelve she is unable to understand her strong feelings. She dismisses as "nasty lies"(18). Frankie is aware, at the same time, of having done something immoral with the neighborhood boy in his garage. Frankie is now blossoming into a female but does not want to accept this role.

Frankie's encounter with the soldier further clarifies the situation. The soldier gives her a date when she goes on telling each and everyone about the wedding. She reaches to see the soldier in the evening at the Blue Moon Café. Uncertainty follows the meeting and Frankie feels crazy as the soldier and she herself cannot talk in accord: "From the first their two conversations would not join together"(158). She finds the soldier ugly. He takes her to his hotel room and tries to seduce her. Frankie realizes something strange and breaks the head of the soldier with a water pitcher. She runs back home. She feels safe with her father. Frankie is also worried: "Papa, if somebody hits somebody over the head with a glass pitcher and he falls out cold, do you think he is dead?"(164). For a time, her illusion disintegrates as she faces adult reality but restores confidence again. The soldier represents the carnal principle which Frankie denies, and that is why she feels loss of power. She does not know "how to refuse"(159) the soldier's invitation to his room; Frankie thinks she is unable to leave, and when he grabs her, she feels "paralyzed"(161).

Frankie's denial of the feminine is seen as a "problem not only of sex awareness but of sex determination"(250) by Chester Eisinger. Chester says: "It is not the responsibility of womanhood that she reluctantly must take up but the decision to be a woman at all that she must make. She is then, sexless, hanging between the two sexes"(250). Frankie hangs between the two sexes because she is a girl but she does not want to surrender the rights of boys. She exists in a divided state. She does not want to stay in childhood. Frankie wants to fulfill her desire to be a grown-up but without accepting her identity as female. It is because she "suspects that her gender will be confining. Frankie thus waves between striving for adult status and resisting it"(127).



Frankie's thinking to change her name is also a part of this effort. Throughout it is "the sexual impulse on Frankie's consciousness"(220), which foreshadows Frankie's change of guard in name.

After the Wedding, John Henry dies a horrible death from meningitis, Honey Brown is arrested, Berenice is forced to quit her job because Frankie and her father decides to move to the new colony of town, and Frankie herself is restored to her legal name and becomes "Frances". When Frankie leaves home after the wedding, she is trying to escape her "shabby" home and lonely existence. Frankie wants to find something or someone to fulfill her identity, and she cannot find it within herself. Frankie sees marriage as a way out of her house, a way to achieve wholeness. However, Frankie is only twelve, and marriage is not an option for her, so her escape ends when Officer Wylie identifies her as missing and calls her father to come and get her. When the officer asks what she is doing in the Blue Moon Bar, Frankie replies, "I don't know"(147). At this point, Frankie begins to transform into someone else, feeling as if "the world was too far away, and there was no way anymore that she could be included ... she felt queer as a person drowning"(184).

When Frankie's father finds her, the transformation is complete, and "he looked at her with the eyes as china as a doll's, and in them there was only the reflection of her own lost face"(184). Frankie sees a reflection of herself as something "grotesque". Her tomboyishness is relinquished, and as Frankie turns thirteen, Frankie and F. Jasmine becomes Frances. Towards the end of the novel, Frances does not outgrow her tomboyism and successfully moves into a woman. Instead, she finds a new relationship with Mary Littlejohn, whose name has the combination of the feminine 'Mary' and the

masculine 'Littlejohn'. In her dream of a future with Mary, Frances still longs for freedom and mobility traditionally enjoyed by boys. Marriage and motherhood, the so-called appropriate female aspiration, are not her life options. At the beginning of *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie plays with knives, cutting calluses off her feet in the kitchen. By the end of the novel, expecting Mary's arrival at five o'clock, Frances "was making the sandwiches, cutting them into fancy shapes and taking great pains"(185).

The novel closes with the narrator's announcement of Mary's arrival: "Dark, when it came, would come on quickly, as it does in wintertime. 'I am simply mad about-' But the sentence was left unfinished for the hush was scattered when, with an instant shock of happiness, she heard the ringing of the bell"(190). The unfinished sentence serves to highlight a potentiality that is involved in continuous and ever-creating becomings, a queer futurity that opposes homogeneous identity and totalizing explanatory narratives. McCullers chooses to end the novel in a suspense state of expectation without leaving a definite image of any future or an assured success. Unlike the linear narrative of progress, this queer futurity would be willing to be disturbed by the negative effects, such as loss, disappointment, shame, and failure, and even make them central, as manifested by the novel's preoccupation with freaks, crips, tomboys, racist victims, social outcasts, cross-dressers, and homosexuals.

McCullers's fiction through her use of the freak and the grotesque is an attempt to both reconcile and revolt against the prescribed gender norms. Initially literary critics approached McCullers use of freak and the grotesque as a mere representation of her own personal struggles with gender and sexuality. Frankie is representative of a revolt against becoming a "belle" yet the progression of tomboys into female adulthood is stunned.



Frankie's unresolved story represents the slow progression of women in the south during the 1930's and 1940's that McCullers was witnessing, both in her own life and from her perspective in the north. Her novel shows the problems with growing up female in the south and the struggle to confront white patriarchal society.

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**Journey from Detachment to Involvement: A Study of Arun Joshi's**

***The Foreigner***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

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affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Journey from Detachment to Involvement: A Study of Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

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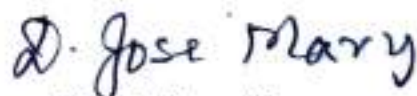
## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Journey from Detachment to Involvement: A Study of Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Janish S. during the year 2018 – 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Journey from Detachment to Involvement: A Study of Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*** analyses the existential problems faced by the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi.

The first chapter throws light on the origin of Indian English Literature, the general characteristics of the contemporary English fiction, the biographical details of Arun Joshi and his unique contribution to Indian English Literature.

The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novel which enacts the crisis of foreignness of its protagonist Sindi Oberoi. It also traces how his philosophy of detachment declines and he gradually gets involved with the world.

The third chapter focuses on the various different reactions and responses to existential issues both positive and negative. It deals with the perpetual conflict of modern man in his search for authenticity in life, to assert his own individuality in a society governed by cultural and social norms.

The fourth chapter, Tradition and Modernity deals with the process of survival in the entrapped situation between the traditional inherited culture and the new, unfamiliar, antagonistic host culture.

The fifth chapter highlights Arun Joshi's usage of techniques and style to convey his ideas and thoughts of existential tenets. It also sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Indian English Literature is a body of writing which is the creation of Indian race responding fruitfully to the Western impact during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of colonial period. Though English was first introduced to de-orientalise and anglicise India, it set the stage for a complete intellectual and cultural regeneration of Indian society and opened the floodgates of Western ideas. This exposure brought the dormant intellectual and critical impulse into sudden life and manifested itself in social, religious, and political awareness.

Thus English Literature in India is a product of colonial rule. And even though this is a thing of the past, its hangover persists in the Indo-English Literature which cannot ignore the native models. The Indo-English novelists find it difficult to get out of Western influences. Shankar Kumar says, it is in this sense that in their effort to give an expression for individuality that "the Indian writers in English lose their sense of identity-both personal and national-and feel alienated in their own home making frantic efforts to seek, organise and affirm that identity." (26)

Lord Macaulay wanted the westernization of Indians through the introduction of the English language. Then, he had no suspicion that the Indians would ever try their hand at creative writing in English, especially the novel writing. The various Commonwealth countries easily adapted this genre with its comparative flexibility and amorphousness. It became a vehicle for the expression of their indigenous ethos. With this started a unique literary phenomenon: a novel having the graces of English language and technique with the indigenous content. The Indian-English novel was no exception to it. The historical romances of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are an ample



proof of it, for example, S.K. Nikambe's *Ratnabal* (1895), R. C. Dutt's *The Slave Girl of Agra*, and S. K. Ghosh's *The Prince of Destiny* (1909). Then in the 1930s and 1940s there emerged a new trend in the Indian-English novel exhibiting social and political realism. The authors took up contemporary social and political problems.

Indian Writing in English soon developed characteristics and qualities of its own which were in marked contrast with those of metropolitan literature. It was firmly rooted in the Indian soil and culture. Like all other Indian Literatures, Indian Writing in English can be said to be constituting and reflecting the Indian culture. After the 1960s Indian English fiction, like its western counterpart, shifted its focus from the public to the private sphere. The mass destruction caused by nuclear weapons in World War II brought unrest and anxiety all over the world. The situation gave rise to psychological disorders and loss of moral values, and profoundly disturbed man's mental peace and harmony. Indian novelists, too, could not remain aloof from these currents and henceforth they were not exclusively concerned with the exploration and interpretation of a social milieu but dealt with new subjects of human existence and man's quest for self in all its complicated situations. This shift of focus in Indian English Fiction becomes particular particularly by Anita Desai and Arun Joshi who explore the agonised existence of modern man in their writing which changed the face of Indian English novel. The novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi are the result of the complex socio-political situation in the post-independence days, which only got a fillip by the west.

Many post-independence novelists endeavour to explore the theme of encounter between the East and the West. The finest example of the East and West encounter is in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) wherein Ramaswami, an



Indian scholar and Madeliene, his French wife, part ways because of the basic incompatibility of these two cultures.

Among Joshi's contemporaries, Chaman Nahal is an important novelist. His most outstanding work before the eighties was *Azadi* (1975), one of the most prominent novels on the theme of Partition. His other novels before the eighties are *My True Faces* (1973), *Into Another Dawn* (1977), and *The English Queens* (1979). Novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgaonkar have depicted the Indian society after Independence, its social evils and corruption as well as the suffering inflicted upon people by Second World War and Chinese attack on India. Bhattacharya has published six novels: *So Many Hungers*, *Music for Mohini*, *He Who Rides a Tiger*, *A Goddess Named Gold*, *Shadows from Ladakh*, and *A Dream in Hawaii*. The novels of Manohar Malgaonkar, *The Princess*, *Distant Drum*, *Combat Shadows*, *A Bend in Ganges* and *The Devil's Hand* reveal his interest in the post-independence scenario and its effect on human life.

With Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Arun Joshi Indian English novel makes a distinct departure. The novelists have no shift from the outer world to the inner recesses of mind and heart. They are passionately concerned with the dilemma of human loneliness. The characters of Nayantara Sahgal are solitary individuals trying to combat loneliness. Her fiction deals with India's elite responding to the crisis engendered by political change. She was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for English, for her novel, *Rich Like Us* (1985), by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters.

In these fictions the crisis is born out of matrimonial discord, the lack of understanding between man and woman. The novelists of the 1950s Kamala

Markandaya, Khushwant Singh, Nayantara Sahgal and others concentrated on projecting the political, social and the economical situation of India. The next generation of writers Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Sashi Tharoor, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi not only projected the contemporary issues but also the East-West encounter, immigrant issues, multi culturalism, post colonialism, and attempted to reveal, compare and contrast the existential issues portrayed. The themes and issues of existentialism are prominently portrayed in the fiction of Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Jhumpa Lahiri. Anita Desai's protagonists Maya, Nanda Kaul, Raka, Ila Das and others revolt against the unfavourable situations and circumstances in their lives.

Arun Joshi like Anita Desai, has recorded the modern man's traumas and agonies in his novels with rare competence and gravity. As Shyamala A. Narayan puts it:

Arun Joshi presents an India riddled with corruption. Even God can be propitiated, by gifts in black money to his temples, where the priests themselves are corrupt as the narrator. Hypocrisy is so all pervasive that the narrator himself is not free from it (35).

Arun Joshi was born on 7 July 1939 at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi where his father, late Prof. A.C. Joshi was on the science faculty of the University later he became the Vice-Chancellor as well. The youngest child of his illustrious parents he had his formal education at Varanasi, Lahore and Jalandhar. After completing his Intermediate courses he got a scholarship from the U.S.A. to pursue higher studies. He obtained a Degree in Engineering from the University of Kansas in 1959 and Master's degree in Industrial Management from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, U.S.A. in 1960. During his American sojourn, he had also worked at a



mental hospital where his uncle was a psychiatrist dealing with chronic schizophrenics for a brief period. After returning to India in 1962, he joined the Delhi Cloth and General Mills Co., Delhi in a managerial capacity, as chief of its Recruitment and Training department.

Exceptionally perspective as a creative artist, Joshi has brought out five novels, *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), *The Apprentice* (1974), *The Last Labyrinth* (1981), *The City and the River* (1990) and a collection of short stories, *The Survivor* (1975) have won him high critical acclaim and a recognition as an author of rare sensitivity and exceptional talent. He won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his fourth novel *The Last Labyrinth* in 1982. It was very unfortunate that a man of such amazing abilities died of cardiac arrest in April, 1993 at the age of fifty four in New Delhi.

There are a number of literary and non-literary influences which have their profound impact on Arun Joshi's creative sensibility. The most dominant among them are Hindu scriptures- *The Bhagvadgita*, *The Upanishads*, *Vedanta* and *Mahatma Gandhi*. In his interview with Pier Paolo Piciuco, he accepts that the Hindu tradition has influenced him the most. He candidly seeks his affinity with India:

I certainly have some affinities with this country (India); I have found it lately. One is the affinity of the spiritual kind, then there is the affinity of the sensual kind and there are others, too. Each country in India is very unique, and all India still remains unique. You know, historically, India has always been very inner-directed and never outer-directed like many other countries.... There is no other country like this for the

religious size, for the spiritual, the Bhakti Movement.... India then has dealings with God which are peculiar. (89)

Arun Joshi presents different facets of crisis in modern man's life. The image in all his novels is an image of foreigner. His characters are not only in the dilemma of dual cultures but lively pictures of alienations. All the four novels of Arun Joshi are set in search of reality. Joshi has not only attracted a large number of readers, writers and reviewers but he has also received appreciation from Indian and foreign critics.

Arun Joshi is a major contemporary Indian English novelist who has attempted to grapple with the predicament of modern man. While Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao concentrate, by and large, on the social scenario in the native country and endeavour to underline its inadequacies, Joshi's main thrust is on the individual psyche of the protagonist. Imbued with an instinctive urge to define their identity in relation to themselves, to their society and also to humanity at large, Joshi's heroes plunge into the extremely trying situations and combat with them in their peculiar and distinctive ways. Despite surrounded by affluence and sophistication, they mark themselves as 'outsiders,' as misfits in the apparently satisfying environment where something more valuable is missing.

Joshi delves deep into the dark recesses of the mind which are the inscrutable region of uncertainty and inscrutability. As R. K. Dhawan writes:

Reading Joshi's novels is not always a smooth experience; there are moments when one is assailed by doubts and questions. There is "something" that attracts one's attention and then grips. Joshi delves into the inner recesses of human psyche where he finds instincts and impulses at work; he seeks a process of the apprehension of reality



which may lead him to the world of the core of the truth of man's life. He realises man's uniqueness and loneliness in an indifferent and inscrutable universe. (*The Novels of Arun Joshi*, 8)

Arun Joshi is an original talent exploring deeper into the moral and spiritual crisis of the contemporary Indians. His protagonists' dilemma issues from the lack of any moral norm in the society. The alienations that emerge in the novels of Arun Joshi are because of the clash between the socio- cultural and psychological pressures. The alienation arises because of the social maladjustment and emotional insecurity; this alienated self leads to a psychological revolt within the self that every moment of life is in search of identity.

In *The Foreigner* Arun Joshi has very dexterously handled some thought provoking, grave issues like rootlessness, detachment, frustration, quest for better alternative, identity-crisis and self-realisation, highlighting India's glorious cultural heritage and imperishable moral values. Arun Joshi has candidly accepted, with reference to *The Foreigner* that his recurrent theme is alienation which is closely related to the identity issues in many forms, sometime in the form of identity conflict, sometime in the form of self-quest, many times leading to estrangement from the self. At the same time, his heroes are intensely self-centred persons, prone to self-pity and escapism. In all his novels, Arun Joshi attempts to deal with different facets of alienation, in relation to the self, the society around and humanity at large. Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* is a born foreigner.

In response to Purabi Banerji's enquiries, Joshi acknowledges that the novel is "a study in alienation" (*The Sunday Statesman*), and is based on observation and personal experience. He admits: "It is largely autobiographical". Joshi himself says,

"Some parts of *The Foreigner*, my first book, were written when I was a student in America. I gave it up then and completed it later in 1966." (*The Sunday Statesman*)

*The Foreigner* relates how Sindi Oberoi, an immigrant Indian, suffers in the course of his search for meaning and purpose of his life. Sindi's alienation from the world is similar to the one that many existentialist heroes in the west suffer from. The novel is an enactment of the crisis of the present in the story of Sindi Oberoi. The question is of the identity as self-identity of a person who does not know his birth, parents, relatives and friends. This very understanding of Sindi brings Joshi closer to Camus and Sindi to Camus' outsider.

Sindi was himself an emotionally sterile person devoid of the self and the identity. It seems that Sindi was selfish and his philosophy of detachment was merely a false construction to run away from the worldly responsibility towards June. It is not that Sindi could not start a fresh life with a meaning and self identity but the precedent experiences were obstacles to do so. The climax of the novel comes at a juncture where June, deprived of love and marriage by Sindi, falls in love with Babu Rao Khemka and it is aptly reciprocated by Khemka. In the past Sindi was deeply in love with June and he could have saved the life of both Khemka and June but now he is guilty of killing the duo. Sindi has committed a crime because of his false detachment. A man without identity, roots, values, ethics, emotions and love cannot be expected to be redeemed.

Arun Joshi by his own inventions and discoveries makes Sindi realise. After coming to India, Sindi got a God-sent opportunity to redeem himself. Muthu and his problems bring about a major change in Sindi's attitude towards life. The Indian soil gives him a meaning to life, attachment from self to the world. In *The Foreigner*,



Arun Joshi depicts a keen awareness and deeper understanding of our times. Sindi represents the solutions to the meaninglessness of life. The establishment of the identity of Sindi at the closing of the novel presents the only way of saving man from the purposelessness and degradation of the contemporary meaningless world.

The identity-conflict in the protagonist of *The Foreigner* is many-folded. Though Sindi involves himself in an earnest quest for life sustaining values, he is not able to overcome the miseries of past completely. The character of Sindi portrays the sense of metaphysical anguish at the meaninglessness of life. Lastly, what comes out from the conflicting nature of the protagonist of *The Foreigner* Sindi Oberoi, is that life rotates in a flashback style. If life is full of suffering the human nature is to overcome that. Struggle, confusion, frustration and confession are the realities of human life. The self on the earth is meant to acquire an identity, without identity there is no human being. The identity conflict in *The Foreigner* in the light of the character of Sindi reveals that man's false beliefs and self-created agenda of life evaporate with the passage of time. The identity of Sindi is not only the identity of a character of Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*, it is also an identity of the millions of the young generation of the world, who have a lot of questions but no answer. The identity of Sindi is a warning to evolve a system to meet the needs and challenges of the time. What Sindi did was the outcome of the social conditions. That Sindi loves but cannot marry reflects the identity-conflict and he is torn apart between West and East.

Arun Joshi adds a new dimension to the genre of Indian Fiction in English by introducing the theme of existentialism in his novels. It is an attitude, an outlook that emphasizes on the purpose and meaning of human existence in this world. The potential meaninglessness of human existence has corroded human life from various quarters. The existential encounter with nothingness and the tenuousness of human

existence are prototypical of modern life. The space between what the individual aspires for and the hard reality of what he achieves, between what he professes and practises has mercilessly crumpled his life leaving an insidious effect on his inner being. Arun Joshi attempted to dismiss the wide spread belief that existentialism is all about negativity, absurd and meaningless life. On the contrary individuals by their will power and determination come out of the crisis, despair and find meaning in life. They experience alienation, anxiety and helplessness, which are the other themes of existential philosophy.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Attachment through Detachment**

The introduction of the theme of alienation in the modern Indo-English literature opens a new realm of understanding of human nature and behaviour. It helps us to observe an individual in terms of his responses and reaction to other human beings, the environment and with his own self. Alienation is one of the greatest problems confronting modern man. Its corrosive impact can be seen in the form of generation gap, the anti-war movement, the credibility gap, the compartmentalization of our life, the stunting of personal development, the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaningfulness of life, and so on. These have made the modern man lose his confidence.

This has resulted in his estrangement from the self, the family and the society. He is not able to grasp the meaning of his existence in a hostile world in which he is a stranger and an exile. There is something absurd about him. He feels lost and finds no solace in religion and philosophy which all thrust him towards becoming senseless, absurd and useless. The crisis of character, identity or consciousness or authenticity has grown out of man's looking before and after and pining for what he is not.

The idea of alienation is also found in the works of Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Jean Paul Sartre and many other existential writers. Joshi's novels are mainly based on the isolation of man in an alien world, the estrangement of the individual from himself, the problem of evil and the pressing finality of death. In the 20th century, modern man is confronted with various problems, stress and strains. He reaches a point where he is shocked to find that he is no longer the master of his

destiny and realizes that there are forces which threaten to wither his life and all its joys and hopes. He suffers from a deep sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness.

Crisis of identity may have its roots in both self-alienation and social alienation. Self- alienation is loss of contact of the individual self with any inclination or desires not in agreement with the prevailing social pattern. Alienation from the self is the basic form of rootlessness. This is not only a sociological but also a psychological problem of contemporary man and literature.

Applying the psycho analytical theory, one can notice that the novelist in his works has sketched the human predicament caused by the inner turmoil of man living in the present world. Joshi's books talk about characters that do not have a firm footing and their rootlessness always haunt them with a quest for identity. They seem to be vagabonds who travel far and wide but with no permanent home of their own. The lack of a hometown makes an individual literally crave for an identity for the loss of one leads to neurotic disasters and leaves one in utter dismay. The confrontations between the alienated self and the sociocultural forces are the main focus of his fictional works. Arun Joshi's principal characters of his novels are subjected to extreme social, cultural and psychological pressures. It is no wonder that Joshi subjects his protagonists to experience such a crisis of life because the destiny of modern man seems to be so.

As S. Rangachari aptly remarks:

The themes of alienation, of rootlessness of individuals, of inanity and purposelessness of human existence, of moral vacuity, spiritual bankruptcy and apathy- the themes which are associated with T.S.

Eliot's early poetry figure prominent in *The Foreigner*. (T.S Eliot's Shadow on *The Foreigner*)

*The Foreigner* deals with the journey of the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi, from his detachment from the world to his involvement in it. The heroes of Arun Joshi move from indifference to the society to involvement in the society. They learn that real detachment is the ability to allow people, places or things the freedom to be themselves. It is giving another person 'the space' to be himself or herself. Towards the end of the novels, the characters learn that 'indifference' implies detachment from self, and 'involvement' signifies 'attachment to the society at large'. A truly detached person involves himself in the lives of the people around him for their betterment and his own physical and mental well-being. Joshi brings out the narrator's point of view through the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi's words in his maiden novel, *The Foreigner* "You had a God; you had roots in the soil you lived upon. Look at me. I have no roots" (118).

Through the character of Sindi, Joshi presents the plight of the modern man, who is pulled off his roots because of his problems. A pervasive sense of his rootlessness, along with his loneliness, is a threat to him. He lives in no man's land and is incessantly haunted by his past. He has no belief in himself, or in the society around, or on the land he is born. As stated by R. S. Pathak in his article, "Human Predicament and Meaninglessness". "The work of Arun Joshi, reads like the spiritual *Odyssey* of the twentieth century man who has lost his spiritual moorings" (109). Arun Joshi depicts Sindi's anguish following his loneliness and his so-called rootlessness. The novel shows the sufferings of Sindi who finds himself lost in the maze of worldly existence and is deprived of any familial, social, and cultural ties. His soul cries for a way out of these confused ways of life. He gives an account of the



conflict between involvement in and detachment from the world going on in the mind of Sindi. To find out the solution to the problem of his restlessness and forgiveness Sindi tries to be detached from the world. Sindi aimlessly roams in search of peace, identity and purpose of his life. Disappointingly, he tries to escape from the world as a solution to this problem.

But Arun Joshi has his roots deep in the ancient Indian philosophy; that is why he never accepts detachment as the final solution to the problems of life. He has faith in the notion that estrangement is something to be overcome, and not to be nourished. Through Sindi, Joshi presents before us tremendous capacity for transcendence. The novel shows the protagonist's journey from inaction to action, from detachment to involvement and from illusion to reality.

The psychological problems in the form of alienation, loneliness, rootlessness, withdrawal and detachment are seen as the dominating themes in the novels of Arun Joshi. He depicts the protagonist's psyche or inner development in his novel *The Foreigner*. Arun Joshi has very skilfully handled some serious thought-provoking themes in an unpretentious manner such as rootlessness, detachment, quest for better alternatives in this ostentatious world and self-realisation, highlighting our glorious cultural heritage and imperishable moral values.

In *The Foreigner* Sindi's life is an account of his search for his roots in a parentless world and realising his commitment to life and action as opposed to passive detachment. Sindi passes through the crisis of the present. Sindi is also anti-ambitious and detached which he seems to cultivate as a virtue. It deals with the problem of involvement in and detachment from the world, and the lack of courage to face the bitter realities of life and eventual resolution of the problem. The formative part of the



novel develops against the backdrop of the west, and the later part set in India brings in "acculturation" at the end.

*The Foreigner* relates how Sindi Oberoi, an immigrant Indian, suffers in the course of his search for meaning and purpose of his life. Sindi's alienation from the world is similar to the one that many existentialist heroes in the West suffer from. The novel is an enactment of the crisis of the present in the story of Sindi Oberoi. He is a perennial outsider, an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century. He belongs to no country, no people and finds himself an outsider in Kenya, Uganda, England, America and India. Sindi is trapped in his loneliness, which is "accelerated by his withdrawal from the society around him" (Dhawan, 47). He mulls over his foreignness which is almost Kierkegaardian:

I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I lived without a purpose, unless you would call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter. It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreignness lay within me and I wouldn't leave myself behind wherever I went (55).

As R.S. Pathak observes: "His alienation is of his soul and not geography" (44.) He leaves the impression of being an alien on all those whom he meets. June in one of her meetings with Sindi tells him that "I have a feeling you'd be a foreigner anywhere" (29). Even Shiela once tells him that "you are still a foreigner, you don't belong here" (122).

Sindi Oberoi, born of a Kenyan-Indian father and English mother, is orphaned at the age of four when his parents met their end in an air crash near Cairo. He is brought up by his uncle in Kenya. His deprivation of parental love perforates his heart. This realization of 'loneliness' in the entire social set up causes his failure to find any purpose behind his existence. When Professor White says "Every foreign student is an ambassador of his country," Sindi asks himself, "And what country had I represented? Kenya or England or India?" (43). Owing to his loneliness, everybody has pity on him but it further increases his agony because he hates the pity that he got from people. His wandering from Kenya to America is a vain attempt to cope with the shattering paradigms of existence.

Deprived of parental love and affection in his very childhood, he becomes broken and anchorless. Actually, he is incapable of any emotional involvement with his social milieu. He is a born "foreigner" and is an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically. Whoever comes in contact with him notices this foreignness in him. June in their very first encounter says,

There is something strange about you, you know. Something distant, I'd guess that when people are with you they don't feel like they are with a human being. May be it's an Indian characteristic, but I have a feeling you'd be a foreigner anywhere (29).

Totally isolated from the society, he spells out his predicament in his dialogue with Mr. Khemka:

But you at least knew what made an ass of a man; we don't even know that. You had a clearcut system of morality, a caste system that laid down all you had to do. You had a God: you had roots in the soil you

lived upon. Look at me, I have no roots, I have no system of morality. What does it mean to me if you call me an immoral man. I have no reason to be one thing rather than another, you ask me why I am not ambitious: well, I have no reason to be. Come to think of it I don't even have a reason to live! (118).

Sindi's total alienation and isolation makes him cynical and frustrated. Many of the characters in the novel point their fingers at this aspect of Sindi's. Babu Rao Khemka, his friend and a student at Boston, writes to his sister Shiela that Sindi is "so terribly cynical" (55). His flat mate Karl says to him, "I didn't know you could laugh, too," to which Sindi replies; "I can if I am drunk enough" (77). June's mother tells Sindi: "You are just a cynic, my boy" (88). Shiela even goes to the extent of telling him: "You are the saddest man I have ever known" (148). Sindi, aware of his real plight, confesses: "I was cynical and exhausted, grown old before my time, weary with my own loneliness" (131). His rootlessness takes him from Kenya to London and thereafter to Boston and finally to New Delhi. His quest carries him to London, but his tiresomeness and exhaustion don't spare him also. He remarks:

I joined London University, but soon I got tired of the classroom lectures. I didn't have any trouble with my courses and I passed the exams creditably enough when they came, but the question that bothered me was very different. I wanted to know the meaning of my life. And my classrooms didn't tell me a thing about it (142).

Sindi's attitude towards life and love is in total disregard of the values of human relations, which leads to his obsession with non-involvement. When the moment of real involvement and commitment with June comes, it becomes "almost a



countdown of my courage" (58). He knows "Love was like a debt that you had to return sooner or later. And if you didn't you felt very uncomfortable" (60).

His quest for the meaning of life makes him befriend a Catholic priest in Scotland. He spends much of his time "discussing religion and God and mysticism" (145) and gradually things begin to clear. Once it so happens that he climbs a hill top one morning and as the sun rises it comes to him in a flash: "All love- whether of things, or persons, or oneself-was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion. Love begot greed and attachment and it led to possession" (145). He feels that this philosophy of the so-called detachment would enable him to meet the challenges of life, though he is grossly mistaken.

Sindi has misconstrued the term "detachment." His utter selfish notion of detachment is just a euphemism for non-involvement and thus avoids the most needed responsibility towards June. His estrangement compels June to love Babu Rao Khemka who is gullible and has his root embedded in the Indian soil. America for him is a dreamland of free sex, and he argues with Sindi: "What is the good of coming to America if one is not to play around with girls?" (20). When June comes to know that she is pregnant by Babu and asks Sindi to marry her, but under the garb of detachment he shirks his duty of extricating her from the situation. Finally, she has to undergo an operation in which she dies. Thus, Sindi's false and cold "detachment" leads to the tragic death of both Babu and June. He himself confesses: "All along I had acted out of lust and greed and selfishness and they had applauded my wisdom. When I had sought only detachment I had driven a man to his death" (8). Not that he does not love her, actually he does not agree to her proposal of marriage owing to certain notions and experiences he has had in the past.



He has a purely detached business-like attitude towards life and people. Sitting expressionless, he watches the world go by. Thus Sindi is a psychic case. He is totally unaware of the happiness provided by emotional bonds. Earlier in England he had amorous relationships with Anna and Kathy but all his relationships “fizzled out like an ill packed cracker” (121) because he couldn’t pay the price of being loved. Sindi’s past experience has given him painful lessons: “Even after several years, somewhere in the labyrinth of my consciousness the wound still bled. I felt sad and perhaps showed it” (61).

To get rid of his past he tries hard to involve himself in some work but is far from getting it. When he visits the house of June Blyth in Boston, June tries to involve him in a conversation with a view to knowing more and more about him, but it makes him uneasy. He feels embarrassed by her personal talk and changes the subject to save himself from the discomfort of talking about himself. He all along desires to physically possess her but wildly struggles to remain uninvolved. In fact, he entertains a deep sense of insecurity, unreality and impermanence about things. In one of his conversations with his beloved June Blyth, he says:

...I have loved people as much as I love myself. It isn’t much but that is not my fault. And then to be in love in your sense requires one to take things seriously, assume that there is permanence about things. Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important (92).

These words reveal his depressing attitude towards life.

He tells June: “We are alone, both you and I. This is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within” (107). As a result of this loneliness he

becomes indifferent to this world and says "nothing is bothering me"(117). He has no feelings for his parents and finds no purpose in human existence. This whole world is purposeless for him. He does not find the meaning of his existence. He has no aim in his life and is suffering from existential agony.

Once, when he was in high school, he confesses: "I was contemplating suicide since I was tired of living"(141). He insists upon teaching of how to live than those boring classroom lectures. He has no reason to live; consequently, everybody who meets him calls him strange and cynic. June tells, "you are just cynic my boy" (88). Out of furry, Mr. Khemka frowns, "I can't make head or tail out of you. I grant you that you are not a stuffed shirt, but then you are stubborn as a mule. Even mules mend their ways if they are beaten enough, but nothing seems to affect you" (116). All this is because Sindi was weary of his own existence. All these observations brought an inferiority complex in Sindi and he developed a feeling of detachment. He has no interest in mundane relationships because "death wipes out everything for most of us anyway. All this is left is a big mocking zero" (92). He is in search of authentic existence hence any other thing seems to be painful and unreal. The preaching of his Catholic friend in London has made him believe this cosmos as an illusion. Getting involved with this illusion is painful. He is still in search of right things at right places.

Sindi's confused and blundering approach to life costs him two lives, both dear to him. Seized with a sense of guilt or self contradiction, he progresses towards an insight into the nature of life and action: "Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it" (162). He decides to start his life in another place where he can experiment with himself a fresh, escaping from the aspect of his being that appears to be decayed. Destiny, as seen had already set him on the



path of self-realisation. Now it takes on a more active role and, through the spin of the coin, makes Sindi go to India, the land of his future self fulfilment and salvation.

When Babu Rao Khemka's father who is a corrupt industrialist employs him in his business, Sindi develops the right attitude towards life. He shows hatred for the senior Khemka's corrupt practices and sympathy for the company's exploited workers. His earlier attachment with himself crumbles, and when Khemka is arrested and imprisoned, he allows himself to be persuaded to take over the management of the business with the most selfless motives, "I felt as if I had been dropped on a sinking ship and charged with the impossible task of taking it ashore" (189).

At last he arrives at the right conclusion and he surrenders himself to the right kind of involvement and the right course of action with which his selfish desires have nothing to do. Sindi is made aware that as a social animal, he is not to remain aloof and isolated from the society but has his own commitment as a civilian. Sindi takes charge of the factory and saves the lives of numerous workers. At length, the protagonist experiences a feeling of contentment; it looks as if he has stopped shedding tears after he has involved himself in wiping them from the eyes of others. He understands the true meaning of detachment. For all his initial alienation, he has at last earned the right to suffer for others and this care for others gains perspective, a self validating context.

He realises the folly of his perception. He looks upon himself as the victim of a tremendous illusion. The so-called "detachment" immediately vanishes and he feels extremely miserable. June could have proved to him one last emotional anchor, but his pompous philosophy of "detachment" alienates June from him and sends her to his friend Babu and in the process she meets her tragic death, thereby intensifying his

feeling of the abominable absurdity of the world. After coming to India, he gets a god-sent opportunity to redeem himself, when, Mr. Khemka is sentenced to jail for committing fraud with income tax accounts. Mr. Khemka's business began to collapse and the workers begin to starve. The workers persuade him to take over the charge of Mr. Khemka's business. Sindi is still not sure but his visit to Muthu's place changes his whole attitude towards life and others. Sindi sticks to Muthu's words and confesses to having realised "detachment" though belatedly: "Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it" (162).

Thus, Sindi's quest for identity as well as meaning and purpose of life does not end in despair. He is lucky enough not to find absurdity and estrangement as the ultimate condition of life, and shows a tremendous capacity for transcendence. The small fortifications of detachment that Sindi had built around himself all his life are shattered to pieces when the redeeming episode of the crumbling of Khemka's business and the appalled spectacle of the "bundles of soggy humanity" (43). He identifies himself with them: "these are my people, I thought" (166)

The education of existential man can be learned only through encountering the absurdity of experience. The protagonist emerges out of the clutches of misery and pain as a complete human being who is going to lead a fulfilled life. He has learnt the art of converting the agony of life into pure ecstasy. He has experienced pain and alienation in such a manner that he can understand the meaning of joy, happiness and fulfilment in the fullest measure. Sindi is distinctly different from the mindless multitude that surrounds him and he experiences the existential anxiety which results in a relentless search for fulfilment and it ultimately ends in his realisation of the values of the noble virtues of compassion, understanding and benevolence towards his



fellowmen. Thus, his quest for identity is at length quenched and his understanding of being attached in a detached manner gives a new dimension to his life.

With the completion of his journey from passive detachment to his commitment to life and action Sindi gives a twist to his name 'Surrinder' and calls himself 'Surrender Oberoi'. His new name is quite fit according to his personality. He has surrendered his own interests for the larger interests of the total mass. He listens to the voice of his soul. The novel ends with the hope of Sindi settling down to life with Sheila and committing himself to action. Thus *The Foreigner* deals with the spiritually adventurous journey of a puzzled man, who is confused in the maze of life, from his escaping the world to his engagement with it.

Joshi appears to regard both existential detachment and involvement with self as wrong as eating into the vitals of both individual and society. Whereas Babu Rao Khemka, going to the West in search of enjoyment, finds only frustration and death, his friend Sindi Oberoi, learning from experience and trusting in fate, reaches the land of his ancestors and finds a purposeful existence.

## Chapter Three

### Existentialism

Existentialism is a twentieth century's most influential literary and philosophical movement that focuses on individual existence. It originated in the philosophical and literary works of Sartre and Camus. It focuses on acting on one's conviction in order to arrive at personal truth. Existentialism deals with the problems of the meaning and purpose of life on earth, finding the world as hostile in nature. It is an attitude, an outlook that emphasizes on the purpose and meaning of human existence in this world. Indian form of existentialism as manifested in *The Gita* and *The Upanishads* deals with the problems of our existence on earth. The basic theory of existentialism is an insistence on the actual existence of the individual as the basic and important fact, instead of a reliance on the theories of abstractions. The central doctrine is that man is what he makes of himself; he is not predestined by God or by society, or by biology.

Existentialism is a reaction against the blind equalisation and vulgarisation brought about by the extremes of the democratic revolution and the progressive emasculation of body and mind effected by the technological revolution. The very existence of humanity as a whole is under a menace on account of fatal nuclear weapons invented by science. Consequently, there is an atmosphere of envy and unrest, uneasiness and boredom all over the world. Man has lost his human values such as love, joy, pity and peace and he has become more a machine functioning like a computer.

There is a gap between what the individual professes and what he really practises, between what he really is and what he should be. These absurd situations

give rise to psycho-social disorders and loss of moral values. These negative attributes of human conduct instigate man to commit blunders. Sometimes, deadly sins that ultimately disturb his mental peace and harmony result in discomfort, depression and frustration. Hence he finds himself a misfit. He is alienated from nature, society and even from his own self. These psycho-socio-cultural factors have weighed heavily on the mind and imagination of the writers and thinkers all over the world. Such is the existential problem: how to redeem man from the clutches of his own past contrivance, the many forces that encompass his alienation from his God, his environment, and even from himself.

Existentialism had its beginning as a philosophical tendency or attitude that manifested itself in Europe as a consequence of the two World Wars. Strictly speaking, it is not a well-knit school of thought. All existential thinkers seek to justify in some way the freedom and importance of human personality. They all highlight the prominence of human will in contrast to reason. They uphold the view that "each individual person is unique and inexplicable in terms of any metaphysical or scientific system" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 968). Existentialist thinkers chose to define and describe the burning human experiences of anxiety, anguish, guilt, dread, despair, alienation, absurdity etc., of the post world war in their own ways. Their findings did exert tremendous influence on the thought pattern of the literary artists all over the world.

There are three schools of existentialist philosophers; theistic, atheistic and absurdist. Soren Kierkegaard (1813- 1855), the father of Modern Existentialism, Karl Jaspers (1883-1962), a German philosopher and Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), a French philosopher, were the exponents of existentialism. The terms 'Existence' and 'Existentialism' were first coined and explained by Kierkegaard himself. He believed



that true self-knowledge is realized only with an intensified awareness of God. He proclaimed the Existentialist manifesto: "Subjectivity is Truth".

These existentialist emotions had the compelling effect on the life and thought of literary artists all over the world. Hence, writers of repute like Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, Eugene Ionesco, Proust, Virginia Woolf, Graham Greene, T. S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, William Golding, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway and many others all over the world gave vent to the existentialist themes in their great works.

Arun Joshi's interest is driven towards delineating the individual quest for the self in all its varied and complex forms. Arun Joshi's speciality lies in unravelling diverse facets of crisis in modern man's life. He has the potentiality to give proper shape and form of fiction to the chaos in the mind of a contemporary man and to correlate it to human condition. His technique of self introspection intensified by self-mockery opens a new dimension in the art of Indian English fiction. It is because of his novelty of approach, his psychological understanding of the inner workings of the mind and his philosophical existentialist vision that one gets enamoured of Joshi's writings. There are a number of influences that have worked on Arun Joshi. First and foremost, he is well aware of having been influenced by existentialist writers in general and Albert Camus in particular. Joshi himself admits in an interview with Purabi Bannerji:

I did read Camus and Sartre; I liked *The Plague* and read *The Outsider*:

I might have been influenced by them. Sartre, I did not understand clearly or like. As for existentialist philosophers like Kierkegaard, I have never understood anything except odd statements (Feb, 1983, 4).



In the words of O.P. Bhatnagar: "a strong feeling of aloneness and aloofness permeates the entire narrative and provides the necessary texture and structure to the novel" (13-14).

Arun Joshi adds a new dimension to the genre of Indian Fiction in English by introducing the theme of existentialism in his novels. Like other Arun Joshi's novel, *The Foreigner* is full of darkness, the darkness of the identity conflict and personal sufferings. Ultimately there is rejuvenation and elevation from the shadow of the darkness by the arrival of the light in the form of knowledge. Joshi is at pains to realize that modern man has lost his faith in God and has become a slave to the money and machine culture. For him, human life is an agonizing pilgrimage in which man strives to be an instrument of God.

Arun Joshi who is obsessively concerned with the human predicament explores the human psyche so as to unravel the mystery of the human existence. Joshi is primarily concerned with the action that is concrete and directed towards the individual who is free to choose for himself a personal way of life out of nothingness and vacuity around. The individual's capacity for choice and self-realization is sharply drawn in the novel. Although Sindi Oberoi, the hero cultivates an act of detachment around him, he is basically a person who longs to love and to be loved. Sindi has no respect for society, no belief in God or religion. His alienation from his friends and from the people around him causes in him the anxiety of meaninglessness of life.

Sindi experiences a restless feeling which keeps him restless throughout his life. Sindi, a misfit in the world, sees his mode of living "like a small death" (104). Sindi's awareness of the meaninglessness of human life in the world accounts for his

inauthentic mode of existence. Inauthentic existence is essentially a life of pleasure seeking and it gradually brings forth despair, boredom and unhappiness. In such a state, man ignores his potentiality of being and what pertains is a sense of vacuity, worthlessness and nothingness. In his eagerness to lead a meaningful existence, Sindi lives in a strange world of intense pleasure and almost equally intense pain. While gathering miscellaneous experiences in life, he realizes his mistakes.

Sindi leaves the impression of being an alien on all those whom he meets. Actually Sindi is incapable of emotional involvement with his social milieu. He is a born "foreigner and is an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically" (Mukherjee, 50). Sindi is a foreigner everywhere, in Nairobi, in India and even in America. Sindi is spiritually sterile as he himself is devoid of any religion and faith. His total alienation and isolation make him what he is; cynical and frustrated. Sindi's rootlessness takes him from Kenya to London and thereafter to Boston and finally to New Delhi. As R.S. Pathak opines:

His existential drifting over the surface of the earth and his experimentation with self only intensify his dismal loneliness and acute sense of meaninglessness of life (44).

Sindi has vague memories of his parents. When his American beloved June Blyth asks him how long he has been affected by asthma, he answers, "As long as I remember. They say my mother had it" (32). Thus in Sindi's life, except for a very short time that he spends with his uncle, there is hardly any parental influence. He expresses a peculiar sense of this parental void:

Anyway I can't really be called a Hindu. My mother was English and my father, I am told, a sceptic. That doesn't seem like a good beginning for a Hindu, doesn't it? (30).

In this way his parentlessness has its manifold implications in the different facets of his life and "he grows up without family ties and without a country" (Naik, 230). He is a child to none. He "is an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically" (Mukherjee, 202-203). Being a stranger to the world of filial relationships, he learns some meaning and purpose of his life with his uncle. When his uncle's death snaps the last thread of parental love, life becomes a purposeless existence to him. He says:

Somebody has begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose.... I hadn't felt that when my uncle was living ...the thought that he moved about in that small house on the outskirts of Nairobi gave me a feeling of having an anchor. After his death the security was destroyed. Now I suppose I existed only for dying (55-56).

This loss of personal history, culture and national identity flings him. His past experience with the world, the death of his parents and the loneliness in his life makes him totally pessimistic and lost.

Although an Indian by birth, Sindi feels himself to be an outsider, a foreigner, an alien because he is obsessed with the impermanence and transience of things. It is apparent that Sindi's alienation lies within him. Joshi exhibits the agony of loneliness in uncovering the psychological conflict in the character of Sindi Oberoi in his quest for meaning through a series of relationships. . He is a lover, a spectator who wants to



stand cut of the maze of action dreading involvement. He is an existentialist character- "rootless, restless and luckless in a mad, bad and absurd world" (Dhawan, 152). His rootlessness is rooted in his soul which precipitates one crisis after another. He too acknowledges "I have no roots" (143) His loneliness is exaggerated by his withdrawal from society. Living in Kenya, London and Boston, he undergoes various changes through personal experiences. While in Kenya, he contemplates suicide, and when he comes to London, the same despair remains with him.

There are two lasting impressions in his life. His escapade with Anna, a woman of "about thirty five with dark hair and finely chiselled features" (142). She is "a minor artist who had separated from her husband" (142). He has a love affair with her and comes to know in due course that "Anna was not yearning for me or anybody, but for her lost youth" (143). She knows that she has fallen in love with him, but his response is languid and listless:

We carried on like this for six months. I think she loved me intensely and unselfishly. I enjoyed making love to her and her sadness attracted me, but engrossed as I was with my own self, I couldn't return her love (143).

Anna knows that it is her age that discourages him. It is at one of her own parties that he meets Kathy and is drawn towards her. "I left her (Anna), the moment Kathy showed interest in me" (144). He gets deeply involved with Kathy, an English house-wife who hungers for adulterous love. But Kathy, in turn, leaves him after carrying on with him for a few weeks and goes back to her husband for the sacredness of marriage. These relations taught him to practise detachment and non-involvement in human emotions. The broken relationship disturbs him, and in America he is



"afraid of getting involved" (53) with June, an American girl, in spite of his determination not to get involved. Sindi believes that possession generates pain as it implies involvement.

Sindi marks the sudden fall of a spider from the ceiling, and attributes it to his "exploring his inverted universe" (90). This ordinary and almost negligible incident becomes for him a symbol of man's mysterious position in this universe. According to Sindi, life is shortlived, unreal and inescapably painful. He broods over his loneliness in the ball of International Students Association which is intended to bring foreigners in contact with the Americans:

Except for the bartender and me there wasn't a soul in the room who wasn't dancing or talking or beating his feet to music. It is remarkable how you can be in a crowded room like that and still feel lonely, like you were sitting in your own tomb (22).

Thus Sindi Oberoi is totally isolated from the whole setup of society. "A strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness permeates the entire narrative and provides the necessary texture and structure to the novel" (Bhatnagar, 13-14).

The more Sindi kept on flirting with the English ladies and American girls, the more conscious he became of his futile existence. Sindi's sense of detachment and rootlessness is evident when June asks him where he was from. Sindi's reaction to the question provides a clue to his alienation: "Everybody always asked me the same silly question. 'Where are you from?' as it really mattered a great deal where I was from." (23) Sindi has misconstrued the term detachment for himself. It's just a way of avoiding commitment which drives Babu and June towards death. Sindi confesses,

All along I had acted out of lust and greed and selfishness and they had applauded my wisdom. When I had only sought a detachment I had only driven a man to his death. It all seemed very logical now that it had happened. (8)

He creates an illusion that he has learnt detachment. It so happens that one morning, it comes to him in a flash: "All love – whether of things, or persons, or oneself – was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion. Love begot greed and attachment and it led to possession" (145). He is of the view that one should be able to detach oneself from the object of one's love. Sindi's meeting with June turns out to be a turning point in his life. She loves Sindi intensely. Repeatedly, she requests him to marry her. But his cold 'detachment' alienates June from him and paves the way for her to fall on Babu, Sindi's friend.

Truly speaking, the man she really loves is Sindi. She affirms: "You are beautiful Sindi, beautiful as a God. I don't think I can even stop loving you" (147). Her love of Babu is merely a stop-gap arrangement; it is only on adhoc basis. Having come to know that June is still having a relationship with Sindi, Babu is shocked and commits suicide by involving himself in a motor accident. Later, when June comes to know herself pregnant by Babu and he being no more alive, she feels utterly disappointed. She then undergoes an abortion surgery during which she dies. Sindi ruminates over his own role in bringing about the untimely demise of both Babu and June. He realizes his mistake of rejecting June's love. His unconcern born of a sense of detachment which proves fatal and he fails to meet June before her death. The tragedy upset Sindi. He feels miserable because he holds himself indirectly responsible for the death of his beloved June and his friend Babu.

He is upset at the death of Babu. His sense of alienation becomes finely tuned. He wants to move away from America in search of mental peace. Being isolated he had seen the consequences of practising detachment in America. Sindi decides to leave the country and go to India. This he decides with a flip of coin which goes in favour of his ancestor's land. "Like many of my breeds I believed erroneously that I could escape from a part of myself by hopping from one land mass to another" (176) for in another development, on reaching New Delhi while making a casual courtesy call he accepts a job in the firm of Babu Rao Khemka's father. He gets a last chance of redemption when he comes to India and takes over Mr. Khemka's business. However first he is unwilling to join the business but all his hesitation dissolves when he visits Muthu who tells him "But it is involvement, sir. Sometimes detachment is actually getting involved." (188) He ultimately gets the right meaning of detachment.

Finally Sindi accepts Muthu's suggestion to take charge of the factory. This sheds light on the "message" of disinterested involvement, "a line of reasoning that led to the inevitable conclusion that for me, detachment consisted in getting involved with the world" (176). This shows that Sindi is an existential everyman of our time. It is about things that Sindi wants the courage and the capacity to love. His alienation is of the soul and not of geography. At one place he confesses that his 'foreignness' lies 'within' him and it drives him from crisis to crisis making it difficult for him to leave 'himself' behind wherever he goes.

He understands that his total involvement with the self was the cause of the death of his friend Babu and his sweetheart June. Moved by remorse, he comes to India and decides to do something meaningful. His philosophy of detachment crumbles down and he gradually gets involved with the world.



## Chapter Four

### Tradition and Modernity

The arrival of Britishers in India provides us with the context of two civilizations coming into contact. One acting on, the other acted upon, one proud of its past and content with its progress, the other nearing a stage of stagnation and exhaustion, especially compared to the former. Ever since India came into contact with the West, there has been a cross-fertilization of her life and literature. In the encounter between India and Britain, each gained to a considerable extent but one of the fall-outs of this togetherness was the de-culturation of India. The rapid industrial and scientific developments, the Westernization of life in the urban areas of the country and the increase of consumerism are the main aspects of the western civilisation. With its modern approach and changing tactics this civilisation has given rise to materialism. This materialistic approach today is termed as 'modernism'.

With the emergence of modernism, man's inner self continued to be corroded by discontent, despair and lack of faith in the traditional values that had sustained an entire generation before Independence. The art of leading a peaceful life without tensions, introspection, and dwelling inside, maintaining human relationships can be called as primitivism. Primitivism is nothing but a revelation of modern man's alienation from his deepest self and from nature. Corruption in the social life or the substitution of ideals by deals reflects the temper of modernity. In fact, the English did not merely mutilate the native cultural values of India; the western culture distorted the very fundamentals of the tradition of India. The achievement of new goals, of money, career and power by any means was in fact a consequence of the process of urbanisation and modernisation under the influence of the West. Modernism has brought in its wake a growing sense of loneliness, purposelessness and drift whereas



primitivism reaffirms a strong urge for reintegration and sincere and passionate struggle to recover the lost vitality and wholeness of being.

The impact of West has penetrated deep into the Indian ethos. Following the pattern of the West, the Indian English novelists have started trying their hands in writing psychological fiction. Modern man faces countless problems in his family and society. There is a growing antagonism between man and technology. The economic drudgery, social pressure, the dissolution of old faiths and dogmas and uncertain loyalties mercilessly crumble the life of modern man and wound his psyche. The socio-cultural pressures propel him to quest for his inner peace. Through self probing and self exploration, perception of the past and alienating experiences of the present, he discovers the higher values of life.

Along with the psychologists and philosophers, the modern Indian English novelists have discussed the predicament of deep rooted anxiety, alienation and deviation in their writings. "Modern fiction reflects the twin consciousness, the haunting traumas and the tireless quest as portrayed in the works of Indian English writers" (Prasad 75). Most of the men novelists recognize man in his social context. They project an India torn between tradition and modernity and their novels display a comprehensive vision of the Indian society.

Painfully aware of his insecure position, man experiences severe limitations in today's set-up and an acute terror of the world augmented by its randomness. The reason for the modern man's problems is varied. According to Fromm:

In the nineteenth century the problem was that God is dead; in the twentieth century the problem is that man is dead. The danger of the past was that man became slaves. The danger of the future is men may

become robots [who] will destroy their world and themselves because they cannot stand . . . a meaningless life. (122)

In fact the absence of inter-personal relations is the greatest curse of this age. Men have become islands in the sense that some kind of inner crisis has made them alienated from themselves, their homes, their surroundings and their community.

O.P.Mathur in his perceptive study of "The Art and Vision of Arun Joshi" feels,

The novelist's vision is coloured by a certain love of primitivism as against society. He wants acculturation of modern man. He is especially disillusioned over the post-freedom trends of degeneration in India. To be of use to others is his most emphatic assertion in all his novels (67)

Arun Joshi illustrates that "total industrialisation" and "total automation" result in the frustration that lead to various pathological states. The triumph of things over people leads to our spiritual alienation which results in the wholesale destruction of the personality. Basically Arun Joshi is an industrialist, who cultivated his love for literature only in his spare time. Arun Joshi is exposed to both the cultures. His writing is a bridge between the two worlds and cultures- East and West. In all his novels and short stories, he has analysed the psychological problems faced by both the Indian and foreign characters. They undergo traumatic experiences. H. Prasad observes:

Arun Joshi is a novelist with intuitive understanding of human psychology. In the modern times, life has shifted from the outer world to the recesses of the mind. He expresses those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probing of psychology continues to



disclose to us. His novels explore the crannies of the protagonist's mind, and their split-self. (89)

Though capacity of Indian culture to amalgamate exotic cultural elements is much overlooked yet an individual always experiences lot of psychic upheavals in such dichotomous ambience. Even claim of cosmopolitan or global self is more a myth for it doesn't mean complete absence of conflicts between the self and the other. Interestingly in contexts of cross-cultural confrontations it is said that a sense of crisis is never experienced by someone capable of strong faith in one's native culture. Scientific and industrial achievement looked very promising when it began with immense assurance of happiness and comforts but with time unleashed new evils. It just became a great aid to human tendency for evil all the while precipitating new kinds of problems. Because of human inability to be civilized in the real sense of the term science and technology has furthered only material comforts and the modern man continues to feel uncertain and unsettled followed with feelings of existential anguish.

Arun Joshi noticed the collapse of old values resulting in absurd universe. He saw contemporary man in search of a way to lead a meaningful life. He has recorded modern man's traumas and agonies in his novels. This concept echoes in all his novels. The present generation is facing the conflict between modern civilization and primitivism. *The Foreigner* deals with these two themes. We can find a solution to the torn personality of the entire modern generation. Arun Joshi has explored the reality of cultural interaction and has located its significance in Indian life. In his fiction the encounter of cultures does not come up directly, it is wrought in the concept and conflict of tradition and transition and in the juxtaposition of the materialistic, empirical rational view of life and the spiritual stance of life.

His fictional world is revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. Along with the problem of meaninglessness the present society is full of exploitations. There is only chaos, confusion and anarchy in social life. Men do not realize their duty and responsibility towards others. Arun Joshi was pained to see the chaotic conditions of the society. He therefore took into his hand the task of providing a solution to the society to escape from the vicious circle of rapid industrialization. Thus through the struggles of his protagonists he aims to achieve a good society and happy and joyful individuals.

Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* exposes the encounter between two cultures, India and Britain and conflicts between primitivism and modernism. It depicts the growing sense of loneliness, purposelessness and drift in the wake of modernism while primitivism reaffirms a strong urge for reintegration and a sincere and passionate struggle to recover the lost vitality and wholeness of being. The solution, however, can be found in the torn personality of the modern generation.

*The Foreigner* illustrates the corrupting influence of technology on modern man. The modernisation and industrialisation is heading our civilization to disaster. Human virtues like affinity, love, sympathy, kindness etc. have disappeared altogether. Modern man in contemporary society finds himself lonely, frustrated, dejected, secluded and almost alienated due to his detachment and non-involvement with his fellow beings. The most penetrating problem man faces today is the problem of meaninglessness. Man today suffers not from war, famine, persecution, famine and ruin but from one's own inner problem. Each of us has got some or other inner problem. Arun Joshi being himself connected with the industries and technology takes up this treatment beautifully and emphatically. *The Foreigner* illustrates the traumatic influence of urbanisation and industrialisation on man. It is mainly the study of an



uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century who looks out concernedly for mooring and a meaning in his randomly drifting life. It also deals with human suffering and agony arising due to the rapid advancement of technology.

The protagonist of the novel, Sindi Oberoi is a restless and uprooted character in an incompetent and sordid world. Arun Joshi has tried to project through Sindi's experiences the crisis of the urbanised and highly industrialised modern civilisation along with its dehumanising impact on the individual who is eager to find out and reaffirm the value of meaningful relatedness in life. He is more emphatically concerned with the search for the essence of human living and the need for the acculturation of man to establish his roots. Living in an era of rampant materialism and individualism, his protagonist, Sindi is very unhappy. His material prosperity, academic achievements and hedonistic life style do not lead him to a state of peace within and around. Sindi Oberoi is lonely, depressed and dependent and is also aware of the mess they are in, and they are oppressed with the sadness of living. In his struggle for survival, he finds himself in a wilderness where, as in "The Second Coming" Yeats describes, "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold".

Sindi Oberoi faces the problem of the barren, modern sophisticated society and hankers after the inner peace to be found in simple life. He is a foreigner to the world, a stranger to himself. He is seen wrestling with the imponderables of life, existence, involvement and detachment. Sindi Oberoi is remarkable in the sense that he nowhere demonstrates his need to seek feedback for his tentative formulations either in philosophy or spirituality. Civilized world has created lots of problems about one's identity and existentialism. Primitivism or the simple life has satisfied one's need and has got solutions to all the problems. The protagonist of the novel Sindi Oberoi goes on from one land to another because he finds his life meaningless and rootless. Born of an

English mother and Indian father in Kenya, he finds his life a burden. To get rid of this he reached London and was tired of the classroom lectures. He discusses his problems created by the civilised. Though some books on philosophy give him some light yet that is not ultimate and permanent. He lives his life at a superficial level because he does not belong anywhere. He realised the vanity of his life at the young age of twenty-five. He expresses his feeling thus:

And yet all shores are alien when you don't belong anywhere. Twenty-fifth Christmas on this planet, twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places. Twenty-five years gone in the search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement; a ten-stone body that had to be fed four times a day, twenty-eight times a week. (80)

He considers his life to be full of illusions and is unable to fix up his roots. His problems multiply when he feels insecure. For an insecure man, everybody around him is an enemy and everything is purposeless. Sindi's case is not a study of an individual but 'the whole lot of mankind' suffering from the modern malaise of cultural estrangement, social isolation and self-estrangement. Sindi moves from person to person, place to place and country to country to meet individuals and places which will give his soul solace. He confesses to Mr. Khemka that he has no sense of morality and he does not belong to any culture. He realises the vanity of his thinking in his dialogue with Mr. Khemka:

You had a clear-cut system of morality, a caste system that laid down all you had to do. You had a God; you had roots in the soil you lived



upon. I have no roots. I have no system of morality. What does it mean to me if you call me an immoral man? (143)

Sindi's life in Kenya, London or Boston and varied experiences he undergoes illustrates his predicament of anomic. In Kenya he feels restless, even attempted suicide. In London the broken relationships with Anna and Cathy disturb Sindi intensely. His life turns over a new leaf when he came in contact with June, an American girl. June is strongly fascinated by oriental transcendentalism and Indian mysticism.

The novel *The Foreigner* has many paradigms of misunderstanding and misjudgements between people that happens in cross-cultural encounters. Babu lacks capacity for what critics describe as successful cultural integration, which signifies the capacity to refrain from thinking that one's own ethical standards and cultural traditions represent universally valid truths in an ambience of multiple cultures. Babu had grown up in a culture where boy-girl interaction is restricted very much. His impulses in this matter had been suppressed a lot and hence in America the most alluring aspect to him is the easy availability of beautiful girls to befriend. He whiles away his time with girls at the cost of his education.

Even the system of education in America and its difference from that of India affects Babu. In the face of liberal culture and different educational parameters Babu fails to handle the situation effectively. Then there is the American system of education he finds unadjustable as it is incompatible with his hitherto experienced Indian mode of education. The strict rigors of learning in America where an individual is continuously evaluated throughout the academic years prove burdensome to Babu who had adjusted to year end evaluation mode followed in Indian examination pattern. The anticipation

of his father's angry retort at his academic failure further attracts him to entertaining world of America and his bubbling youthfulness finds no better option than whiling time away with easily available American girls.

The difference between Babu and Sindi speaks a lot as to the influence of culture on individuals. Having grown up in a culture where strong taboos subsist over girls having affairs he cannot accept June's history of affairs. So when he comes to know of her relationships especially with Sindi he has a nervous breakdown and is killed while driving recklessly his car. Thus Babu is victimised by his own surging emotion; a situation created by a clear context of cultural incompatibility. Sheila, Babu's sister's hatred for June Blyth is one more paradigm of cultural incompatibility. Sheila calls June a harlot offended by her free behaviour with men as she fails to grasp the liberal ambience of western culture in which June has grown up. It is a proof that perceptions cannot be objective, reasonably neutral culturally and socially. Sindi's behaviour in this matter serves a great contrast to that of Babu. Sheila calls June a harlot for her easy go behaviour with men and Babu is irritated by June's history of affairs but Sindi has lot of respect for June and feels that it was Babu's innocence that precipitated the disaster in his life. Babu's innocence he thinks is the result of authoritarian nature of Khemka's parenting, his condition of lost childhood and his exposure to a culture quite different from his own.

Sindi resented the ultra-modern and mechanized society. He knew that the abominable wheel of industrialisation was grinding on inevitably. Conscious of the unceasing gyration of the wheel of civilisation, Sindi remarks on the nature of modern man to Mrs. Blyth when she brags about the longer life span of Americans. Sindi clings to a false image and deceives himself with the idea that he has developed the spirit of 'detachment'. But the truth is that he lies to himself. He reflects that in the civilised



society there is no end to suffering, no end to struggle between good and evil. Sindi's feeling of meaninglessness of life is pervasive and he spoils his relationship with June. On the other hand, Babu had given her all she needed. He had his roots in Indian soil. In America he tries to play around with girls but he forgets that memories and roots are like fortifications in one's self and they may destroy one in the process of disowning them. When he learns that June had been yielding to Sindi, he kills himself. In Babu's death oriental innocence is destroyed in the strange ways of Western World. June's death is a symbol of a face of 'cultural lag.' She has left the American world without inhabiting the oriental universe.

Sindi has oscillated from Anna to Kathy and from Kathy to June and withdraws from June. Laing affirms that a man suffering from this psychosis "goes round in circle in a whirl, going everywhere and getting nowhere" (128). His relationship with Anna, Kathy and June has not brought him out of the labyrinth of meaninglessness. It is in India, the land of simple life and high thinking, that he is able to gorge out an authentic self for himself out of the dialectics of being and nothingness. In the modern civilised world Sindi thinks, "Marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars. And then gobbled each other up." (71)

The issues taken up by Joshi hammer on the consciousness of his readers about their own choice between the materialistic values and spiritual affirmation. *The Foreigner* suggests that man's metaphysical reconciliation is the only answer to all the agonies of his existence. He demonstrates that modern man may overcome his sense of uprootedness by self searching and introspection. Their instinctive yearning for affirmation and authenticity is a native cultural thrust which most defines Indian metaphysical concerns. The protagonist reaches a critical point where he is in utter

confusion, and then encounters a catastrophe which becomes the basis for his introspection and prompts him ultimately to reconcile to the world.

With involvement and attachment, he decides to devote his life for the betterment of the factory workers. Arun Joshi has successfully depicted the truth that migrants struggle hard to shed off their Oriental roots and to familiarise themselves to the Occidental influences. *The Foreigner* is a remarkable novel that bristles throughout with ruminations on various issues encountered by modern man.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Arun Joshi, as a novelist explores the psyche of the twentieth century man which is the product of the strains of living in an excessively complex world and is perpetually on the verge of alienation and isolation. Arun Joshi, as an artist is not satisfied to restate the experiences in a cold matter-of-fact manner, but he shapes them in a new way in order to discover the reality which lies hidden in the actuality of his own life. For Joshi, fiction is neither a source of entertainment nor an instrument of publicizing some set ideas. He does not use his genius for propagating any political or social creed. Moreover, he does not follow any formula while writing a novel but he rather grapples with the moments of acute trying situation in human life.

He reveals man's predicament, particularly the motives responsible for his action and the reaction of his action on his psyche. Man is a social animal and he is interdependent in his family and society. In spite of the latest technological and scientific advancements and all the means of comforts and luxuries, modern man is inept within himself because of his sense of rootlessness, restlessness, alienation and isolation. He feels that the immense increase of knowledge has not liberated him, instead it has cooped him in a cage of existential dilemma. Arun Joshi's men protagonists are images of modern men who mark themselves as "outsiders" and "misfits" with segmented and tortured psyche.

Arun Joshi chooses and develops a narrative technique as a means of developing reader's involvement. Narrative technique signifies the way a story is told. It is a perspective established by the novelist through which he brings the characters, actions, settings and events to the reader. Narrative techniques must be understood in



the way it promotes both emotional and intellectual involvement within the reader. The constituent features of his narrative technique include the use of autobiographical overtones as a narrative technique, symbols and myths, the stream of consciousness technique, and humour and irony.

The first characteristic feature of Arun Joshi's narrative technique is rooted in autobiographical overtones. This technique harnesses actions of the leading character in a literary work as the narrator. In this technique, the author himself talks through the protagonist and presents events, incidents, and characters in interactive relationships. The story is generally narrated by the hero or a character in the story, and the narrator, speaks of himself as "I". In case of the first person narrative, the point of view may represent the author himself, but it is more often through the point of view of a character in the story that best serves the author's purpose. In this way, the first person narrative, with all its variations establishes a friendly relationship between the narrator and the reader. The device of autobiographical overtones as a narrative technique has been used by Arun Joshi in all its variations. However, Joshi not only uses this technique as a medium of projecting the self or of mere self propagation for that matter. For him, it is something new and experimental. It is one of the crucial evidences of his creative competence as a writer. Many of Arun Joshi's protagonists undergo endless frustrations which the writer did not necessarily do in his life.

Arun Joshi has equally well used myths to suggest and reinforce deeper intended meaning to the surfacial narration of his novels. In point of fact, myths hold to the depth of meaning and aesthetics of presentation to the narrative dynamic of fiction. Myths are stories of unascertainable origin or authorship accompanying or helping to explain religious beliefs. Writers value myth positively because of its



apparent spontaneity and collectively expressing some lastingly and generally satisfying account of the experience of man. Equally attractive is the apparent universality and timelessness of myth.

Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* deals with the modern man's existential dilemma. However, in terms of narrative technique, this novel is fully revelatory of Arun Joshi's deft handling of symbols and myths to depict man's sense of alienation, meaninglessness, disorientation, confusion, suffering and anguish. Here, symbols have been used aesthetically and effectively through characters, events, scenes, places, and by way of significant comments of the omniscient narrator, meaningful and pertinent observations of the protagonist and other characters closely connected with him. This novel and its symbols centre around Sindi Oberoi who encounters terrible meaninglessness in the early period of his life which eventually closes on a happy note in the later phase. In this total context, the vicissitudes in Sindi's life relevant to his notions, feelings, emotions, and thought have been depicted through effective symbols.

The use of symbols in this novel is evident in its very title and perceptible in the name of its protagonist. Right from the early stages of his life Sindi is inexorably torn by "a strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness" (O.P.Bhatnagar, 13). Meenakshi Mukherjee has pertinently observed that Sindi emerges before us as a foreigner, rather "a perennial outsider" (24). This trait of Sindi's personality is symbolised by his continual movements from place to place like a leaf in a storm whether it is America, India, Soho, Scotland or Boston. He had gone to America for higher studies but quite soon felt rootless and alien in that country but even on his return to India he found himself no less a stranger in his own country. On this background, India and America have been used as symbols of strange places that not

only bewilder and perplex but also trap man in evil and anguish. Sindi's feeling like a foreigner in America is symbolically suggestive of the country as "a place for well-fed automatons rushing about in automatic cars" (90). Similarly, in India too, he is appalled by "the stagnant deadness" (160) of the place and evidently this feeling is pregnant with highly symbolic overtones.

Again, the very name Sindi Oberoi verbalised as "Surrender" is fraught with deep symbolic implications. In one obvious sense, Sindi seems to have surrendered to the overwhelming monomania of foreignness about any place he visits. This sense of surrender gets all the more symbolically intensified as he comes to experience strangeness and rootlessness in the world around. Then, Sindi sums up his entire life as being "alone in the darkness". And, significantly this phrase is deeply surcharged with symbolic overtones. Sindi's feeling rather obsession of alienation and foreignness associated with such of the places as London, Soho, Scotland, and Boston, and his predisposition to surrender, point to the core of his character. And, he reveals and evinces these traits of his personality in different crucial stages of his life. For example, Sindi's talk to Babu Rao Khemka that "you had roots in the soil you lived upon. Look at me. I have no roots" (143), reveals that Sindi had a reason to feel rootless and what is more, his "foreignness" lies "within him" (61). It is, indeed, an inalienable part of his personality.

Similarly, the inner warring self of Sindi Oberoi is depicted through the symbol of "a battlefield where the child and the adult warred unceasingly" (130). His alienation and hollowness becomes all the more symbolically evident when he is contrasted with the Soho artist who cares neither for fine things nor for sound human relationships but only "for her lost youth" (167). In the same way, Sindi's exhaustion after Babu Rao Khemka's death has aptly been symbolised through his feeling "like a



desert or like a vast field of naked oaks in winter time" (175). Again, in contrast to the fabulous riches of Mr.Khemka the miserable plight and penury of Muthu and his family, as observed by Sindi, were symbolically seen as "accumulated despair of... weary lives" (226). Arun Joshi's technique of handling symbols through scenes and in correlation with character is thoroughly natural and artistic.

On the broad background of Sindi's "aloneness and aloofness" (O.P.Bhatnagar, 13) the recurrent image of the pathlessness of the road to New York points to a mythic archetypal situation. Technically, the archetypal base has been created for the creation of myth through Sindi's recalling certain lines from a popular song: "who knows where the road will lead? Only a fool can say" (196). Properly seen, the repeated mention of the concept of 'the foreigner', the "perpetual outsider"(Meenakshi Mukherjee, 101) equally well constitutes a mythic reference through which Joshi plumbs much of man's perennial dilemmas as they prevailed in case of Sindi Oberoi who grows up without family ties and without a country. Likewise, the "pathlessness" of the road to New York is, in fact, Sindi's own pathlessness. And this concept of pathlessness seems to have been built on the myth of the stranded hero left high and dry in a desert or a jungle as Sindi gets stranded in the concrete jungle of New York. This mythic base is strengthened by a parable - like situation in Sindi's exhaustion. The essential symbolic tinge within the parameters of myth becomes visible, especially in Sindi's getting exhausted after the death of Babu Rao Khemka.

The third aspect of Arun Joshi's narrative technique comprises the use of the stream of consciousness technique. This technique is used to depict the endless flow of the consciousness of one or more characters within an interconnected pattern. In the context of this technique total human personality is determined, not by acts but by

motives and intentions. In fact, it is used to present all the contents of a character's mind, memory, sense perceptions, feelings, intuitions and thoughts in relation to the stream of experience of characters through random associations to produce rhythm of consciousness within the orchestra of minute thoughts and feelings.

Since Arun Joshi's novels deal with man's existential dilemma involving alienation, anguish and muddle of concepts which are all matters of inner experience, the use of stream of consciousness method forms a suitable technique for the depiction of such a phenomena. In view of the enormity of the dimensions of this technique it seems a major challenge to control the weight of the details involved but Arun Joshi manages his material with admirable dexterity. Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* constitutes the first example of the use of the stream of consciousness technique.

The consciousness of Sindi has been explored in correlationship with other characters in the novel including June Blyth, Kathy, Anna, Babu Rao Khemka his father Mr. Khemka, his sister Sheila, and Muthu, a low paid employee in Mr. Khemka's factory. The stream of Sindi's consciousness has been mapped in inter-connection with his experience in such of the places as America, England, Kenya, and India simultaneously interwoven with people and problems capturing many shifting moods and memories. In requirement of the stream of consciousness technique the narration has been conducted in a series of flash backs throwing together the past and the present, the real and the remembered, the world of imagination, and the world of reality. This novel that runs through three interconnected parts and eighteen continuously marked and arranged sections opens out in the present to depict things that happened in the past.



Arun Joshi resorts to the flashback technique to point out the inner weather of the characters. He tells the story of Sindi's bohemian life through a series of flashbacks, with a deft and harmonious ordering of past events. The past and the present, the real and the imaginary, the ordinary and the extraordinary are artistically detailed to enhance the element of curiosity and suspense:

I wandered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose.... I was a foreigner in America... in Kenya...India or any other place for that matter... My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went (55)

Its narration starts with the death of Babu Rao Khemka in a terrible car accident in Boston, America when Sindi Oberoi was called by the police to identify the body and ends with his realisation of the humanitarian obligation to fellow workers in Mr. Khemka's factory. In so far as the narrative threads and binds places and events in an artistically circular manner, R.K. Dhawan has confirmed the use of the stream of consciousness technique in *The Foreigner* by observing that it "is written in the form of things past", and that its "narration keeps moving from the recent past in Boston to the present in Delhi." (13)

Various modern as well as post-modern psychologists and social philosophers have perceived the search for self as a quest for meaning by achieving the depth of one's being and its relatedness to the society. The only difference between the modern and the post-modern, is that the former regards the unconscious as a structure containing 'meaning' while the latter regards it as a 'function' engaged in the process

of production of 'meaning' or self or the subject. The residual point of both the concepts is that meaning or quest gives the self its identity whether it is a discovery within the structure of one's depth or a "semiotic" production through post-modernist differentiation.

In *The Foreigner* Arun Joshi delineates the search for self through his chief protagonist Sindi Oberoi's wanderings in a world where he is free to form meaningful or meaningless relationships. His raw self has been exposed to the hard realities of materialistic Western civilisation where he tries to discover himself and where he has been sought and left out as an object leading to his further bewilderment and withdrawal into himself. He himself sums up his search as a journey of innocence to experience, "In many ways the past had been a waste, but it had not been without lessons. I had started my life as a confused adolescent, awesomely engrossed with myself, searching for wisdom and the peace that comes with it"(221) He has been made to develop a protective covering of Western existentialism and Indian philosophy of *Karma* and detachment to shield his sensitive and vulnerable human self. His empirical consciousness isolates his self from its opening to its depth and life beyond itself.

Having missed the motherly care and protection, Sindi does not have the guts to actively participate in life and create meaning for his self. He chooses to drift because he wants the objective reality to find his self to him and makes the mistake of throwing himself to chance and vulnerability to be played with by the others. Sindi's tender and raw self, not knowing the direction and purpose of his search falls a prey to "chance" randomness and experimentalism in a hard and materialistic universe. "Chance" takes him to study engineering in London University.



Sindi's search for his self in the having mode of existence leaves his soul stand outside him "like a bedraggled beach comber that had searched the beaches of the world and found nothing" (78). The logical deduction of the search for his self is a suffering to his human self which frantically seeks freedom in "the sense of being unfettered, freedom from the craving for holding on to things and one's ego, is the condition for love and for productive being" (Pathania, 137-38).

The novel emphasises the mysterious and incalculable nature of life. The events of life are uncontrollable and one gets involved inevitably. Sindi aptly remarks, "One does not choose one's involvement" (44). The blundering confusion in Sindi's approach to life causes the death of his friend Babu Rao Khemka and his sweetheart June Blyth which drains out his confidence.

The language employed by Joshi, is free flowing. Sprinkling the novel with similes, satire, metaphors, parallelism and oxymoron to indicate variation of mood and intensity of emotional outbursts, Joshi states that Sindi "feels like a river that hopes to leave its dead wood behind taking an unexpected plunge over a steep precipice" (176) since he felt like "sitting in your own tomb" (22). Also "Strangers parted on the doorstep promising to meet again, knowing full well they didn't mean it. It was the American way" (23). When Sindi's professor says that every foreign student is an ambassador of his country, he wonders "what country had I represented" (43). Babu's memory piercing through the statues and Jukebox song to stress existential appeal are some of the motifs mentioned in the novel. The very title gains a symbolic value in the larger context of human existence and struggle. The metaphysical anguish of the protagonist at the meaninglessness of the human condition, the unreality, insecurity and transitoriness associated with the word "foreigner", provides the texture and structure of the novel. *The Foreigner* enshrines

strong affirmations: right detachment and meaningful action, confrontation with evil and corruption, humanitarianism and love of the people, faith in the operation of destiny and a quest for peace, fulfilment and salvation within one's own cultural parameters.



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**Ethnical Dispute and Severance in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird***

A project submitted to

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Ethnical Dispute and Severance in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**THOOTHUKUDI**

*Jasmine J*

**JASMINE J.**

**OCTOBER 2018**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Ethnical Dispute and Severance in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Jasmine J. during the year 2018 – 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Ethnical Dispute and Severance in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*** analyses the lives of the coloured immigrants, who suffer a mixed feeling of love and hate towards their adopted country, in an alien society.

The first chapter deals with the short biography of Anita Desai discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in the realm of Indian Literature.

The second chapter explores the theme of alienation in all possible manners and provides with the idea of overcoming alienation as much as possible.

The third chapter throws light on different dimensions of cross cultural conflicts expressing the feelings of the diasporic society.

The fourth chapter depicts the different aspects of feminine psyche and its effect on the human relationships.

The fifth chapter sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Indian English Literature originated as a necessary outcome to the introduction of English education in India under the colonial rule. The new literature, however, is characterized by Indian themes, Indian reality and above all, by a new language, that is, a new English, adequately suitable for the communication of Indian experience. India English literature is today a fast-growing discipline at the levels of creativity and criticism. The earlier shackles, scepticism and cynicism with which the new literature is born, have vanished with the passage of time. Today Indian English literature, which is born on Indian soil in the hands of Indians, is widely acclaimed even outside the land of its birth. The Indian writes in English have won international reputation that they convey through their work in more ways than one, including themes, images, myths, symbols and linguistic nuances. Typical Indian themes are said to be the caste system, social attitude, social and religious taboos, superstitions, notions of superiority and inferiority. More important issues are pertaining to socio-cultural ethos and philosophical heritage.

The greatest gift of the British to the Indian subcontinent is probably the English language and its rich varied literature. During the British regime, Indians had to learn the language for the purpose of education as well as to learn their livelihood by securing a government job. An Indian intelligentsia and men (also women) of letters who had sufficient mastery over the language, thought differently. They tried their hand at poetry, prose and fiction. It is a unique combination. The Indian Literatures describing their feelings and emotions in a strange language that belonged to a faraway land.

Fiction is story telling of imagined events and stands in contrast to non-fiction, which makes factual of claims reality. It is largely perceived as a form of art and for entertainment, although not at all fiction is necessarily artistic. It is also a fundamental part of human culture and ability to create. A large part of the appeal of fiction is its ability to evoke the entire spectrum of human emotions; to distract our minds, to give us hope in the times of despair, to make laugh or to experience empathy without attachment. It may be creates for the purpose of educating. Fiction is also frequently used as an instrument for propaganda or advertising.

The writer's awareness of the individual needs of women like self-fulfilment and identity formation have resulted in patterns of alienation, communication gap, broken relationships and identity crises. The major Indian women novelists who have been concerned with these themes are Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Anita Desai, and Sashi Deshpande. Anita Desai is regarded as the first Indian author writing in English who addresses the feminine themes based on their relationship with men and their inner world. She is one of the eminent writers of the twentieth century who has shown her female protagonists facing the problems of existence and responsibility. She projects a tragic vision of their life placing them in hostile situations. The fiction of Anita Desai is relevant to all times because she writes about the predicament of modern man and woman. She digs into man's inner psyche and goes beyond the skin and the flesh. Literature for her is not a means of escaping reality but an exploration and an inquiry. She prefers the private to the public world and avoids the traditional growth of external reality and physical world.

Anita Desai is one of the foremost novelist, Short-Story writer and Children's author of India. Anita Desai is indeed a name to reckon with in the field of literature. Winner of the Sahitya Academy Award and Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, her



distinct style of writing, her original characters and her realistic subject-line is what made her writings so endearing. Over the years, Desai won many awards and recognition for her work and was shortlisted for the Booker prize twice. Apart from writing, Anita has been actively involved in teaching as well. She continues to be an inspiration for many young aspirations for many young aspiring writers today.

Anita Mazumdar Desai was born on 24th June 1935 in Mussoorie, India, to a German mother Toni Nime, and a Bengali businessman, D.N. Mazumdar. She grew up speaking German at home and Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English outside the house. Although German until later in life as an adult. She first learns to read and write in English at school and as a result English became her literary language. She begins to write in English at the age of seven and published her first story at the age of nine. She is a student at Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School in Delhi and received her B.A in English literature in 1957 from the Miranda house of the University of Delhi and then the following year she married Ashwin Desai, the director of a computer software company and author of the book, *Between Eternities: Ideas on Life and The Cosmos*.

Anita Desai's career started with a short story *Circus Cat* and her first novel *Cry the Peacock* in 1963. The cities like Calcutta, Mumbai, Chandigarh, New Delhi and Pune are frequently described in her novels as she spends most of her lifetime in those places. Her work became popular first only in England. She is considered as a psychological novelist, who follows the tradition of how Virginia Woolf adopts Indian tradition in her novels. At nine, she had studied *Wuthering Heights*. She has got many notable awards and prizes such as National Academy of Letter Awards for *Fire on the Mountain* in 1978, Sahitya Academy Award for *Fire on the Mountain* in 1978, Winifred Memorial Prize for *Fire on the Mountain* in 1980, Guardian

Children's Fiction for *Village by the Sea* in 1983, Booker Prize (short listed) for *Clear Light of the Day* in 1980.

Anita Desai writes for New York review of book and has taught at Mount Holyoke College, Naruch College and Smith College. She uses different fictional technique to convey the ideas very effectively. She is able to narrate the story to portray the characters, to convey the mood, to evoke the atmosphere, to probe the psyche of her characters successfully and for this she uses flashback technique which is stream of consciousness and she contrasts characters through use of symbolism and effective use of language either to evoke an atmosphere or to transcribe the pronunciations or the characters. She is one of the most famous contemporary Indian English Novelist of India. Her novel focuses on the inner climate, the climate of sensibility. Her contribution to literature is boundless.

She has written nine novels, such as: *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1982), *Fire on the Mountain* (1984), *Clear Light of Day* (1984), *In Custody* (1984), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1989), *The Zigzag Way* (2004). She has also written her works for Children, such as: *The Peacock Garden* (1979), *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Village by the Sea* (1982). Some of her Short Stories are *Circus Cat*, *Alley Cat*, *A Selection of Modern Indian Short Stories*, *How Gentle is the Mist?*, *Tea with the Maharani*, *Grand Mother*, *An Examination*, *Ghost House*, *Mr. Bose's Private Bills*, *Private Tuition by Mr. Bose*, *To Sell a Picture*, *Descent the Roof-top*, *Surface Texture*, *The Accompanist*.

In her novels she follows her own instinct, which is a kind of compulsion, an inner urge. She writes down the scenes and impressions, moods and emotions. Being a creative writer, she is conscious of its value while writing. Desai says that this:



Has become such a deeply ingrained habit, it is like chain-smoking: I chain – smoke with words, with words, with books. There is a difference; of course what begin, as self-indulgence eventually becomes a self – deceptive. (Dalmiya, 1979)

Her central theme is the existential predicament of an individual which is projected through incompatible couples – acutely sensitive wives, and dismal, callous, inconsiderable and ill-chosen husbands. Anita Desai's chief contribution lies in the fact that almost all her women are not only liberated but go much beyond to the region of psychological and philosophical depths. In almost all her novels the story does not stop with the woman attaining liberation but goes beyond intellectual regions. Desai's concern does not merely lie with radical feminism and liberation of women. In many cases the narration starts after the independent identity is established. Her women are sensitive, sometimes hypersensitive and hence turn out to be emotional misfits trying to maintain their individuality, either withdrawing into a subjective world, often acting in ways society considers neurotic or mad; or they cultivate coldness or indifference, refusing to give in. This peculiar strain in her women characters makes them resort to self-imposed isolation that results in the women protagonists experiencing a sense of alienation even while living within a solid, secure, traditional family set up. One of the predominant themes in Anita Desai's writings has been the theme of alienation that has come to assume great importance in the modern age. The theme of alienation has also been dealt with by American novelists like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. Among Indian novelists in English, the theme has been touched upon by Mulk Raj Anand and Kamal Markandaya, and has been dealt with extensively by Arun Joshi and Anita Desai.

In her novels, Anita Desai seems to be struggling towards the mastery of violence which seems to threaten not only her protagonists but also her own self. Right from her, *Cry the Peacock*, this violence has persisted in her work as a kind of inevitability, forcing one to conclude that it has some kind of metaphysical or psychological significance not yet explored and analysed. The characters are portrayed as engrossed with the present, look backward in time, and visualize future as well. It is through a sense of alienation that the protagonists manage to look at their problem in a subjective manner and arrive at an appropriate solution or resolution in the end. Most of Desai's protagonists are alienated characters. She portrays her characters as individuals "facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence" (Srivastava 15). Thus, characters in her novels are generally neurotic females, highly sensitive and engaged with their dreams and imagination, and alienated from their environments. They often differ in their opinions from others and embark on long voyages of contemplation, in order to find the meaning of their existence. In other words, in Desai's novels, the love encounters explore into marital disputes as the result of devastating post-marriage relationship between husband and wife.

Anita Desai has dwelt upon problems of love, marriage and sex in her novels in a very convincing and realistic way. She seems to champion the view that marriage alone does not provide a ready-made solution to life's tension, chaos and turbulence. Instead, mental satisfaction and happy married life means better understanding between husband and wife. One needs the genuine help of the other. A proven and trusted sense of co-operation at every stage and phase is required. Psychological adjustment is safe key to a healthy compromise and coordinational existence in a conjugal life. Husband and wife need to nurture the strong feeling that they are complimentary to each other. The most common themes in Anita Desai's novels are human



relationship particularly the man-woman relationship. Nowadays this theme has become more important due to rapid industrialization, growing awareness among women of their rights and individualism and the westernization of attitudes in the lives of the people.

Today Indian women are economically independent. Women's role in society is burdened with two kinds of jobs-her work within the house and the work outside. She does not find any time to enjoy the fruits of her economic independence. Women's labour and effort at home and work place are not recognized in the society. She manages to place herself in an acceptable position. Freedom of mobility is restricted to women when compared to the freedom of men. Women being considered as a weaker sex in the society, have to depend on their father in their children in their old age. In Desai's novels, most of the male characters enjoy life without bothering about their wife's tendency and temperament. The women characters suffer a lot because of the difference in their attitudes. They are culturally as well as emotionally dependent on man and any disruption in relationship proves to be a loss of self. Desai's unique nature of writing gives voice to the psychological, emotional as well as physical needs of women which are hardly considered in Indian society.

Twentieth century novelists treat this subject in a different manner from that of earlier novelists. They portray the relationship between man and woman as it is. The modern writer is concerned with the quality of life and people, with world and value. His investigation of a number of unsatisfying lives has to its basis in the deep conviction that it is man's sacred duty to fight for a life that will express the inherent dignity and worth that, he is capable of. He is aware of that pain, pathos, and failure but sure of the values of the struggle towards fulfilment and perfection. Indo-English writer is constantly concerned with the problem of interaction between man and

woman, between the individuals and the social world. Her main concern is to depict the psychic states of her protagonists at some crucial juncture of their lives.

Thus the most common themes in her novels are the complexity of human relationships, particularly the man-woman relationship. She writes mostly about the miserable plight of women suffering under their insensitive and inconsiderate husbands, fathers and brothers, so man-woman relationship brings characters into alienation, withdrawal, loneliness, isolation and lack of communication that frequently occurs in her novels. Most of her novel's protagonists are alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents and even from their own selves because they are not average people but individuals. When these characters have to face alienation, they become rebels.

The uniqueness of Anita Desai's fiction lies in her treatment of feminine sensibility. In India where women have redesigned role, which does not allow any room for individualism, identity and assertion, Anita Desai talks women who question the age old traditions and want to seek individual growth. They try to reassess the known in a new context and find a meaning in life. Desai suggests that a balance between the conventional, pre-set role of women and the contemporary issues has to be struck. Her female protagonists try to discover and rediscover meaningfulness in life through the known, the established. These characters are not normal but different from others. They do not find a proper channel of communication and thus become alienated and start brooding about their lives. All their wanderings and reflections finally bring them into new vistas of understanding, which they had formerly ignored or rejected. Most of her protagonists are alienated ones. She portrays her characters as individuals facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence. Thus, characters in her novels are generally neurotic females, highly sensitive and engage with their



dreams and imagination and alienated from their environments. They often differ in their opinion from others and embark on a long voyage of contemplation in order to find the meaning of their existence. That is why that they suffer of their relationships more than others do.

In this close context of co-existence, mutual respect, mutual understanding and enthusiastic attitude to help each other, and also in the backdrop of relationship crises, The novel, *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) is “a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perceptual experience” (25). It is the faithful description of psychosomatic growth of a female character, which cannot cope up with the practical world of the husband and feels dejected, forlorn and demoralized. It is mainly concerned with the theme of disharmony in the relationship between husband and wife. Desai looks into the reasons for marital discord and illustrates how such discord affects the family. Sometimes, the inability of an individual to be responsive to the behaviour patterns of her partner leads to strain and tension in the relationship, while sometimes it is on account of varied levels of sensitivity, that relationships become strained. The novel, *Voices in the city* (1965) is divided into four parts – Part One for Nirode, Part Two for Monisha, Part Three for Amla and Part 4 for Mother. It tells the story of a brother, two sisters and their mother. But throughout the novel Nirode, the hero of the novel, remains the dominating figure.

From the beginning the theme of loneliness, alienation and loss of identity of the characters, is often stressed by the novelist to create an atmosphere of dramatic tension and conflict. *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975) has been applauded as “an interesting addition to Anita Desai’s achievement as an Indian novelist writing in English” (50). In this novel, Desai pin points a real and pathetic picture of a lovely married woman and aspires to establish victory over the chaos and sufferings of her

rather unusual existence. She presents her favourite theme of investigating the consciousness of an introvert and sensitive woman who is bored and frustrated by her common place and hum-drum life and tries to escape into purposeless and unproductive loneliness. She chooses marital discord as the subject matter and highlights how the inability to lay bare one's soul and one's fear and anguish results in the snapping of communication between husband and wife. Different attitudes, individual complexes and fears add to this distancing between the husband Raman and the wife Sita resulting in conjugal disharmony.

Anita Desai's fifth novel *Fire on the Mountain* was published in London in 1977. It won the Royal Society of Literature's Winifred Holt by Memorial Prize and the coveted 1978 SahityaAkademi Award. The novel, on a plain scale, may be considered the story of the agonized cries of Nanda Kaul, an old woman who has had too much of the world with her and so longs for a quiet, retired life. Her busy past now look like "a box of sweets". But on being examined on a broader scale, the novel tends to focus on the feminine sensibility and a woman's inherent desire to know herself in terms of not only her relationship with her family, but also in terms of her individual identity and its relationship with the world at large. Nanda asks: "Can I not be left with nothing"? – Which is the central question to the meaning of the novel.

The story of the novel, *The Village by the Sea* (1982) is woven around an alcoholic fisherman, his sick wife and their four children – Lila, Bela, Kamal, and Hari. Here Desai describes human relations, man's relation with woman, and man's relation with God in the real village Thul, situated in the western coast of India. Village life with the advent of modern technology and machinery becomes commercial. Consequently, the purity and chastity of human love is violated. The happy married life is richer and better in Thul without industrial development.



Anita Desai's sixth novel *Clear Light of Day* (1980) "describes the emotional relations of two main characters – Bim and her younger sister Tara, who are haunted by the memories of the past" (89). The novel highlights the theme of the effect of remembrance of the past on the chief protagonists. To Tara, the memories are a source of wishful joy, and to Bim they strike like the knell of sorrow. The former want to live in the past and enjoy it while the latter is wearied of it and wishes to run away from it.

Anita Desai, in the novel, *In Custody* (1984), presents the thematic problem of love and marriage in a very exquisite manner, analyses the crushing upheavals of Deven Sharma, an impoverished college lecturer. In this world of 'sick, hurry and divided aims' he has to confront the common problems as others do. After his marriage with a sullen and dull wife, Deven sees a way to escape from the meanness and hopelessness of his daily life. Deven and his wife Sarla lead an unhappy marital life. They are quite different from each other in their temperaments. Deven is a Hindi lecturer in a college and Sarla has no interest in literature. Sarla is a typical picture of an abandoned wife. Deven is a temporary lecturer appointed in a private college, but he lives in a fool's paradise. He is usually lost in the dreamy world of fantastic fame that one day he will rise to the pinnacle of glory by flying on the wings of his devotion to art and poetry. However, his extreme devotion to art leads him to be indifferent to his wife, Sarla. He cultivates an aversion to and dislike for his wife.

Anita Desai's, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is a novel, which depicts the lives of coloured immigrants, who suffers a mixed feeling of love and hate towards their adopted country, in an alien society. It examines the plight of Indian immigrants in London. The term blackbird used in the title of the book is refers to the immigrants to whom the people of London want to say goodbye. The author explores the adjustment and feelings that the people from India face there in London.

The author has divided the story totally into three parts - Arrival, revelation and perception and finally abandonment. The book has given immense proudness and happiness to the writer as she got Sahitya Academy Award for this book. The author describes about the beauty of London and the busy lives of the people. The characters of the book are not so real but it truly undergoes the real problems, the immigrants face in the country. The story revolves around three character – A recent immigrant refusing to fit in and looking at those who do with scorn, an immigrant trying to belong and loving everything about the new place. And a native who marries an immigrant. Thus the experience of alienation proves to be an important theme and phase in the novels of Anita Desai and in the lives of her female protagonists respectively. A sense of alienation not merely haunts and hurts Maya, Sita, Bim, and Uma but also covers way for the final resolution of their problems.



## Chapter Two

### Alienation

Alienation is a term which has been used in theological, philosophical, sociological, and psychological writings for a long time. For Marx, alienation meant man's dehumanization and his estrangement from other fellowmen, even from the product of his own labour (27). Alienation happens mostly and obviously, largely for people who migrate from one country to other. People who migrate to other places need to adjust themselves to many situations expectedly or unexpectedly. Movement of living beings from one place to another is called as Migration. Migration can be divided into two categories: Emigration and Immigration. Emigration can be defined as the act of leaving one's country or place to settle permanently in another. It is same as immigration but from perspective of the country of origin. Immigration is the movement of people into another country or region to which they are not native in order to settle there. Anita Desai depicts the facets of alienation very convincingly in most of her novels.

In Desai's novels, most protagonists are alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents and even from their own selves because they are not average people but individuals made to fight and stand against the general current. All her women characters ranging from a young wife to a mother of five children to an aged spinster to a wronged daughter and wife suffer from a similar kind of solitude and alienation. Different factors contribute to their alienation and consequent suffering. But the period of alienation does not merely make them suffer endlessly but proves to be a period of painful learning and realization. Desai sees more deeply, darkly, privately and like her English counterparts, her emphasis is an appropriation of reality with the high purpose of bringing order to disorder by reflecting the

dilemmas of the uncompressed territories of life in the New World. The women characters in her novels have their material needs taken care of by wealth and servants, but their emotional needs remain unsaturated. Since her characters are sensitive, the protagonists are affected by trivial things such as silent whispers, a leaking tap, creating shoes, groaning beds, moaning hinges and tick-tocking clocks.

In her novels, Anita Desai seems to be struggling towards the mastery of a violence which seems to threaten not only her protagonists but also her own self. The portrayal of the alien life has been one of the most discussed issues of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. The cross-cultural interactions are very well portrayed by Desai in the novel *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. There is a definite distance between the British mainstream society and the marginalized Indian immigrants, who face racism frequently but have to put up with it, in order to live and survive in the country, which they have decided to call home.

In Anita Desai's third novel *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* (1971), the theme of alienation is explored from a different perspective and dimension. The novel is about the condition of alienated Indians settled England, their social, cultural and racial displacement. It explores the issues of identity, love-hate relationship of the immigrants towards their adopted land, their sense of alienation, their several attempts to adjust and integrate into an alien society, and their final realization to a foreign cultural. Anita Desai is concerned here with the socio-psychic experiences of the Indian immigrants in England. The novel opens with the arrival of Dev, the chief character, who has intellectual pretension and has come study at the London School of Economics, after necessary arrangements. He is, however, confronted with an initial problem of adjustment in a foreign land. The novelist has recorded the silliness of Dev's existence in England in a poetic and humorous language. Dev's longing for



living with its variety and multiplicity remains unsatisfied in the new atmosphere where everyone is a stranger and lives in hiding. It is a world where people live silently and invisibly, the world, which makes him nostalgic about India – the India of familiar faces, familiar sounds and familiar smells.

As the plot develops, one can find Dev turning into a completely disillusioned man. He feels estranged in London from both Indians and English men. There is a lack of sympathy in English men, who do not, recognize their neighbours and treat them like strangers. The silence and hollowness of London disturbs Dev and makes him uneasy and alienated. He finds himself insulted and isolated. He realizes that the Indian immigrants rush to the west and in the process miss their own mother land very deeply. He feels extremely suffocated in the Tube station and considers himself, like a Kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth at a prison. Dev's contact begins from Adit who has settled in London with an English wife. He is confronted with the major problems as Dev moves out in search of a job. He finds it difficult to adjust with silences and the emptiness of it – the house and the blocks of flats, streets and squares and crescents – all. He never wants to live in a country where he is insulted and unwanted. He calls Adit, his friend a "boot-licking pudge and a shameless imperialist-lover" (19). Searching for an identity in an alien culture, Dev feels lost and suffers from alienation.

Dev becomes a victim of alienation as his idea and view are at variance with the reality of his experiences. He compares and relates everything to India. He goes through the different phases of the confused alien, the charmed observer, the outraged outsider and thrilled sightseer, all at once in quick succession. Dev takes his final decision not to return to India and not to lead the way of the masses there. He slowly and steadily adapts himself to the new environment.

Dev's friend Adit Sen, a young man from India lives in England with his English wife Sara. After coming to England Adit worked as a teacher, and finally accepted a little job at Blue skies. He is happy with his job. He feels now a sense of cultural likeness. This closeness, however, does not destroy the sense of his cultural identity. He appreciates the landscape of England. For him England is fertile, luxurious and prosperous. At time Adit: "O England's green and grisly land. I love you as only a babu can" (130). But the scenario changes in the last part of the novel. He secretly longs for Indian food, music and friends. Even on the out-spread hair about Sarah's shoulders he could see the Indian landscape. Even when he thinks of a brief visit to India, the images of Indian food, dress and music are predominant in his mind.

Adit is disillusioned with England. Despite having been settled there for quite one year, he is still a misfit. Adit feels himself a stranger in England, and realizes his alienation from the English people. He frankly admits to be a stranger in England. He takes a boat back to India with his wife. Adit's quest for identity is stimulated by his individual motivations and attitudes. Hence the quest is not disinterested censure. It is disillusioned, nostalgic and humorous. His nostalgia mitigates his cultural-shock in an alien land. His mood keeps changing, depending on the identity of Sarah.

In the beginning, Dev is fully determined that he would not stay in England where he has to bear all the insults, and said strongly to Adit "I wouldn't live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted" (17). Later on, there is a slow change in his attitude. The life of an alien appears to be interesting rich and beautiful to him. Then he hears a word in the tube or notices an expression on an English face that overturns his latest decision. Anita Desai presents a clear reversal of attitude of the two refugees. Adit decides to settle down in India, contrary to Dev who had come to



England with a purpose to pursue higher education and was determined to go back, settle down here. But at the closing page of the novel, the readers find a change in Dev, the English hater who stays back in London being employed and living in his friend Adit's place. When Adit and Sarah bid him goodbye, he calls out, "*Bye-Bye Blackbird*" Dev, a representative of Indian immigrants struggles against the cultural control of the British people who have maintained their centrality at the cultural, economic and political levels. The notion of cultural dominance has made them feel superior.

The treatment receives from the British people by the Indian immigrant's shows the cultural violation between the West and the East. Though Indians migrate to the west for the purpose of economic security, they feel disillusioned finally because of the shocks of cultural rootlessness in an alien land. Adit is completely alienated from Indian culture. Dev is happy in reciting Vedic riches but Adit is not interested even in visiting the Victoria Albert Museum. Dev has come in search of a cultural and intellectual quest.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, it is observed that the same spirit and desire to have taken place for migration for a better future. England is a dreamland for Indian migrants. Indians migrate there to get better education and well-paid easy job, for England is the land of opportunity and employment. While living there they suppress their love towards their own home and country; they even forget temporarily their own festivals and religious ceremonies, and if not, observe them merely as a token. They are made to undermine their cultural heritage and cut their roots of birth and go to England with strong determined for their ambition to be fulfilled. There is a sense of superiority among the Britishers.

It is clearly observed that Sarah's marriage with an Indian is not accepted by British society. Even Sarah suffers from a sense of insecurity and separation from her own society. The real problem of Sarah is that she suffers from alienation. Sarah's position is very pathetic. By marrying an Indian, she has broken the unspoken code of English society. She suffers from a sense of inferiority because of her marrying an Indian and for this she has to suffer the taunts from her colleague. She fails to reconcile with Indian ethos. Sarah is in dilemma also to locate her identity. She has no complaints against her marriage with Adit. Desai points out this as:

With her husband brought her, he seemed so rich to her, he seemed to have so much to give her so many relations and attachments, pictures and stories, legends, promises and warnings (237).

Sarah represents foreign identity but in an Indian context she suffers a lot. On the other hand, she is a victim of male dominance mentality. She is ready to cope up even in odd situation. Even marrying an Indian, she has become unidentified and lost her origin. She has rejected her identity. There is no mental peace and satisfaction in her life. She is taunted and abused by her own people in her own land. Adit is a victim of homesickness. He realizes that his weakness for England and decides to go back to India. Adit is conscious of his racial inferiority. He tries to dominate his wife. He is a representative of male dominated society in India. Adit, with a happy job, family, English wife is well settled in his adopted country. But at the end of the novel he decides to leave England. When Sarah decides to visit to India, India is a different cultural background and environment. But she is confident of her decision.

Dev's resentment is caused by his unemployment but Adit is happy and loves his adopted country. He tries to improve upon Dev's pessimistic attitude towards



England. The feeling of alienation reflects in his mind. Dev is consciousness about his new life and real existence. Dev says:

You would sell your soul and your passport too, for a glimpse, at two shillings of some draughty old stately home. You'd probably vote for the Immigration laws and Mr. Oswald Mosley and the Notting hill louts (19).

The last chapter of the novel describes the return of the black bird to Mother land. Sarah lives in her own country. She feels displaced in England by marrying an Indian. She is disturbed by the anguish of shedding her own name and identity. The feeling of utter hopelessness bordering on despair and destruction is absent in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, for Sarah, although she is not very sociable she is involved in some kind of job outside her home.

Adit recollects the golden memory of his native land that is India. Memory of cultural and festival celebrations is getting hold on his mind. One day he reads news about India and Pakistan being at war. It brings the flash back of the past memories. Adit plans to join army to fight against Pakistan. Adit changes his attitude and creates a feeling of patriotism. His plan to leave England and return to India is not miracle but the reflection of alienation. Sarah is realistic and even her sense of alienation does not allow her to miserable and tragic condition. When Adit finds him awkward to adjust in the foreign land, he decides to go back to his Mother land. He packs up his luggage and together with Sarah leave for India. Adit recognized this difficulty to belong to a foreign country to a lack of education. The life that he enjoys became boredom and he irritated and disappointed. He decides to leave England. He explains the reason to Sarah. His decision to leave England for good was rushed by the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965.

When Indo-Pakistan war is declared, Adit remembers the Hindu – Muslim communal riots in India in Calcutta in 1947. When Hindus and Muslim killed, burnt and raped one another, he recollects the same tragic picture repeated again in the war. The war aggravates homesickness in Adit and urges him to leave England and he confirmed his decision to fly back home. Adit goes back to his roots where from nobody could uproot him and the title of them novel assumes its full significance. “Make my bed and light the light, I will arrive late tonight Black bird, bye-bye” (28).

Adit realizes the uselessness of exaggeration and false survival and finally makes a decision to go to India. Adit cherishes the memory of the Indian festival. Anita Desai comment:

He longed with pain, to see the fire-works and oil-lamps of Diwali: night again, to join in a Holy rump of flying coloured water and powder and leaping to the music of drum (185).

Adit represents a modern educated youth of Indian society. At the end Adit accepts the reality. He is optimistic now and thinks positively about India. It is a journey of self-realization and consciousness. Adit is unable to control his sentiment and he say: “A dilemma? Nothing of the sort! Adit snorted. It’s only complicated, worrying, thinking people like you who get caught in dilemmas. I live for the moment. I do not think. I do not worry” (49).

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* one can find the same spirit and desire to have taken place for migration for a better future. England was and is a dreamland for Indian migrants. Indians migrate there to get better education and comfortable jobs, for England is “the land of opportunity” (9). Therefore, it is noteworthy that on one lands at England due to any change in one’s heart. While living there they suppress their love towards their own home and country; they even forget temporarily their own



festivals and religious ceremonies, and if not, observe them merely as a token. They are made to undermine their cultural heritage and cut their roots of birth and go to England with strong determination for their ambition to be fulfilled.

In conclusion, race, ethnicity and an alien cultural group may function as vulnerability factors and continuing socio-economic disadvantage, discrimination and alienation may work as chronic difficulties, making vulnerable individuals develop psychosis. A deep sense of alienation, loss and failure may contribute to poor self-esteem, which may contribute to distorted images of the self. This chapter has explored the theme of alienation in all possible manners and provides with the idea of overcoming alienation as much as possible.

## Chapter Three

### Cultural Conflicts

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* is a classified prose and it has rightly described the lives of the outsiders seeking to improve a new identity in an alien society depicting cross cultural relations in a diasporic society. Devendra Kohali and M.M. Jain rightly observe, "The importance of Desai's art lies not only in her ability to pursue these various strands but also in the skill with which she evokes the very nuances of a consciousness engaged in the process of re-counselling these landscape" (61). It is the best example of identity crises on one hand and the East West encounter on the other hand. The storyline is also not an exception to this. Here the author has actually expressed the feelings of diasporic society and described it in a skilful manner. Further, it has been rightly noted that literature in its many forms and facets plays an important part in the author's novels. Many of her characters are keen readers, and allow themselves consciously or unconsciously to be influenced in their actions and attitudes by what they read. Truly enough, these characters have become vehicle of her feelings and expressions.

Based on the theme of immigration of native Indians to England and it has still its bearing on the cultural relationship of these two nations. There is certain to be the clash of ideas, traditions, and social systems where opposite cultures collide and create confusions. The theme of immigration and consequent alienation of characters concerned has been the subject matter of choice for many Indo-Anglian artists. But what differentiates Mrs. Desai from others in the same sphere is her capacity to turn such experiences into the monument of living art. It is the simple rendering of emotions of Indians who face abnormal situation in living and partly living every moment of life on an alien soil. The novel deals with inner problems of immigrants.

Local English society considers Indians as Blackbirds. Nathputs in *The Echo of India*, "The novel describes the superiority complex of the people of England who uses the epithet the 'blackbird' to the Indians" (234).

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* contains issues of isolation, alienations, identity crisis and accommodation. Indians have migrated to different countries of Asian; Pacific states as a labour to work in plantation and mines. The diasporic community is complex with complicated problems of exile. The title *Bye-Bye Blackbird* makes it crystal clear that the acceptance and warmth which Indians have for foreigners is one of their most likeable characteristics, and are not found everywhere in the world, and this attitude is particularly missing in many countries of the Western world. It is quite apparent that the intermingling of cultures has its limitations and it's not quite successful all the time, with time the view has changed but the fundamental attitudes remain the same, in spite of the fact, that human nature and requirements are same all over the world.

It also suggests that multiculturalism which has thrived in Britain, has taken its own time and the process has been gradual and difficult. Apart from London, racism is still widespread in the small towns and the country-sides of Britain. Political correctness apart, it is difficult for the Indian immigrants to expect that all Britons would equally understand or respect the Indian culture and civilization. It is deeply shocking and disturbing for them, for instance Dev is disturbed by the way Indians are treated in England. He hates being called a wog. He now has a new found respect for his homeland and has a profound feeling of homesickness and he feels that he is an unwanted immigrant who wants to go back to his homeland. India is a place of recognition, security, unlimited freedom, respect and status. On the other hand, some Indian immigrants hate England but like the money which they earn there.



The Indians who live in Britain also adopt a lot of British attitudes, practices and lifestyles but they think that their colour is a major problem. The incidents of xenophobia in Britain and the United States in 2008 prove that even now the racial bias and prejudice has not moderated the second class citizens. The feelings of utter sadness, despair and frustration at being an Asian is clearly reflected in this novel. The first generation Indian immigrants in Britain faced a lot of prejudice, harassment and mental torture. A foreign land is ultimately foreign, and different from one's own, this is quite evident when Adit is hurt, and says,

Why does everything have to come to this – that we're Indians and you're English and we're living in your country and therefore we've all got to behave in a special way, different from normal people?. (188)

Desai highlights how Adit suffers from feelings of loss and nostalgia, his experiences resonate largely in the background throughout *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. There is also another aspect of cultural shock and perplexing issues like identity, culture, nation state, minority status, psychological and social adjustments with a cultural crisis, and complex universal as well as personal conflicts.

A memory of Calcutta in 1947 when Muslims and Hindus who had learnt, through the reign of Moghuls to regard each other as one people learns, at the end of the British reign, to slaughter each other, burn each other's houses, rape each other's wives and toss the children aside like broken twigs. He remembers going up to the terrace at night with his father and seeing the sky livid with innumerable fires all over the city. He remembers the steady, surreptitious pacing of the men of the family who guard the compound by night his mother placing his shoes by his bed at night, in case they had to rise and flee. It was happening again-in India. "No riot, but war in India. What was going on?" (197). Desai portrays the collective transformation of these



immigrants, their multicultural experiences, and suffering in a world which is hugely different from their own.

This novel has a very deep and vivid multicultural element from the Indian perspective as well as the diaspora. The increasing conflict in the minds and hearts of migrants is portrayed in a simple but striking manner. There is a subconscious psyches of the first generation immigrant mind-set, which pretend to be very happy amongst their friends and families in India, but in reality suffer from nostalgia, home sickness and a love-hate relationship, with their adopted countries, as a result of which they are victims of many schizophrenic complexities and tough choices.

There are questions in Adit's mind, his love and admiration for multiculturalism in London on one hand and the terrifying and threatening coldness and prejudice of the British on the other, which is difficult to comprehend for him. Desai has also portrayed a feeling of insecurity life. Adit and Dev's view point have been expressed in rich and powerful words. Gradually Dev adjusts to the behaviour of the prejudiced and racist persons, and learns to ignore it, contrasted to his earlier attitude, when he felt hurt and depressed at being called names and could not accept his disgrace in Britain. Desai has portrayed Adit's mind-set, his self-esteem, sense of belonging, in a subtle style. It is a classic novel in which the profound nuances of living away and moving back again, in to the country of one's birth have been dealt with. The manifestations of the mind of the protagonists Adit, Dev and Sarah unfold along with the narrative and cleverly merge with their trial, defining the moments of their lives. Desai's novel *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* explores the all-consuming questions of race, creed, colour and a sense of identity that is depressing as well as unknowable and ever-new, and is as relevant today as it was about fifty or hundred years back.

Desai has not only revealed her extraordinary story telling prowess in this novel, but also her empathy for her protagonists, there is no doubt that they are a reflection of her own Research Scholar A vivid cultural experiences not only in India but that of living in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Mexico. She portrays the pain of people in an alien land and an unknown society that is oblivious to their suffering and unfathomable struggles. Adit, Dev, Sarah, Emma Moffit and Christine Langford are Desai's mouth pieces on the issues of East-West encounters and discords. This novel explores the multi-dimensional struggles of the migrants seeking to create an all-new identity in an unknown country.

The cultural diversity, different attitudes of the Indian immigrants in London, constant disorder and their emotional and mental collapse, trauma, longing for one's own country, freedom and a final end to a confusing and weaken dilemma and finally the comfort and courage on reaching a final decision about living their life has been portrayed by Desai, with elegance, Multiculturalism has been revealed and highlighted in an enlightening manner. The fusion or collaboration of these ideas and ideals are not only personal but also that of an entire generation and have been shown by her with an all-consuming realism.

Desai has portrayed that how the constant coming and going of immigrants almost never stops, in spite of everything and everyone. She writes; England's green and gold fingers has let go of Adit and clutched at Dev instead. England has let Adit drop and fall away as if she has done with him or realized that he has done with her and caught and enmeshed his friend Dev. *Bye-Bye Blackbird* has the Indian migrant Dev disillusioned by an England represented by the London of the 1960s because the mind has the image of an England as depicted in English literature studied in schools and colleges. Dev's psychology intensifies his exilic condition because his aesthetic



sense cannot identify with reality. But when he visits the countryside he finds: this was the England her poets had celebrated so well that he, a foreigner, found every little wildflower, every mood and aspect of it eerily familiar.

It was something he was visiting for the first time in his life, yet he had known it all along – in his reading, in his daydreams – and now he found his dreams had been an exact, a detailed, a brilliant and mirror like reflection of reality. (170)

Dev decides to stay in England after making this mental identification that eases his exilic condition. In St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, Dev finds little religious atmosphere and has an uneasy feeling that these are no temples of Christ, but temples dedicated to the British Empire. It is in the countryside that he visits an old, small and silent village church and on touching the rounded pillars felt soft to his hand as do the stones in Hindu temples that have been touched by so many devout foreheads. The stone tiles were curved beneath his feet as are those of temples on which Hindu worshippers kneel and walk incessantly.

Dev wishes that "he had a sick of incense to burn, a handful of jasmine or marigold to offer, Hindu fashion, to the grace of Christianity" (172). It is the aesthetic and spiritual familiarity that suppresses the psychological sense of exile. Of all the novels of Desai this is the most intimately related to her own experience. Desai said in an interview "of all my novels *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is the most rooted and experienced and the least literary in derivation" (92). Desai's novels seems pre-eminently a novel about East-West encounter and the damage of cross cultural adjustment, the anger, shame and frustrations of characters re-enact the experience of both, the former oppressor and the oppressed, and their struggle to break through cultural situations brought about by the colonial political history.

This novel portrays Indians and Englishmen in England with their problems both physical and psychological. Adit, an Indian is married to Sarah an English girl. Both of them suffer from problems such as the loss of identity, alienation and humiliation largely on account of racial and cultural prejudices. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* Adit is an Indian who lives in England. He reconciles to his stay in England even though he suffers humiliations ungrudgingly and he inwardly identifies himself with Indian. Apart from this he obviously longs for Indian friends, activities, food, dress, music and culture. Sarah, his English wife, finds by hints and suggestions that she is not liked by her own countrymen for having married an Indian.

Adit and Sarah love each other even though their language and culture continue to differ. Sarah cooks Indian curry without developing a taste for it while Adit has none for some British items of food. Sarah's cat doesn't please Adit. Sarah does not like Indian music nor can she understand and appreciate Indian jokes and conversations which Adit enjoys a great deal. Initially, Dev is misfit in England, discriminated everywhere; he cannot get accustomed to the silence and emptiness of the city.

Artistically speaking, this novel of Desai is rather weak. There is good deal of light-hearted comedy in it. Desai portrays well the cultural conflict of the immigrants who can't save their cultural roots and makes an effort to strike new roots in alien territory and eventually becomes alienated. The novel is basically concerned with immigrants abroad, their experience of alienation, loneliness and sentimental for their past life in India. The central problem with which the novel deals with is the problem of poor which is one of the most recurrent and dominant theme in Anita Desai's work.

Sarah is different from other characters. She is almost in an exile in her own land but unlike others she never withdraws. Sarah leads a miserable routine life with



Indian husband. Adit behaves like a typical Indian husband who is lead bothered about the convenience of this English wife. This is clear from the following:

Wash up, Sarah, dear and go to bed and don't mind me when I fall over the cat. Unable to part with the warmth of shared experience and shared humour, leaving Sarah to pick up empty cups and glasses and fall ash trays and yawn her way to bed. (27)

Everything else being gone, she is left with shock of loneliness. She has lost her cultural identity and appears herself submissive and voiceless. Despite this, Sarah represents herself alienated in her own culture. Her fate is worse than that of the bouncing dog, the homeless adventure she experiences in the novel. Sarah experiences an extreme kind of loneliness after married an Indian. Her marriage is an act of free choice. She boldly accepts the consequences of her choice with regret or any sense of remorse. She does her domestic as well as official duties with great patience and perseverance. But she suffers a great deal on account of the crisis of identity. This is clear from the following passage:

If Sarah had any existence at all and then she wandered, with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step of the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real wheather English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only sincerity its truth (35).

Sarah is reserved and sensitive woman. She suffers agonies when Adit reveals the innocent side of his character to invite scorn and pity from her relatives, friends, colleagues and relatives. Her longing for a Christmas wedding explicitly indicates non-belongingness and instability in her marriage: "have never been to a Hindu wedding, so I don't know how to compare but I don't know that Christian wedding is touching and charming and heart wringing (190).

Sarah has objectively analysed the change in the late end of their lives. Sarah's grudge was directed against her parents. She clearly identified the cause of the marital discord as the clash between her egoistical tendencies of her parents. B.R. Rao put that in the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* the marriage of English girl Sarah would be an excellent subject for the novel. But there is a brief reference of the first meeting between Sarah and Adit. There is not real attempt made to explain the irresistible passion that impelled and English women to marry an Indian and break the scorn of English society. The loneliness of Sarah is made dramatic – more interesting than the tension between her and Adit. His sudden decision return to India, Devi's changing attitude towards England, the Black Bird's feelings that he is welcomed in England.

Thus, a close textual analysis reveals decisive influence of the socio-cultural, historical and economic factors on the ultimate destiny of the characters in the novel. It would be over simplification to say that characters are merely passive products of their culture. The novel deals with alienation of an English lady Sarah married to Aditan immigrant from India. In the novel Adit faces economic crises due to which he could not come back to India immediately after his marriage. As a result Sarah bows down her head of committing a mistake of marrying an Indian in her own society. She is treated as an out caste while in her own land.

Adit in spite of his adjustments compromises he makes under given circumstances, behaves at time like a typical Indian male whereas Sarah in spite of being a women from so called advanced west in quiet meek and submissive. While, Adit and Dev has choice to select for their natural conditions, their true circumstance Sarah has no choice she surrenders to the decision of her husband. In seeking her own self Adit is totally unaware of the loss of self that his decision implies for Sarah. Once

again Desai draws our attention to the annihilation of self that marriage involves for a female a theme that she picks up in her novel.

As a result, in the present chapter, cross-cultural relationship is reflected. The title of the novel is a unique symbol which describes for the Indian or the Eastern citizens. The problems of immigrants, social-cultural isolation have been very well tackled. The different dimensions of cross cultural conflicts have been carefully studied here. Especially, issues like nostalgia for home land, psychological problems of immigrants; racism and loneliness, metamorphosis of their characters, identity crisis, and the East-West conflict are explained here briefly. All these aspects are noted and narrated and they led to understand the problems more effectively.

As a result, the chapter succeeds to throw light on immigrant Indians. Literature being a mirror of society reveals various currents and cross currents which appear on social forum. In this chapter, various aspects of cross cultural relations are examined and illustrated. The entire phenomenon was based on new critical approaches to look at the problems. The new approach has tried to understand the complex issues in a smooth and easy way. Desai's novel under study has received a tremendous height of excellence. Her brilliant explorations and accurate observations amply testify the theme effectively.



## Chapter Four

### Love-Hate Relationship

Literary manifestation of the specialization process creates a different linguistic experience and environment for male and female experience. Especially, in the novels, one can move much closer to the female experience. Novels, therefore, are seen as structured and extended statements about reality. A closer study of Anita Desai's works reveals her struggle for female autonomy, played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal culture pattern. Her writing can be viewed as a self-conscious reaction to overwhelming masculinity of privileged dominant gender. One can identify in her characters a defiant tone of voice in asserting the personal and the subjective. Her emphasis is psychology rather than sociology. Her profound intellectual maturity provides a frame work based on gender (female) as the ideological scheme for the analysis of society in general. This theme, though as old as the English novels itself, can be found in Richardson and Fiddling on the one hand and D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Hemingway and Faulkner on the other. D.H. Lawrence points out, "The greatest relationship for humanity will always the relation between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary" (130).

With Desai, technique becomes a matter of predominant concern. She not only brings innovative changes in it but also makes use of flashbacks and stream-of-consciousness. She expresses her views on the *Skill of Writing* in the following words: "Writing has become such a deeply ingrained habit; it is like chain-smoking with words, with books" (76).

Anita Desai's novels are called forte of poetic sensibility because she employs 'the language of the interior' to delineate the inner tensions and crises in the lives of



her characters. Desai's exploration of sensibility and distinctive technique make her novels celebrities. In this novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai has not given much importance to the plot of the novel but she has tried to tell her story through the development of her characters. Anita Desai uses the techniques of contrast between various settings, situations, characters and even between different stages of the same characters. In her *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, there is the contrast between the Englishmen and Indians, between Dev and Adit and between Adit and Sarah. In the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, R.M. Verma's review about *Bye- Bye Blackbird*, "The problem of immigration which is at the centre of the novel achieves its appeal and dramatic intensity through the juxtaposition of Dev's and Adit's point of view, increasingly divergent and from the complex reversal of situation in the end."(52)

Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is mainly concerned with the varied human endearment and detestations relationship. Adit from the beginning of the novel develops an attachment to the western way of life, especially to England; but while living in England he shows his hostility towards the way of European life and particularly to England. Dev comes to England only for his education. As a matter of fact Dev celebrates the fundamental excellence of social and educational factors between the east and west. Dev becomes impetuous to be an England returned teacher at the same time shows his abhorrence to the social system of England. Adit tries to be sagacious to the country he inhabits to the country and he exists for his future. Dev shows his strong dislike towards men and manners of England; but his stay there for a while intensifies his tendencies to the country.

Dev is not sure whether he comes to it, again and again, in order to look upon the face of England as it had existed in his imagination when he was a child – years before he had begun to plan to come to

England – or because it reminds him of that Victorian India that formed a part – unreal and, therefore, all the more haunting, omnipresent and subliminal – of the India he had known. (84)

Dev, main protagonist of Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* undergoes a convulsive change in his mind. He becomes a precedent of contrast. Dev loathes Adit's mind and forgives himself completely to settle down in England for its luxurious life. Desai leaves her character to grow independently and watches the inner feelings. Desai diagnoses the inner shaking in Adit and Dev for their respective change towards life. Finally he realizes his social duties and returns back home. He leaves all the pomp and show of materialistic life. Dev also undergoes transformations in his character and strikes a comparison and contrast with Adit in existential pursuits. Thus there is a stepwise psychic change in both the characters.

The novelist simply justifies Adit's yearnings to return to India due to Pakistan's attack; but the raging change through the war does not convince the reader immediately. The author herself watches a slow and gradual restraint sensibility in Adit. England as a living entity brings forth a slow change in the mind of each character. In his visit to the parental house of Sarah, Dev is drawn towards it by its scenic beauty. He gives up all the doubts and confusion for his future existence; he obtains sensational excitement from all the objects seen in England. The scenes and situations become so delightful that he realizes every step or other paradisiacal walk in his mind as though to imprint it all on his mind as one memorizes a poem. The irony of the novel is that Adit, the Indian with comfortable job, English, wife, fully feels at home in his adopted country. By the end of the novel Adit chooses to leave England for good to India with his English wife, and Dev who has been critical of



English and England in alien society. It is not simply white man's burden but also the feeling of superiority by virtue of their being ruler over us.

The need to love and be loved is crucial for healthy personality development and functioning. Human beings appear to be so constructed that they need and strive to achieve warm, loving relationships with others. The longing for intimacy with others remains throughout the lives and separation from or loss of loved ones usually presents a different adjustment problem. The breaking out of war between India and Pakistan once again creates yet another important structure as a whole. The war news makes Adit, nostalgic and he desires to be in India. His love for the motherland shakes the inactive emotions. He makes up his mind to go back to his country immediately. There is wrestling inside his mind to leave England or not. Ultimately he listens to the call of his conscience and realizes his social responsibilities. He doesn't want to live the artificial life of England. He frankly confesses to Sarah. Though she has to confront problems during the long way fare from England to India because of her pregnancy she embraces limping thought as Adit's wife. She marries him with expectations to share the best of mind and spirit; but she gives up her womanly desires and like a traditional Indian wife admits her destiny.

Her shyness and rectitude that brought out the protective in Adit whereas all the other guests and the hostess had only made him feel uncertain and possibly even humiliated. Humiliation and uncertainty were not sensations in which Adit felt at home, and so he chose Sarah for company. (74)

Sarah is an English woman who marries Adit. When Sarah deals with letters and bills in her room under the strains, she feels as an imposter, but equally she is playing a part when she tap her fingers to the sitar music on Adit's records or ground

spices for curry. She does not have little command over these two charades she plays each day, one in the morning at school and one in the evening at home, that she cannot even tell with how much sincerity she played one role or the other. The strains of interracial marriages are so much that they affect her daily life. She even goes for shopping in big departmental stores to remain an anonymous buyer. The super market is a soothing place to her. Here she will wander about unnoticed, in absent-mindedly happy way and she can buy anything without acquiring the distinct personality. These purchases can mark with her: "But inside the sparkling halls of the supermarket where walls of soap and corn flakes hid her from strangers eyes, she could be eccentric, as individual as she pleased without being noticed by even a mouse" (39).

Both Adit and Sarah pretend the facade of happy-married life. The tension between pretension and actuality, appearance and reality is always there which tell upon her, resulting in schizophrenia. She is constantly under tension which makes her life unreal, that is why, she is affected by tortures of anxiety and insecurity. She herself feels, "who was she? Both these creatures were frauds; each had a large, shadowed element of charade about it. Her face was only a mask; her body is only a costume" (39). Sarah is a different person at home. She tries her best to adjust with her Indian husband.

She makes 'Charchari' curry with different spices and even wears a Benarasi sari of Adit's choice. Sarah bears the tantrums of Adit, to save her marriage. Sarah feels over-decked when he puts on a heavy sari with heavy chain of golden mangoes send by his mother as a wedding present. Adit flares up in anger, "you feel like a Christmas tree! I suppose all Indian women look like Christmas Trees, perhaps like clowns, because they wear saris and jewellery" (38). Sarah doesn't get spice powder in the house as Adit hates it and would throw it out. Sarah is more like Indian girls in



her docility; whereas Adit is a typical Indian male when he expresses his opinion to Dev: "These English wives are quite manageable really, you know. Not as fierce as they look – very quiet and hard working as long as you treat them right and roar at them regularly once or twice a week" (39).

Adit is attracted towards the shyness and quietness of Sarah. He tells her, "You are like a Bengali girl. Bengali women are like that reserved, quiet. But you are improving on it – you are so much prettier" (40). Sarah, formally, has the problem of emptiness in her life. She is attracted towards Adit's so many relations and attachments, pictures and stories, legends, promises and warnings. She tries to fill her life with these colourful things. At the time of making a decision of going to India, she is filled with apprehension about her future. She has inflated these dreams, making them screens with which to surround and protect herself. Sarah finds it difficult to adjust to the voyage, the uprooting, and the child in one stride. In spite of doubts in her mind Sarah readily accepts to leave her country. She says, "I think when I go to India, I will not find it strange after all. I am sure; I shall feel quite at home very soon" (219).

In reality, Adit and Sarah are afraid of rejection, vicious distrust and mocking pity from their own people, transforming them into escapists. Sarah, finding the world around her hostile, submits to Adit – the very cause of her alienation and isolation. She never protests and is ready to sacrifice anything for her marriage. The symbolic nature of relatedness of Sarah and Adit can be expressed in Erich Fromm's words:

Both persons involved have lost their integrity and freedom; they live for each other and from each other, satisfying their craving for closeness. Yet, suffering from the lack of inner strength and self-realisation, which would require freedom and independence, and further more constantly threatened by both conscious and

unconscious hostility, which bound to arise from symbiotic. The marriage of Samar and Bella is identical to the marriage of Adit and Sarah. They are also the victims of separate cultural mal-adjustment. The novelist has presented a highly volatile situation: Two Indian, two English women frozen in the stances of players on the stage who had not been told what to do next. Somewhere in a locked closet, a slab of marble like a black grave stone awaiting and engraving a grave, a bunch of flowers (188). Their differences are marked from the beginning: But Bella and Sarah sat in stiff silence, their Anglo-Saxon faces impassive.

They has learnt exactly how much of this foreign world was theirs to tread and had gave up their early attempts, made out of curiosity and desire to join, to interpret jokes. The marriage of Mala and Jasbir is also a farce. Each partner has changed to his worst due to disharmony. Jasbir has changed into an over loud, careless clown; whereas, Mala is a dishevelled, impractical, impolite, idle young woman. Both have longing for physical comforts and good living. Mrs and Mr Roscommon James also present a very loathsome picture of marriage. Sarah identifies the cause between egoistic tendencies of her parents. Mrs Roscommon James scolds her husband bitterly, "She scolded him in tone that would lead anyone not present in the room to think she was speaking to an unusually, naughty, and tiresome dog. He never answered" (14). Anita Desai has commented on the marital disharmonies existing not only in the lives of Indians but also in the lives of England people. She expresses her views about Indian married couples with Adit's reply to Dev that the married couples in India are not in parks, they are at home quarrelling. The marriage of Sarah and Adit, on the whole, is satisfactory.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai deviates from her earlier theme of the treatment of the psychic tumult of her self-afflicted characters. In it she dealt with the



topical problem of adjustment faced by black immigrants in England. She analyses this problem by delineating realistically the situations of three different characters Dev, Adit and Sarah and by exploring the effect of racial hatred on their sensibility. This justifies this novel, as a forte of 'poetic-sensibility'.

To conclude from the above study of Anita Desai's novel is that family and familial relationship play a very important part in her imaginary world; but more often the relationship are not harmonious. Husband and wife alienation in her novels is the result of the hypersensitive nature of her women and their inability to establish a point of contact with their partner. Her women are in eternal quest for meaningful life. Anita Desai never shows a trace of biased or prejudiced outlook in this inner struggle between husband and wife. Her women either yield to or survive the existential problems within the family. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, we find Sarah, who, in spite of being an alien woman; understands her husband, his family and country which she would accept one's in India. It can be concluded that Anita Desai has explored different aspects of feminine psyche and its effect on the human relationship and she has definitely given a new depth and meaning to the theme of man-woman relationship in her novels.

Anita Desai makes use of her rhetorical skill at several occasions, especially when Dev is haranguing. Dev believes that he is a cultural ambassador to England wants to reverse the historical fact of colonisation of India by the British; he wants the reversal of it by colonisation of England by Indians. The whole speech is comical and fantastic with a touch of wishfulness but at the same time it does sound absurd for history cannot be reversed.

Adit is the lover of English society and England but Dev is a hater of England. In the end of the novel, one learns that their roles change. Adit becomes the hater of England. Dev decides to stay forever in this foreign land although he is rejected. Secondly, Sarah an English wife of Adit is also an example of contrast within herself. Sarah tries to adjust herself totally with Adit and his Indian background but in spite of her least efforts she is torn between herself, between her outer realities. Sarah fails to make proper adjustment with the Indian background of her husband. Thirdly, Krishna Murthi, in the novel hates going back to India, but wants to start fishing business in South India.

Adit weighs the advantages and disadvantages of foreign land, but by the end of the novel he concludes that when his English self is fading and dying to achieve his real self and to have real life he must go to his native land India. Desai is of the view that all these immigrants are prone to live or not live in England. Adit leaves England for good and Dev remains behind once. Adit's part of inexplicable influence for his foreign land to everything about London is fascinating and expresses unreservedly. He moulds and transforms himself entirely up to the expectations of England. He voluntarily adopts the life style of Britishers. He keeps comparing England with his own motherland, criticizes India for its traditionalism and backwardness. Truly his experience in India is not very pleasant and he portrays its heart-rending picture. When Dev feels irritated to see a couple hugging each other under a lamp-post, it is the beginning of his unfortunate position. At the close of the novel he finds himself completely bewitched and charms for future perspectives of his life in England. It clearly shows that *Bye-Bye Blackbird* portrays the endearment hatred relationship of the emigrants with England.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

Anita Desai is one of the foremost novelist, short-story writer and children's author of India. Anita Desai is indeed a name to reckon with in the field of literature. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award and Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, her distinct style of writing, her original characters and her realistic subject-line is what made her writings so endearing. Over the years, Desai won many awards and recognition for her work and was shortlisted for the Booker prize twice. Apart from writing, Anita has been actively involved in teaching as well. She continues to be an inspiration for many young aspirations for many young aspiring writers today.

In her novels, Anita Desai seems to be struggling towards the mastery of a violence which seems to threaten not only her protagonists but also her own self. The characters are portrayed as engrossed with the present, look backward in time, and visualize future as well. It is through a sense of alienation that the protagonists manage to look at their problem in a subjective manner and arrive at an appropriate solution or resolution in the end. She portrays her characters as individuals "facing single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence" (Srivastava 15) they often differ in their opinions from others and embark on long voyages of contemplation, in order to find the meaning of their existence.

The main theme therefore, is an exploration of these states combined with the exploration of the psychic tumult experienced by Adit's English wife, Sarah and how these psychological states are resolved. Adit Sen, hailing from Calcutta is lured by the prospects presented by the West and proceeds to England to complete his education. Even though he returns to India on completion of his studies, he goes back to England after his disillusionment in India over finding a job. Joining a travel agency, Adit

settles down into the groove of a "pukka sahib" amongst all the "Kala Sahibs" (226) adopting the language, dress and manner of living of the English. Yet, his basic instincts still remain Indian and make him choose Sarah - an English girl - for his wife. This is because Sarah's shyness and rectitude remind him of a Bengali girl.

Adit's tastes in both music and culinary remain Indian. He immerses himself in Indian music and abhors British soups and stews. Since Sarah is not proficient in the art of Indian cuisine, he chooses to cook it himself mostly and thus dishes out rice, curry and charchuri and carrot halwa.

Adit thus, slowly comes to belong to that "class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (156). Yet this reconciliation with another alien culture seems incongruous as is brought out very suggestively by Adit's loud colours in his choice of attire. This incongruity is at first not obvious to Adit and he remains indifferent to its many instances. Whenever Sarah speaks of going to India, Adit always has an excuse regarding the finance involved, yet he dreams wistfully of having "hilsa fish wrapped in banana leaves" (10) and of dressing Sarah in saris and gold ornaments. He cannot reconcile himself to the Englishman's fondness for pets and creates a scene when Sarah's pet cat noses the cooked food. Again, Adit cannot comprehend the lack of high emotion and sentimentality in the Englishman's relationships and is often astonished and highly disapproving of the colourless, toneless, flavourless relationship that exists between Sarah and her parents.

Adit finds Sarah too careless of her aged parents while at the same time he takes months to write to his own parents. Spending a night in Sarah's old bedroom, Adit finds a cupboard full of her childhood memorabilia. When Sarah rebukes him for being so sentimental, he feels deeply offended by her lack of nostalgia and seeming



indifference to her past childhood. Yet he himself remains indifferent and insensitive to Sarah and leaves her alone to pick up empty cups, glasses, ash-trays and "yawn her way to bed" (27) after his friends leave.

When Adit takes Dev on a tour of the city, he feels agonizingly embarrassed by Dev reciting loudly in Sanskrit the "Vedic hymn to fire" (54) on encountering the Battersea power station. Yet after visiting the Clapham tube station and National Gallery, he wants to show the best collection of Moghul and Rajasthan miniatures to an indignant Dev who obviously hasn't come to England to see Indian paintings. This wish of Adit is significant as it brings out his inherent longing for India. He declares to Sarah and Dev that he sees himself as an "ambassador from India showing the English what a gentleman an Indian can be" (154). It thus appears that Adit is still attached subconsciously to his Indian identity in spite of his outward appearance of an Anglicized gentleman.

On a visit to Sarah's parents, Adit along with his friends very aptly exhibit their Indian traits when they intrude into Mrs. Roscommon-James' kitchen demanding of their wives to make pakoras. The strangeness of Adit's efforts at Anglo-Saxon sing himself reaches a climax when his horrified mother-in-law finds him whipping about her kitchen plugging to catch an unfortunate lark - which incidentally is actually a thrush - to have on his toast for elevenses.

Surprisingly, it is this week-end spent with his in-laws that starts the chain of doubt and uneasiness in Adit. The trip through the rich and even countryside brings to Adit's mind the arid landscape of India. This unconsciously becomes the turning point of his life in England and this sows the seeds of his dilemma concerning his identity. Although earlier also, most weekends with his in-laws had been "marred" by his tactlessness and inane misunderstanding yet, this particular weekend makes him feel

drained of the brightness of life and he wonders fearfully if he had ever felt so depressed before.

Adit is basically an urbanite and curiously it is the abundant green beauty of the countryside around him that fills him with a curious anger and sorrow. This culminates now in filling him with a new mood of anxiety and abstract pain, something he had not experienced before. His sudden nostalgia makes London now become workaday weary. Consequently, he is filled with amazement that he had once considered it his "golden Mecca" (181). Doubt too, now pervades him about his true identity and in a desperate effort to cling to his acquired Anglicized identity, he visits all his favourite places but is plagued with a sense of dislocation - hunted out by the black sensation of not belonging. Even the voices and laughter around him appear ominous like that of enemies and schemers. Now, not only do his thoughts and emotions change, this sense of not belonging appears to have a psychological effect and his very appearance undergoes a drastic change.

Adit comes now to reflect the Indian immigrant's dilemma - how to subdue his unconscious longing for his Indian identity and stick to maintain the identity he has acquired in the alien culture. Adit now feel his own education, his feel for British history and poetry fall away from him. This makes him sink deeper into gloom and as a relief from this pervasive gloom, he seeks the company of his Indian friends. However their company proves to be no comfort but further accentuates his identity-crisis.

In a furious bid to recover Adit lost strength, his formerly rock-solid mental and emotional balance, he buys vitamins which are of course, useless. His work gets affected and he has a dreadful vision of himself going insane. So great is Dev mental disturbance that Adit fears a nervous breakdown or a psychic disorder. His



overpowering nostalgia makes him long now to see a bullock-cart. This growing nostalgia acquires a 'ferocity' that is almost a terrible 'ache' with the dimension of an illness. His attempts at striving to preserve his Indian roots amidst alien culture strikes him as fake and this makes him view his life in England in a new perspective.

Previously, Adit had always avoided talking about India thus making Sarah gather whatever information she could from books on India. Now, his yearning makes Adit create a vision of India for Sarah that was multi-coloured and headily perfumed. In this vision, the actual reality of India is ignored. Again, in his anxious enthusiasm for recapturing his Indian roots, he insists on Sarah wearing Indian jewellery and a sari in celebration of their wedding anniversary.

Adit's vacillation between his external Anglicized identity and his internal Indian one is resolved with the outbreak of the Indo-Pak war. This ignites his patriotic feelings to a feverish pitch and the end of the war sees his vacillation too, end. He finally decides to return to the "warmth" (228) that awaited him in India.

In Adit, is therefore found one aspect of the immigrant's identity-crisis. The immigrant Anglicizes himself outwardly but this adoption is only skin deep. Not being familiar by bonds either of blood or land, the immigrant suffers insults and social isolation as is evident in the strain and tension of Adit's visits to his in-laws and in the obvious racism of Adit's German landlady, Mrs. Miller. The immigrant therefore involuntarily and unconsciously clings to his native roots and community. In Adit's case, his delusion about his external self is strangely broken by the placidity, the munificence and the ease of England. Adit's consequent mental and emotional disharmony and his identity-crisis is resolved by his decision to return back to India and thereby regain his Indian identity.

The social isolation of the Sens is realized by Dev. To him, their street of residence reveals nothing about its people unlike in India where no one lived silently and invisibly. If the social isolation of the immigrant combined with their cultural unacceptance by the white majority fills Dev with doubt, anxiety and despairing anger, his visit to the Battersea power station awes him. Venturing out to Petticoat Lane, Dev is astounded by the sight of a couple of beggars. When Sarah claims that there are a few, Adit snaps out about the presence of a few stray misfits unlike the swarms in India. It is now seen that during his initial stages in London, whenever Dev points out any drawback of London and its people, Adit - then in the throes of Anglicization is quick to defend them.

Dev is also cynical and sceptical about the English and their ways - the silence and emptiness of the heavily populated London city as well as their habits. The city's emptiness conveys an eerie impression - "a bombed out street in wartime" and a "cold wasteland of brick and tile" (63). Dev is equally puzzled about the lack of privacy in their relationships as the English lovers openly sprawl in the grass in the summer dusk, lost to the world about them. Yet when Dev compares them with lovers in India who retain their privacy, Adit counters him by saying that "too much goes on in the dark" (67) in India. Here again, Adit is supportive of the English habits when Dev brings in a comparison with India.

Dev finds St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey to be temples dedicated to the British Empire rather than being temples of Christ. However, he is drawn to the landscape of Greenwich Park. This fascination is juxtaposed by an unpleasant experience when he encounters the insolence of a young man in a booth. So far, therefore, each pleasant experience of Dev is juxtaposed by an unpleasant encounter and so for Dev, it becomes a period of oscillation between certainty and uncertainty. It



is a strange summer in which he is the bewildered alien, the charmed observer, the outraged outsider and thrilled sight-seer all at once and in succession.

Dev's wandering along the London streets which to him are rich in educative value makes him give up his decision of joining the London School of Economics and instead search for employment. Yet, his growing uncertainty continues to haunt him making him more and more unsure of what the experience was to be like as an unwanted immigrant in totality. This bewildering tumult becomes a kind of schizophrenia that wakes him in the middle of the night and shadows him by day.

Thus Dev is faced with an equally agonizing identity-crisis like Adit - whether he should succumb to the life of an alien and surrender his Indian identity or try to give up his growing fascination for England and his attempts at Anglicization and return to his Indian home and identity. This growing dilemma coupled with his attempts at finding employment makes him succumb to a severe cold and fever. In his fevered state, he suffers a hallucination - a symbol of schizophrenia when he sees "a barrow filled with such fruit as can only be seen in an Indian market" (120). Still vacillating between certainty and uncertainty he tries to find an answer and a justification for his continued stay in London: "I am here ... as an ambassador, I am showing these damn imperialists with their lost countries that we are free people now ... I am here ... to interpret my country to them, to conquer England ..." (128). However, these words clatter silently inside his mouth and remain unsaid. Then comes the realization that all he actually wanted was "a good time ... to know a little freedom" (123). His subconscious decision not to return to India comes to the fore during his stay in the countryside home of Sarah's parents when all doubts are dissolved. Like Adit, this change is again brought about by the English countryside.

Thus, "somewhere at some point that summer, England's, green and gold fingers had let go of Adit and clutched at Dev instead" (228). Dev now feels rapturous as he feels his earlier diffidence and uncertainty recede. Consequently, his identity-crisis is also resolved and he decides to remain in England. Now, by acquiring Adit's job and flat, he seeks to settle into the groove already cut and warmed for him by Adit. Although he still encounters flashes of racism, he chooses to ignore them as earlier Adit had done. Thus, Dev reflects the other aspect of the immigrant's identity-crisis. He seeks to give up his Indian identity and adopt a new Anglicized one when the attraction towards England overcomes his doubts and uncertainties.

Sarah, the English wife of Adit, too undergoes an identity-crisis. In her case, this happens because of her marriage to a coloured man -an Indian. Sarah is English by birth and nature but had been drawn to India ever since her acquaintance with an Anglo-Indian colonel papa of one of her friends. It was her friend's house that had first made India real and interesting for her.

Sarah is the only child of an English doctor and a mother who treated her as just some appendage and not as an individual with her own life to lead. Her problem before her marriage had been the emptiness of her life. Adit with his many relations and attachments, pictures and stories, legends, promises and warnings had appeared "rich" to her. She had discarded both family and friends after her marriage to Adit with the hope of filling her life anew.

Unfortunately, Adit neglects to acquaint her with either his home or India. Her desire to know about India makes her buy as many books as she can while her desire to know more about Adit's family makes her finger their letters with an expression of awe and wonder. This longing and fascination for India and Adit's home reflects her



inner longing for an Indian identity. This is however her personal secret and she detests anyone trying to pry into or encroach into this secret.

Sarah's lack of having a first-hand knowledge of India as well as her detestation of the obvious racism of her fellow Britishers makes her hesitant to talk about Adit and his family. This also results in creating within her a sense of alienation.

Sarah feels unable to adopt to the Indian's nuances of communal and provincial prejudice and myth, language and custom. Marriage to an Anglicized husband brings about an anguish of loneliness. She also cannot escape the taunts of her fellow-whites - as for instance, the children scream out to her, "Hurry, hurry, Mrs. Scurry!"(32) but Sarah has a nagging suspicion that it had been Mrs. Curry.

Sarah therefore faces an unfortunate predicament by marrying an immigrant. Although very devoted to Adit, she is ashamed as she feels apprehensive about her own acceptance amongst her countrymen. This attitude of Sarah makes her colleagues comment "if she's that ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she marry him?"(37).

Sarah sense of isolation is also evident during her walk to school. Wearing a mask of secrecy, Sarah seeks out the loneliest paths. The only place where she feels comfortable is the supermarket where she can buy Indian items like Patna rice and pickles in anonymity. This longing for anonymity is the result of her feeling of having two identities.

The line of distinction between these two identities appears to be the green door of her house, for inside her house, she is Mrs. Sen and outside - the English Sarah. This vacillation between the two identities, gives her a sense of displacement and she longs for a firm footing for her identity whether Indian or English. The

resultant mental tension of this dilemma of whether she would "ever be allowed ... to enter the real world - whether English or Indian", makes her experience an "unsettling wave of ... intermittent schizophrenia" (139). It is when Adit tells her about his decision of leaving England that gives Sarah the chance for selection of any one identity. Sarah long wish to know India combined with the fact of her being pregnant with their first child makes her opt to go to India. In spite of her decision, she faces pangs of regret at the letting go of her English identity. However, at the same time, she feels that in India she would be able to have "a new, a different personality" (221). Sarah thus hopes to be able to strike new roots in India and in the process, acquire a new identity for herself.

To conclude from the above study of Anita Desai's novel is that family and familial relationship play a very important part in her imaginary world; but more often the relationship are not harmonious. Husband and wife alienation in her novels is the result of the hypersensitive nature of her women and their inability to establish a point of contact with their partner. Her women are in eternal quest for meaningful life. Anita Desai never shows a trace of biased or prejudiced outlook in this inner struggle between husband and wife. Her women either yield to or survive the existential problems within the family. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, we find Sarah, who, in spite of being an alien woman; understands her husband, his family and country which she would accept one's in India. It can be concluded that Anita Desai has explored different aspects of feminine psyche and its effect on the human relationship and she has definitely given a new depth and meaning to the theme of man-woman relationship in her novels.

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**Resurrection of a Poetic Soul: A Study of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel***

A project submitted to

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affiliated to

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**(REG. NO. 17APEN10)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Resurrection of a Poetic Soul: A Study of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

  
KALPANA DEVI S.

## CERTIFICATE

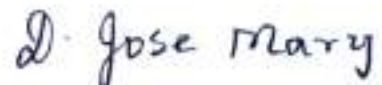
This is to certify that the project entitled **Resurrection of the Poetic Soul: A Study of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Kalpana Devi S. during the year 2018 – 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Resurrection of a Poetic Soul: A Study of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*** gives a detailed analysis on the aspects of identity, persona and performance of Sylvia Plath.

The first chapter throws light on a short biography of Sylvia Plath discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in American Literature.

The second chapter highlights Plath's attraction to death as themes of rebirth and transcendence experienced by her.

The third chapter depicts Plath's portrayal of women in American patriarchal culture who undergo a condition of being repressed and rebel against male domination.

The fourth chapter focuses on Plath's relationship with the spirit, human and the world.

The fifth chapter sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters. It also highlights the style and techniques employed by Plath in her poems.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

A century is a considerable period of time in the development of any literary genre. This is especially true in the case of American poetry, which began the twentieth century as an enervated literary exercise and ended it as a vital form of cultural expression. As the twentieth century began, poetry was greatly overshadowed by the novel. During the period from the end of the Civil War until World War I, the United States experienced explosive population growth and a powerfully expanding economy. As a result, the nation was focused on pragmatic matters that absorbed its immediate attention. American society had little energy to devote to the cultivation of poetry, which was often relegated to the status of a genteel pastime with little relevance to modern-day life. The so-called Age of Realism (1870–1910) was a high point in the development of the American novel, American poetry, on the other hand, lingered in the twilight of the late nineteenth century, unable to enter the modern world or break with the conventional formulas and sentimental diction of earlier decades.

The experience of World War I, which brought many Americans into contact with Europe for the first time, further bridged the gap between American and European culture, and it prepared the ground for an international modernism in which Americans would play a crucial part. The war was traumatic not only for the soldiers in the trenches but also for artists and writers whose sensitivity to the effects of warfare made them, as the antennae of the race. In T. S. Eliot's epoch-marking poem "The Waste Land", he evoked a postwar world in which traditional systems of belief and established social structures had been radically altered. The changed understanding of human society and human nature brought about by the war



contributed to the large-scale literary and artistic movement known as modernism. As the war presented a generation of judiciously limited lyric poets with an epic subject, the realities of war caused a total rethinking of the purpose of poetry in the twentieth century. During the years 1920–26 alone, American poets produced an extraordinary body of work, including Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly", Eliot's "The Waste Land", Stevens' *Harmonium*, Williams' "Spring and All", Moore's *Observations and Poems*, Hughes' "The Weary Blueks", H. D.'s *Collected Poems*, Cummings' *Tulips and Chimneys*, and Hart Crane's *White Buildings*.

World War II represented another watershed in the development of American poetry, marking a definitive historical and generational break with modernism. The postwar poets of the 1950s and 1960s took a number of different guises. There were the academic formalists following the tenets of the New Criticism, there were the "Confessionals" with their more intensely personal approach to the poem, and there were the Beats and other countercultural movements which sought to liberate poetry from what they saw as the rigidity of academic verse. Against the political, social, and cultural conservatism of the postwar era, the poetry of the New American Poets took on a subversive aura in the 1950s, serving as a forerunner to the larger social movements of the 1960s.

Historically, most critics trace the beginnings of confessional poetry to the poems Lowell began writing in the late 1950s. The most extreme phase of the confessional mode lasted until the mid-1960s, and included Lowell's *Life Studies*, W. D. Snodgrass's *Heart's Needle*, Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*, Anne Sexton's *To Bedlam and Part Way Back and All Pretty Ones*, and John Berryman's *77 Dream Songs*. Other poets of the period, such as Elizabeth Bishop, Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell, and Theodore Roethke, have also been grouped with the confessionals. The confessional



mode continued to exert an important influence on the poetry of the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, the post-confessional lyric was to become the dominant stylistic mode of American poetry in the late twentieth century. Poems dealing with relationships, sex, marriage, and domestic life became so common in the wake of the confessionals that they were no longer seen as daringly provocative; instead, such poems were written in creative-writing workshops across the country and soon came to constitute the new mainstream of American poetry. Poets such as Louise Gluck and Sharon Olds, both from the generation after the confessionals, have focused much of their work on family relationships and on such subjects as divorce, adolescent anorexia, and childhood abuse. Olds' volume *The Father*, one of the most successful adaptations of the confessional mode, is a sequence of poems devoted to her conflicted feelings about the death of her father.

The term "Confessionalism" was coined by American poet and 20th-century poet and critic M. L. Rosenthal in his article "Poetry as Confession" and refers to a certain phase in Robert Lowell's career that culminated in the publication of his poetry collection *Life Studies*. Through his discussion of Lowell's *Life Studies*, and in his later works, Rosenthal confines the defining features of confessionalism and, although he carefully restricts the possibilities of the mode, he gives priority to Sylvia Plath as an instigating author of confessional poetry.

Sylvia Plath (1932-63) was a famous American poet and novelist. She is known for her confessional poems as appeared in collections like *Crossing the Water* (1971), *Ariel* (1965), and *Colossus* (1960). Her best known work is *The Bell Jar* (1963), a novel published posthumously in 1963. She had published many short stories, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* (1978), *Letters Home* (1975) and *Journals of Sylvia Plath* (1983).

Sylvia Plath was born in Massachusetts, on 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1932, to parents Aurelia Schober Plath and father Otto Emil Plath. Plath's father, born in Grabow, was of German and Polish ancestry. Otto's grandparents were farmers and had immigrated to the United States and when he was sixteen, they paid for his passage to come to America and also put him through college, where he did well. Otto later became a professor of biology at Boston University where he met Plath's mother, Aurelia Schober, the daughter of Austrian immigrants. In the fall of 1929, Otto and Aurelia were married and in 1932, Sylvia was born. Several years later Sylvia's brother, Warren, was born. In 1936, Otto fell ill but refused to be examined by a doctor. Four years later, however, he injured his leg and was forced to see a doctor. The doctor announced that Otto had advanced diabetes mellitus and gangrene had set in his leg. As a result, his leg was amputated and barely a month later he passed away of his illness. The doctor who treated him announced, sadly, that Otto's disease could have been easily treated and his life saved if he had only sought treatment earlier. Sylvia was devastated by her father's sudden death and never fully recovered from the loss, as much of the biographical elements in her poetry attest to; the trauma she experienced as the result of her father's sudden death caused her to become depressed at a young age.

In 1942, the family relocated and Sylvia moved with her mother and brother to Wellesley, Massachusetts. Plath was a bright and diligent student and after she graduated from high school she attended what was then one of the best girls' colleges in America, Smith College. She excelled in her studies at Smith and took part in various extracurricular activities, such as editing the school paper, The Smith Review. In the summer of 1953, Plath won a coveted position as a visiting managing editor for *Mademoiselle* in New York along with 19 other college girls



from all over America.

Plath's experience in New York was not what she had expected, it was in fact a life-altering ordeal that took a great toll on her. *The Bell Jar* was published under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas. The novel is largely autobiographical and Esther Greenwood's hardships reflect Plath's own struggles with life, self-realization and worsening depression following her stay in New York. Plath was treated for depression with electroconvulsive therapy but her condition worsened and she became increasingly more suicidal. In late August, 1953, Plath attempted suicide by ingesting a large amount of sleeping pills. Not wanting to be found, she hid underneath her house where, fortunately, two days later she was found by her mother and brother. Plath was admitted to psychiatric care and spent the next few months recovering and resumed her studies at Smith College in February of 1954. Although Plath got psychiatric treatment after her suicide attempt she never fully recovered and was plagued with mental illness most of her life.

Plath graduated from Smith College in 1955 and won a Fulbright scholarship to attend Cambridge University. In February of 1956, Plath met Ted Hughes, whom she married in London several months later. During the next few years she published stories and poems in various papers and magazines, receiving mixed reviews. She returned to Boston with Hughes in 1957, writing and working part-time at Smith College. In 1959, they returned to England, settled in London and a year later Plath gave birth to their daughter, Frieda. Soon after they moved to Devon and in January of 1962 Plath gave birth to their second child, Nicholas. In June that same year Plath published her first and only book of poetry *The Colossus & Other Poems* (1962) and received positive reviews. Several months later she learned of Hughes's affair with Assia Gutman, a family friend, and by the end of

September they had separated and she remained with the children in Devon, Hughes moving to London.

In the wake of their separation Plath began writing her late poems, with astonishing rapidity, writing at least 26 poems in the first month after separating from Hughes. In December, she moved with her children to an apartment in London and in January she published *The Bell Jar*. Alone with her children in London, Plath became increasingly depressed and suicidal, having no spare time to write while taking care of her two children she wrote most of her poetry early in the morning. She saw a psychiatrist who prescribed her an antidepressant and appointed her a nurse to look after her and the children because of her deteriorating mental state. On February 11th, 1963, at the age of thirty-one, Sylvia Plath took her own life.

Sylvia Plath's life was tragically brief but her literary legacy is nonetheless one of the most influential in the 20th century. As much of her poetry attests to, if read biographically, one can see how profoundly her struggle with depression, anxiety, self-realization and difficulties with familial and romantic relationships influenced her as a poet. However tragic the end of her marriage and difficult months before her death was, it was the beginning of the extraordinary prolific period in which she wrote her most brilliant poetry that changed literary history.

Sylvia Plath is one of the most influential and distinguished poets of the 20th century, her posthumous collection of poems, published in *Ariel* in the middle of the century, marking the beginning of a new literary mode and a long-standing controversy over the extraordinarily explicit and haunting subject matter present in her late poetry. The publishing of *Ariel* effectively split the literary scene in two, some deeming it the epitome of self-pity and vileness with its harsh tone, explicit



imagery and taboo topics of death, suicide and sexuality. Others maintained she was one of the most brilliant poets of the century, a master of her art, a poet whose skillful use of metaphor, imagery and language was almost unprecedented.

The 1960 collection of poems, *The Colossus and Other Poems*, is the only collection of poetry Sylvia Plath published in her lifetime. In October 1962, Plath began writing the collection of poems published in *Ariel*. In the span of several months, until February 1963, she wrote her most striking and brilliant poems, with astonishing rapidity, sometimes two a day, in a burst of heightened creativity. In 1965, two years after Plath's suicide, her husband, Ted Hughes, arranged and published these poems posthumously in *Ariel*. *Winter Trees* (1971) and *Crossing the Water* (1971) are also posthumous collections of transitional poems written in the same period, also edited and published by Ted Hughes. In 1982, Plath was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *The Collected Poems*, arranged and edited by Ted Hughes, a collection containing all of her published works.

Because Sylvia Plath's work is confessional in nature it has been read extraordinarily biographical. It is therefore necessary to read her poems in relation to her life by placing her work in an intellectual and cultural perspective. Various and random events from her life, large and small, are intertwined into her poetry and reflect her state of mind in the most prolific and burdensome period of her life. At the time of the conception of *Ariel* she had separated from her husband Ted Hughes, who had taken another lover and left Plath heartbroken and in a state of despair.

Sylvia Plath took her own life on February 11, 1963, just three weeks after her novel *The Bell Jar* had been published in London, and having published one volume of poetry, *The Colossus and other poems*. She had been preparing a volume

of poems from those she had written in 1961 and 1962 to be titled *Ariel*, many of which have as background the break-up of her marriage with poet Ted Hughes, who had left her and the couple's two children for another woman.

Plath arranged the *Ariel* poems in a black spring binder towards the end of 1962, including in the selection many of the poems she had written in a furious spurt of creativity following the couple's separation in October, when she wrote a poem almost every day for more than two months. But the published version of *Ariel*, when it appeared in 1965, edited by Hughes, differed in what some readers argue are important ways from Plath's 1962 ordering. Hughes removed 11 poems from Plath's arrangement, characterizing them in his introduction to Plath's *Collected Poems* (1981) as some of them are more personally aggressive poems, and added nine others most of them written in January and February 1963 in the last weeks of Plath's life. The effect of these substitutions is to turn the book from a sequence about a betrayed spouse who finds a way to face the future without the adulterous partner to one illustrating an impassioned woman whose mental illness accelerates into self-destructive madness.

Most of the poems missing from Plath's arrangement appeared subsequently in *Winter Trees* and *Crossing the Water*, both published in 1971. The volume as it was published established Plath's posthumous reputation as a major figure of mid-twentieth-century poetry. Its major themes are the tension and losses of marriage, maternity often with hesitation about childbirth an awareness sometimes accompanied by violence of the body an object; the rituals of writing; domesticity, hospitals, and beekeeping the last an interest of Plath's father, oppressive male figures, the pain that love can bring, escape, and death. Although the subjects and even the attitudes of many of the poems can be tied to the persons, places, and events of Plath's private life

in the period in which she wrote *Ariel*, her placement within the mode of Confessional poet has sometimes obscured the ways in which the poems project a self or series of selves that are not necessarily the individual poet, but rather a more wide-ranging self facing the oppression of history, particularly that of the Second World War, in addition to private losses and betrayals.

In particular, some of Plath's imagery of the holocaust and of male oppression as historically associated with fascism, which has come in for some criticism as self-indulgent, insensitive, or excessive, could be seen instead in the light of the volume's appropriation of recent European history. One example is her poem "Getting There," while one of the volume's best-known poems, "Daddy," contains the lines:

I never could talk to you.  
 The tongue stuck in my jaw.  
 It stuck in a barbed wire snare.  
 Ich, ich, ich, ich,  
 I could hardly speak.  
 I thought every German was you.  
 And the language obscene  
 An engine, an engine  
 Chuffing me off like a Jew.  
 A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.  
 I began to talk like a Jew.  
 I think I may well be a Jew. (24-35)

Here the lines could be describing a wider victimization rather than that only of the poet. In her own comments on the poem Plath spoke of it as an allegory, and of the speaker's father as a Nazi, which Otto Plath certainly was not.



Other well-known poems in the volume include "Lady Lazarus," a poem about surviving suicide, and "Fever 103°" where the speaker swings from hell to paradise. Power of these poems comes from the intensity of the emotions like disgust, despair, fury and the startling juxtapositions of imagery that illustrate them. Two characteristics of the poems that further contribute are repetition of single word to take up a single line as in quotation above, as if the speaker becomes trapped momentarily in the language of her own poem, or is positing a private crescendo of meaning associated with the repetition; and the surprise of a sudden matter-of-fact voice that undercuts the intensity produced by the heightened language though that intensity immediately resumes. One example of many occurs in "A Birthday Present":

Measuring the flour, cutting off the surplus,

Adhering to rule, to rule, to rule.

Is this the one for annunciation?

My god, What a language! (7-10)

The last poems of the published volume are sparer than the earlier ones. The final 12 were added by Hughes to Plath's original arrangement and most of them date from 1963. The last four poems concern isolation, refusing kindnesses, a shutting down of the heart in the poem "Contusion", of maternal care in "Edge", and a fatalistic giving up of individual will in the poem "Words".

Plath's original ordering of the *Ariel* poems is recorded in the notes to her *Collected Poems* (1981). In the latter volume the poems are printed in chronological order of composition, and here the interested reader can find the 13 poems that the published version of *Ariel* omits: "The Rabbit Catcher," "Thalidomide," "Barren Woman," "A Secret," "The Jailor," "Magi," "The Other," "Stopped Dead," "The Courage of Shutting-Up," "Purdah," "Amnesiac,". Many of these poems concern stark



responses to maternity, and the body, and many concern the tensions of a marriage. "The Rabbit Catcher" is also the title of a poem in Hughes's 1998 volume *Birthday Letters*, which centers upon his life with Plath.

"The Swarm," is one of a sequence of five poems centered upon beekeeping that Plath intended to close the book. It concerns a procedure that allows the keeper to control a swarm of bees, moving them into a new hive. Plath's ordering of the poems invites us to read the last lines of "Fever 103°":

By kisses, by cherubim,  
By whatever these pink things mean,  
Not you, nor him  
Not you, nor him  
(My selves dissolving, old whore petticoats)\_  
To Paradise. (49-54)

As a prelude to the bee poems that immediately follow, and the determination to face isolation and adversity without the male figures, father and husband. In taking on the role of beekeeper, being initiated into beekeeping rituals, the poet takes on one of her father's major interests and in "The Swarm" learns the secrets of male control. Most significantly, her intended final poem, "Wintering" addresses the question of survival, and appears to affirm its possibility.

They can only carry their dead.  
The bees are all women,  
Maids and the long royal lady.  
They have got rid of the men,  
The blunt, clumsy stumblers, the boors.  
Winter is for women\_\_\_ (37-42)

This poem is dated October 9, 1962, early in the almost daily series of poems that she would write through October and November. In December Plath moved with her children to London, leaving the house in rural Devon that she and her husband had purchased in 1961. She then wrote the final poems of January and February 1963, which close the volume as it appeared in print. The poet who wrote those verses in a poem "Wintering", which Plath evidently thought of as belonging to a new and subsequent book, would not "Taste the spring" (50) of that year.

## Chapter Two

### Death of the Body and Rebirth of the Soul

Death is an all encompassing theme in *Ariel*, filled with explicit and intense imagery, brilliant language and fierce tone that leave the reader with a haunting impression. In Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" she portrays death as an art and her expertise in it.

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well. (43-45)

The subject matter is intimately personal and autobiographical, completely exposing the author and her innermost emotions and private matters with a frightening focus on death. Selected poems from *Ariel* explore the duality and different representations of death, portrayed as both a ritual of rebirth and a ritual of actual death, or what can be called death of the body and rebirth of the soul.

Among the American writers who attempted suicide, Sylvia Plath is worth exploring in feminist perspective. She is a well educated, disciplined writer who usually avoided the sentimentalities of some female writers. She is one of the poets who wrote about civilization poems of the post-Auschwitz, post-Hiroshima era and showed instance of extremist art along with Robert Lowell, John Berryman, and Anne Sexton. Plath dedicated herself to poetry writing with determination. Her autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, is a true delineation of her own life before she dies at the age of 31. Many of her poems that she wrote touch upon death itself, foreshadowing her upcoming suicide. As Plath is fascinated with death theme, so are the readers obsessed with the real cause of her death. Death is a prominent topic as can be seen in many talented writers.

The central concern present in Plath's late poetry is the dilemma of the two aspects of death and rebirth and almost everything in the poems contributes either to that subject or to the conceived resolutions of the dilemma. The poems relate the sense that the future is precluded and that no experience or circumstance can change that, so the only resolution is that of rebirth or transcendence of the self. In order to comprehend the deeper meaning of Plath's poems it is necessary to interpret her attraction to death as themes of rebirth and transcendence. Such is the distinction of death and rebirth that is fundamental to this thematic analysis of Plath's late poems.

This analysis focuses on Plath's late poems from *Ariel* with a few exceptions where reference is made to her earlier poems where it is necessary and relevant in the context of her work as a whole. To outline Plath's twofold portrayal of death following poems as representations of her poems on rebirth and her poems on actual death, have been chosen. The poems "Daddy," "Medusa" and "Lady Lazarus" are analyzed as rituals of rebirth or resurrection, while the poems "Death & Co." and "Edge" are analyzed as rituals of actual or bodily death.

Among the death poems that Sylvia Plath wrote, "Lady Lazarus" is the one that made her famous posthumously. The poem itself is highly confessional, dealing with her three successive suicidal attempts at different points of her life. "Lady Lazarus" may provide insight of conflicted mind of a talented woman attempting to make her mark during the period before woman's liberation. When Sylvia Plath wrote "Lady Lazarus" in 1962, she was only three months away from ending her life. She had already made one suicide attempt at the age of twenty.

"Lady Lazarus" epitomizes the mythical repetitive motif of dying and being reborn:

I have done it again.



One year in every ten

I manage it — (1-3)

Like the persona in "Daddy," Lady Lazarus must break away from "Herr Doktor," "Herr Enemy," (65-66) although both refer to her father, at the end, where she threatens men. She is also breaking away from her husband whose "Wedding ring" she leaves behind.

In "Lady Lazarus," the persona frees herself from the immobilizing authority, reaching her true character as victorious revived goddess, the entirely redeemed, fierce true self that is the person, embodied or veiled, in much of her late poems. "Lady Lazarus" introduces the twofold nature of the masculine image as the god of the sun and the god of the underworld, as both "Herr God" and "Herr Lucifer," (65-66) the two images of one distinct deity. The persona has been married to both these deities, each of whom has somehow died to her, producing her death in life. However, her form of a grieving goddess has changed to that of a dying and reviving goddess. Plath herself described Lady Lazarus as "a woman who has the great and terrible gift of being reborn. The only trouble is, she has to die first. She is the phoenix, the libertarian spirit, what you will. She is also just a good, plain, very resourceful woman". (Rosenthal 73)

As such, the phoenix, that is the figure of the true reborn self, is endowed with enchanting independence and is self-generative. Plath's engagement with endurance, in her life and in her art, is inevitably an engagement with rebirth. In challenging death "Lady Lazarus" expels the tragedy of her past. From this rebirth arises the form of heroine or goddess who ceremoniously slays her associates. Lady Lazarus's red hair associates her with a kind of expiring and reviving deity. Her red hair refers to the traditional mythic elements of the blazing phoenix. Although Lady Lazarus's

claims that "dying is an art" (45) her true talent lies in her great and terrible gift of being reborn, acknowledging that "It's easy enough to do it and stay put" (52). Lady Lazarus is an artist of resurrection, the valuable possession of "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" and "Herr Enemy" (65-66):

I am your opus,  
I am your valuable,  
The pure gold baby  
'That melts to a shriek.  
I turn and burn. (69-73)

However, this opus rebels against her gods, she eradicates their formation and thereby her false self. The first two "deaths" she carried out were essentially an effort to heal her connection to her father, the "Herr God, Herr Lucifer," (65-66) while in the end, death becomes her way to break away from these "gods" and ultimately redeeming her true self. As much as it is a burden, for Lady Lazarus, dying and being reborn is an innate art.

"Lady Lazarus" is, in a sense, Plath's vision of the state of perfection. She is the embodiment of resurrection, a brilliant artist possessing the terrifying gift of being reborn, an almighty and fearless goddess that devours the figures of her male oppressors:

Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.  
Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air. (53-58)

"Death & Co." is one of the greatest examples of the element of duality that characterizes the poems in *Ariel*. In the poem the two polarities, or faces of death, fear and overarching confidence, are united in the image of the dual nature of death.

Two, of course there are two.

It seems perfectly natural now — (1-2).

The title of the poem referring to a co-operation is both mocking and ironic. The ambivalence towards death is that although it represents an ominous state it also represents a figure of comfort for the suffering who believes in life after death. The poem is a monologue in the first person where no distinction is made between the poet and persona. That is, there is no persona present in the poem rather, it seems as though the poem is a sort of soliloquy to the poet herself.

The poem "Death & Co" is a prime illustration of Plath's ambivalence towards death, because the two contradictory forces, her fear of death and her fascination with it, are united in the poem. In the poem, Plath satirizes the two traditional portrayals of bodily death, the conceptual form of terminality and the real form of degeneration. The former becomes a raw, corpselike, businessman who delivers a persuasive promotion, insisting ". . . how sweet / The babies look in their hospital / Icebox, simple" (13-15) implying that death might do no less for her, making her as pristine and as tender. She satirizes the notion of death as a suitor or groom, who is low and revolting. He is a fake, artificial and sexually enigmatic character impertinently smiling and smoking "Death-gowns, / Then two little feet. / He does not smile or smoke." (23-25). The last stanza of the poem resonates a menacing and fearful tone:

I do not stir.

The frost makes a flower,

The dew makes a star,



The dead bell,

The dead bell.

Somebody's done for. (26-31)

This last chant invokes a conception of completeness attained by way of renewal essentially a rebirth. The conceptions present in the lines "The frost makes a flower, / The dew makes a star," (27-28) mark the renewal of something from a temporary into a more perpetual condition, and the time's wearing on, from night "frost," to morning "dew." When morning comes at last, "the dead bell" (28) is certainly tolling for her. Possibly, the speaker assumes a state of a more perpetual form, reaching the definiteness and completeness of a work of art. However, although these forms indicate transcendence in the mythical sense of death, eventually they do not comprise more than an infirm objection "I do not stir" (26) against an imminent actual or bodily fate.

The death theme which Plath refers to in her poems touches upon the death in personal and death in a larger scale. Her Poem entitled "Fever 103" relates the horrors of nuclear attack with her anguish at the betrayal of trust in marriage:

Pure? What does it mean?

The tongues of hell

Are dull, dull as the triple (1-3)

Devilish leopard!

Radiation turned it white

Like Hiroshima ash and eating in.

The sin. The sin. (22-25)

I am too pure for you or anyone.

Your body



Hurts me as the world hurts God. I am a lantern- (34-36)

Plath linked the overwhelming forces of the nuclear bomb in World War II to the betrayal of her own husband, who had developed relationship with another woman at that time. The direct cause of Plath's third suicidal attempt traces back to her unhappy marriage. By raising the direct question and the meaning of the word "pure" in the opening line, Plath reveals her anguish and agony when she states that she is "too pure for you [her husband] or anyone else." (34) The betrayal of her husband is an unpardonable sin, just as the nuclear bombs that took people's life.

In the summer of 1962, she discovered that her husband was attracted to, and possibly already having an affair with, the wife of another poet. Overwhelmed with grief and anger, she turned to writing as an outlet for her pain. The resulting poems, "Ariel", churned out at a furious pace, were the finest she had ever written. In one of the *Ariel* poems, "Stings" she wrote, "I have a self to recover, a queen." (52) Although she mourned for the end of her marriage.

They thought death was worth it, but I

Have a self to recover, a queen

Is she dead, is she sleeping?

Where has she been,

Whit her lion-red body, her wings of glass? (52-56)

She was gaining a new sense of freedom and power through her writing. With her suicidal attempt, she releases herself from the cruelty of the reality and revenges on her unfaithful husband. As fatal and futile her death is, she has transformed and transgressed herself from the unequal treatment in her life.

In Plath's poem "Ariel" she depicts a woman riding her horse in the countryside, at the very break of dawn. It details the ecstasy and personal

transformation that occurs through the experience. The poem begins with complete immobility in the darkness, while the rider waits on the horse. There is then a change – the intangible blue of hills and distances come into being. The rider is "God's lioness;"(4) she experiences the sensation of becoming one with her horse in a powerful entangling of knees and heels. The plowed field on which she rides soon splits and vanishes behind her, remaining elusive like the brown neck of her steed that she "cannot catch." (9)

Stasis in darkness.

Then the substanceless blue

Pour of tor and distance

God's lioness,

How one we grow,

Pivot of heels and knees!- The furrow (1-6)

She compares herself to Lady Godiva, who rode naked upon her horse. In the midst of the ride, she can slough off things of no consequence – "dead hands, dead stringencies." (21) She views herself as the foam on wheat, as a sparkling of light on the ocean. She discerns a child's cry through a wall, but ignores it. The rider is now a potent arrow, as well as dew that "flies suicidal." She has been subsumed into both the horse and the ride as she propels herself forward into the rising sun, which is depicted as a powerful red eye.

The child's cry

Melts in the wall.

And I

Am the arrow,

The dew that flies  
 Suicidal, at one with the drive  
 Into the red  
 Eye, the cauldron or morning. (23-30)

The poem "Edge" displays Plath's ultimate act of drama as the last illustration in a ceremoniously orchestrated tragedy. In itself, it does not comprise a ritual so much as it displays the conclusion of a ritual:

The woman is perfected.  
 Her dead  
 Body wears the smile of accomplishment,  
 The illusion of a Greek necessity  
 Her bare  
 Feet seem to be saying:  
 We have come so far, it is over. (1-8)

Sylvia Plath and her past are exempt from further revolution, accomplished and completed. Although there is death, the conception is not that of bodily destruction. The form of destruction is peculiarly counteracted by the evolution of the poem from a dead woman to the moon elevating the significance of the event to a different position. To such an extent as "Edge" exemplifies the last act of drama, it insists transcendence through realization, rather than through an actual rebirth. Everything seems resolute and perpetual, examined from a considerable distance, as if under the prospect of infinity.

The dead woman in "Edge," capsizing the development of birth, has consumed her cosmos and children, a scene that affirms the fulfillment of her existence. Likewise, the moon has consumed the woman's destiny back inside itself.



By consuming her children, she makes peace to them and the life they serve, in a manner that goes beyond reasoning and condemnation:

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,

One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.

She has folded

Them back into her body as petals

Of a rose close when the garden.

Stiffens and odours bleed

From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower. (9-16)

Here she does not perceive the children as different from herself, not as sheer formations which have rebelled against her, but as an inherent part of herself. In this fixed and endless illustration, death is not impending but an ultimate state. There is nothing that gives the indication that, like Lady Lazarus, the woman will be revived. In this sense, "Edge" displays another type of transcendence. Characterized by a distressing image of definiteness, it is somber image, enhanced by the knowledge that "Edge" is one of the last poems Sylvia Plath wrote before she committed suicide.



## Chapter Three

### Crushing Weight of Patriarchy

Sylvia Plath's poems confront the issues of gender, constricting social role and unrecognized life from a feminine perspective and ultimately develop into a female statement of the sexual battles between intellectual men and literary women. Western culture had always trapped the woman in divided loyalties, ambivalences and ambiguities. Plath recognized that the dichotomy between the self and the body symbolized the psychic fragmentation of her social and spiritual heritage. She exits from the patriarchal cage and thereby challenges the oppressive forces. The protagonist speaks in a voice wounded to death. Plath reveals a world which does not provoke for reformation but lays down the bare truths of a woman's self. Plath saddled on her horse Ariel, boldly rides straight into the dark, injured world of a woman and surveys the rigid social fabric created by man. The poems of *Ariel* reveal a complete hatred for the existing social order, painful ecstasy and a lost battle.

Sylvia Plath's poems portray women in the American patriarchal culture who undergo a condition of being repressed and rebel against male domination. In these poems the women characters suffer from oppression and imprisonment and they have to accept the conditions patiently. In general the women speakers of the poems have dreams of being free, independent, self-determined individuals; and all of them embody their dreams through death. In the poem "Daddy", the woman has succeeded in killing the men that dominate her life, while after death, the woman in "Lady Lazarus" transfigures into a killing agent and eats the man who has treated her as a thing. In "Fever 103°" and in "Ariel" the women have transformed themselves into untouchable and unseen matters so that they become superior over men, and the

woman in "Death & Co." in her powerlessness and surrender to death still has a hope for a new self rebirth.

"Daddy" is one of Plath's poems depicting how women have been oppressed and searched for self-identity. Manifestation of man's domination over woman is described by the woman of the poem. For thirty years she has lived like a foot, devoted to her Panzerman father as a maid. To describe her miserable condition she says that it is difficult for her to breathe freely or to sneeze at any time she wants to, she even has no courage to speak to her oppressors, her father and her husband.

You do not do, you do not do

Any more, black shoe

In which I have lived like a foot

For thirty years, poor and white,

Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.(1-5)

The expression of inability to communicate with man, "The tongue stuck in my jaw / It stuck in a barb wire snare" (25-26), signifies that being dominated is being dependent upon the man that she should worship. The woman of the poem is a portrait of feebleness and powerlessness, whereas the man signifies power and superiority. Living like a foot indicates that women are inferior creatures who have to shoulder all kinds of infliction, for though a foot is the lowest part of the human body, it has the heaviest task to do and responsible for any burden that the body has. That is why, because of her attribution, the woman of the poem has to sacrifice her own life.

She is a victim who gives her blood, her life, to her beloved husband who is a vampire, "The vampire who said he was you / And drank my blood for a year, / Seven years, if you want to know" (72-74). On the contrary, even though from the beginning to the end of the poem the description of the man's rank degrades, from God to Nazi,



from Nazi to Swastika, from Swastika to teacher, from teacher to devil, and from devil to vampire, each has a different value and significance, and all of them refer to man's superiority. In "Daddy" the woman is metaphorically the Jew, while sexual dominance, cruelty, and authoritarianism of man are metaphorical of the Nazi's traits. The Nazi's sadistic treatment towards the Jewish people symbolizes male dominance and female oppression. Thus, the male inhuman treatment upon woman as an individual in the poem might fit in with the phenomenon of American patriarchy in the nineteen sixties which refers to as the woman of the comfortable concentration camp.

Physically women live luxurious lives in that they can live with their husband and children in their home comfortably, but mentally they are oppressed and impoverished like the prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps. Friedan says that "the women who adjust themselves as housewives, who grow up wanting to be 'just a housewife', are in as much danger as the millions who walked to their own death in the concentration camps" (Betty Friedan 23). This statement refers to the notion that feminists basically claim that the cause of woman's unhappiness is when a woman is entirely tied to the home. Home is a place where the woman is indoctrinated to be indifferent to herself or even to be selfless, in which she is simply a part of the home itself. Her identity depends on her roles of being a good wife, a good mother, in short a good homemaker until she gains her own identity.

However, the woman of the poem has not given up her human identity. After thirty years of suffering, her self-consciousness is finally aroused. She gets annoyed. Accordingly, to gain herself, she murders her oppressors by way of planting a piece of wooden stick in the center of the vampire's chest, symbolically showing that she has combated man's oppression through the poem "Daddy".

Daddy, I have to kill you.

You died before I had time \_ (6-7)

If I've killed one man, I've killed two

The vampire who said he was you

And drank my blood for a year,

Seven years, if you want to know (71-74)

Her love in domination, seven years of marriage and great respect for her father throughout her life, has disappeared. Though finally she has to die, she has succeeded in fighting against her deep-rooted conventional ideas of womanhood.

The suffering woman, who is metaphorical Jew, and the dominating man, who is a metaphorical Nazi, were also mentioned in the poem "Lady Lazarus".

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen. (5-9)

But, the latter directly refers to the woman's hatred of the male doctor who dominates her. "Lady Lazarus" is concerned with the troubles that a good woman should face to be reborn as a new self. The creation of a new self is a symbol of freedom from man's domination. Consequently, the woman in "Lady Lazarus" is willing to suffer, to die one time every decade. For her, dying is a process of being reborn symbolizing her liberty from man and is an art, something of high value.

I have done it again.

Ones year in every ten

I manage it\_\_\_ (1-3)



The German article "Herr" to address a man in "Lady Lazarus" seems to be meant to stress the woman's rebellion against man's authoritative power. The woman of the poem is aware of man's high patriarchal self-esteem. He will neither be looked down, nor be ignored by a woman. As a result, commenting on his actions toward her, with the bitterest irony she says, "Do not think I underestimate your great concern" (72). The woman's hatred towards man, however, is uncontrollable. Before taking revenge she vows to "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" (79), a way of addressing God to show her idea that God is male and that he is also a deity of evil spirit, and in order to defeat him she must become a demonic man destroyer. Deliberately or not, the breaking of conventional language is also done by women to show their rebellion against male superiority.

To reach freedom the woman in "Ariel" has passed through two stages of journey in her life. In the first stage the woman is "God's lioness," (4). She sacrifices her life for motherly devotion. Then, after reaching the second stage she is the new spirit of Godiva, unveiled female rebelliousness. There is a shift from a symbol of a devout mother into a brave rebel.

White

Godiva, I unpeel

Dead hands, dead stringencies. (19-21)

In the excitement of the morning ride, the woman comes to delight at losing herself; she is White Godiva, saying I unpeel, to indicate her self-liberation from woman attributes. Though the self-consciousness raising process in "Ariel" is not the same as what happened in "Daddy", the cause propelling the emergence of the self-consciousness itself seems similar. Before becoming new self both the women in "Ariel" and in "Daddy" have been trapped in womanhood ideas which force them to

accept voluntary enslavement. The woman in "Daddy" has served and worshipped men for many years, whereas the woman in "Ariel" has devoted her life to being a good mother for her child. Nonetheless, because of their consciousness these women finally succeed in breaking out of their imprisonment.

The woman's new self in "Ariel" has completely become an individual, a full human being who can determine for herself. She can now freely move to any place that she desires without having to care for her child.

And now I

Foam to wheat, a glitter of seas

The child's cry

Melts in the wall. (22-26)

Her new identity is no longer the real woman of the traditional role concept. So, the transformation of the woman's spirit in "Ariel" from God's lioness into White Godiva is a sign of her uprooted maternity spirit. This new spirit is loosely tied to womanhood affairs and is the free self who refuses things she does not want to do. Courage and determination are the main clues needed to liberate women from men's domination, while suffering through struggle is training for woman to be set free from the cultural stereotypes of a good wife.

The exaggerated demand upon a wife is man's sin, that traps, and paralyses a woman's life. Such monstrous bondage is too harmful to be shouldered by a woman, like what the woman in "Fever 103" said, "Your body / Hurts me as the world hurts God" (35-36). One of the deeply rooted feminine roles is a wife's task to serve her husband's needs, including his biological needs. This is exploitation and the woman of the poem feels that she has played a role of whore. She is an acceptor of a lecher's kiss.

Darling all night

I have been flickering, off, on, off, on.

The sheets grow heavy as a leacher's kiss. (28-30)

Consequently, to get a new self a woman should be brave, opposing men and remain herself as a woman, ready to suffer first. A woman in the poem "Fever 103" defines her new self is a pure being, and to become a pure being, the woman of the poem has to die for three days as a manifestation of purification. In purifying herself she puts off all her attributes that she has. She puts off her old whore petticoats. Nevertheless, these attributes are extremely difficult to be renounced, even the fires of hell are unable to cleanse them, for they are man's sins which are not only attached to her body, but also soaked deeply down into her muscle, blood, bone, and flesh, as well as into her mind. That is why, her accomplishment of detaching herself from the cultural patterns of womanhood that have dominated her life is very important.

Not him, nor him

(My selves dissolving, old whore petticoats)\_\_\_\_\_

To Paradise. (53-55).

The journey to liberation is something vital, resembling Christ's ascension to Heaven. The transformation from a real body to the pure soul in "Fever 103" and "Ariel" is the embodiment of woman's liberation. A full being of a woman is an independent individual who is out of the reach of man's power. Therefore, to be a liberated self also means to confront or to create a barrier against man's domination and exploitation.

The woman in "Death & Co." is passive. She is the type of woman who clings subserviently to a female role. Her resignation to death as a total surrender can be regarded as the tragic state between hope and hopelessness. The personification of



death represented by two male figures with two different natures symbolizes man's superiority.

Whoever they are and whatever qualities they have, they are unconquerable. Of the first male figure, the woman of the poem is a victim. She is his powerless prey, "I am red meat" (10), because he is a vulture, a corpse-hunting predator. Of the second one, she is a love provider in that "He wants to be loved" (25). To both figures the woman has sincerely dedicated her whole life. Such a woman's condition is very dangerous because it can destroy her identity.

The frost makes a flower,

The dew makes a star,

The dead bell,

The dead bell.

Somebody's done for. (36-40)

These lines indicate that the woman of the poem has been in great despair. She has been exhausted. She cannot stand suffering any longer. However, though it is obscure, after dying she still has an expectation of a free rebirth. With regards to the first figure, she is only a thing, a victim of man's authority. However, she insists "I am not his yet" (11). Meanwhile, for the sake of love she gives her life to the second figure without any force, although she does not want to be his servant forever "I do not stir" (26). This expectation of being reborn as a true independent individual is a feminist dream built upon self consciousness.

After acting out their feminine roles, the women of Plath's poems discover nothing except dissatisfaction and the feelings of loss of self-identity. Their consciousness stirs them to listen to their inner voices in order to find their selves. They perform a supernatural journey to death symbolizing their search for identity.

Death gives them fulfilment. The process of creating a self, a new identity, involves a hard struggle. A woman should suffer and sacrifice her life first, so that the achievement of freedom from man's oppressive domination is rewarding.

In "Daddy" the woman's freedom is celebrated by the villagers, people who are concerned about her condition. They are dancing and stamping on her father's as well as her husband's bodies.

And the villagers never liked you.

They are dancing and stamping on you.

They always knew it was you.

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through. (77-86)

The new self in "Fever 103" says that she is praised and welcomed by cherubim, angles in heaven, and by kisses because she is pure like Jesus Christ. She no longer cares about the pink things, matters of feminine traits.

By kisses, by cherubim,

By whatever these pink things mean,

Not you, nor him. (49-51)

The women in these poems have been trapped in their roles for so long; eventually achieve their freedom and their sense of self. They triumph over oppression. The messages of the poems are very meaningful for a feminist because they refer to woman's constant and anguished search for identity, a typical feminist theme. The women of these poems implicitly declare war against men.

## Chapter Four

### Relation with the Spirit, Human and the World

Sylvia Plath often writes about the tensions which inevitably arise from a relationship, even a positive one, between two people. However, rarely do the "I" and "You" in Plath's poems exhibit a united solidarity. Instead, the two are more often enemies or rivals. Even in poems such as "Lesbos", in which the tone appears to be positive and jovial, the persona's mask often slips to reveal underlying hatred and scorn. "Lesbos" is one poem in which the "I" speaker appears to address "You" as a friend, but as the poem continues, the reader realizes the situation has been misrepresented. The speaker admits that she is a "pathological liar" (7). She orally addresses the listener with the endearing terms "love" (7) and "jewel" (52) but actually considers her a "vase of acid" (71). Instead of recognizing friendship, the speaker perceives her relationship with another as contrary, "two venomous opposites" (36). Although the characters within a poem may turn against each other, the reader is not forced to follow suit by viewing each character as a personal enemy.

Instead, a variety of options are open to the reader, who may love, pity, envy, hate, or feel any other possible emotions concerning a character. However, the reader's emotional reaction to a character, Plath attempts, through a particular rhetorical device, to prompt the reader to identify with a character and his or her experiences expressed in the poem. The device Plath employs to encourage the process of identification is her studied use of personal pronouns. To actually identify with a character and experience the poem personally, the reader must be able to assume either the "I" or "You" pronoun found in the *Ariel* poems. Because the pronoun "I" is customarily taken to represent the writer's persona, the reader generally accepts the "You" pronoun of the addressee. The *Ariel* collection consists almost



entirely of dramatic monologues, poems in which a known "I" addresses a silently listening "You." In the poems of *Ariel* Plath assumes a fundamental tension in relationships between characters. Perhaps this tension is written into the poems as a result of Plath's rage against her husband and parents, a rage which fueled much of her poetry and allowed her to assume that an "Other" is most often an opponent or enemy rather than a helpful or friendly counterpart.

An opposing "Other" is not necessarily another human external to the Self; in fact, an "Other" may be a part of the Self, warring internally. When one is at war with oneself, it is easier and perhaps even inevitable for one to be at war with others. To escape the responsibility of her own darker thoughts and desires, Plath often refines her feelings in the format of poetry and redirects them against or attributes them to her friends, family, and, ultimately, the reader, who receives Plath's furious accusations by accepting the role of "You." Plath's frustration with herself and with others is also often aimed toward such extremes as God, who controls the universe, and inanimate objects, which have no control over a human's fate. Thus, the *Ariel* poems which deal with Plath's exploration of the unsubstantiated relationship between "I" and "Other" may be categorized according to the three spheres identified by spiritual, human, and natural.

"I" and supernatural "thou": Plath did not allow her initial perception of the spiritual sphere to idle, but instead refined it throughout her short life. Plath developed an early respect for God as a powerful supernatural "Other". However, Plath's traditional view of God as controller of the cosmos did not remain static. During her darkest shades of life, Plath's concept of God shifted. For instance, God is accused of being a "great Stasis"(16) of "vacuous black" (7) in "Years" and a mere "Adding

machine" (43) in "A Birthday Present", while Christ is portrayed as an "aborted hare" (11) in "Totem".

In "The Hanging Man", Plath contemplates a possible relationship between "I" as human and "Thou" as God. In this poem, Plath imagines how a God might treat a human if they were to meet face to face. When readers first deal with this poem, they must wonder who or what "The Hanging Man" referred to in this title. They may guess that it is a punished criminal. Once readers enter into the poetic world, they will find the description still unclear:

By the roots of my hair some god got hold me.

I sizzled in his blue volts like a desert prophet.

The nights snapped out of sight like a lizard's eyelid:

A world of bald white days in a shadeless socket.

A vulturous boredom pinned me in this tree.

If he were I, he would do what I did. (1-6)

Within the poem itself, there is no mention of "The Hanging Man," a name which could refer equally well to both the persona and to the persona's "Other" since the "god" hangs or executes the persona, and the persona is the one who is suspended in a tree. May be she means her psychiatrist as "God", a powerful figure who had the authority to force Plath to undergo electroshock therapy to ease her depression. The image of the god's inflicting "blue volts" of electricity rather than the expected "blue bolts" of lightning reinforces the idea of a mechanically induced current sparked by the god-like analyst. Or does Plath mean God, the being who controls the universe and who allowed His own son to experience death by hanging from a cross. One obstacle to the easy acceptance of this notion is the unexplained question of why Plath used the small letter "g" in "god" if the poem were to be read as a reinterpretation of



the events of Calvary. In her *Ariel* poems "Lady Lazarus," "Poppies in October," "Medusa," and "The Moon and the Yew Tree," Plath uses the capital "G" to assign singularity and omnipotence to the person of "God."

The tension between the human and the "god" is obvious in this poem; the "god" torments the human on a whim, simply to ease his "vulturous boredom" (5). "The Hanging Man," which was composed 27 June 1960 (Collected Poems 142), is an early poem. In fact, it is the only poem written before 1961 that is included in *Ariel*. After 1961, as her life became increasingly crisis filled, Plath found the Holy "Other" to be a source of comfort rather than the imposing and arbitrary presence described in "The Hanging Man." In her late poems, while she examines ironically the sacraments and religious rituals and even pokes fun at God, she maintains that capital "G" to signify a basic need or respect for the supernatural "Other".

Actually, even with Plath's personally documented change of perception, the poem itself remains complicated. Plath deliberately layers allusions to history, art, religion, folklore, and her own personal experiences to create a literary work that leaves the reader hanging, like the character in the poem. Ultimately, Plath is the "god" with the rhetorical power to manipulate her readers. By writing in the first person, Plath prompts the reader to assume the uncomfortable identity of the victimized speaker, to become the victim. Hence, readers not only observe the speaker's electrocution, but experience imaginatively the sensation of being destroyed by the "god." The reader could easily feel disturbed when reading this poem that is itself short and pointed, intense as a lightning bolt. This poem is Plath's message to the reader just as the "blue volts"(2) represent a message from the god to the "prophet" (2).



The god, the persona, and the reader are not the only characters who may be called "The Hanging Man." At the end of the poem, the reader is distanced from the "I" pronoun when the persona states, "If he were I, he would do what I did" (6). Because the reader cannot read the fictional persona's mind, the reader cannot know the forerunner to the phrase "what I did." (6) The only action the reader knows for certain that the victim performed was accepting or accommodating herself to the god's wishes. "Hanging Man" might be the author, as is typical in confessional poems, they may deduce that her unspecified action was her chronic attempt, eventually successful, to commit suicide and thereby avoid the god. If the god had followed her example of committing suicide, he would have broken his sadistic cycle, abolishing his "vulturous boredom" (5) and eliminating the need to torture and victimize.

However, because the reader does not actually know what the speaker's action was, the reader is forced to emerge from the speaker's personal pronoun "I" and step out of the world of the poem. Thus, the reader is left hanging at the end of the poem, a confused "Other". In the sense that the reader is left to finish the poem by supplying a possible antecedent for the troublesome phrase "what I did," the reader becomes an author or god, inflicting on the poem the interpretation desired. Hence, the author becomes the victim, having relinquished control of the meaning of the poem assuming the author possessed that power to begin with. However, in the sense that the author set up the situation so that the reader would supply that crucial bit of information, the author still manifests fundamental control. Readers remain uncomfortable with having too much power to dictate meaning. Thus, the confessing author "I" continuously reasserts herself over the reading "Other."

"I" and Human "You"—Plath's portrayal of the "I" and "Thou" relationship between God and humans horrifies the reader no more than her depiction of "I" and

"You" relationship between people. Her rage is subtly controlled but relentless, especially with regard to members of her family. Plath bitterly confronts the pain aroused by memories of her mother in "Medusa", her husband in "The Applicant", and her children in "Lesbos". However, Plath's familial wrath is best documented in the exorcising poem, "Daddy". Sylvia Plath's rage at members of her family, particularly her father who died as a result of a neglected wound when Plath was eight, made Plath write many poems in which she externalizes her experience with an opposing but intimately familiar "Other". "Daddy" is one such poem. The poem shocks the reader with its light-hearted and casual tone juxtaposed with harsh and violent images.

The familiar term "Daddy," a child's trusting name for father, prompts the reader to expect a fun, light-hearted poem. The first stanza also carries this illusion of gaiety and humor:

You do not do, you do not do  
 Any more, black shoe  
 In which I have lived like a foot  
 For thirty years, poor and white.  
 Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.(1-5)

The human "You" refers to her father in this poem. In this poem she uses "You" 25 times and "I" 24 times. These are frequently used words in this poem. This shows Plath's fascination of "I" and "You". First stanza of the poem may resemble the nursery rhymes.

After noticing the childish nursery-rhyme tone and rhythm in "Daddy," the readers who expect simple and cute images to balance the sound, are therefore shocked when confronted with an attack of harsh anguish and horror. The second

stanza of "Daddy" shocks the reader who has been prepared to expect humor and lightness:

Daddy, I have had to kill you.

You died before I had time—

Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,

Ghastly statue with one grey toe

Big as a Frisco seal. . . . (6-10)

The reader began to read the poem under false assumptions that the poem would be positive and uplifting. There are still hints of an almost harsh gaiety—the use of the "oo" sounds in over half of the eighty lines; "do" (1), "shoe" (2), "foot" (3), and "Achoo" (5) are examples of end-rhymes from the first stanza. Also the child-like repetition of sounds, words, and phrases makes the poem sound less serious than it is.

You do not do, you do not do (1)

Of wars, wars, wars (18)

Ich, ich, ich, ich (27)

And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack (39)

But no less a devil for that, no not

Any less the black man (49-50)

Although the syntax indicates that the poem is written from a child's perspective, the images of the poem result from the experiences of a speaker with a far more sophisticated outlook. These images involve specific and gross descriptions of a tongue in barbed wire, a boot in the face, the biting of a heart in two, emblems of torture--a rack and screw, and a blood-sucking vampire. The persona summons ghastly images of her father in an effort to exorcise them and attain her freedom from the haunting memories. Her final words, "I'm through," (80) convey her belief that she



has succeeded in putting old ghosts to rest. The readers are able to receive the speaker's accusations because the person listening to the speaker has not responded within the confines of the written poem. Thus, the reaction has been left open to the reader's whim. Nevertheless, readers remain uneasy at their unwilling involvement in what appears to be a domestic squabble. Plath's squabbles are not left only to a familiar "Other" the father; in this case reading strangers are even drawn into the unceasing tension between "I" and "You".

"I" and object "It". Plath's poems in which she establishes a relationship between the persona "I" and an opposing "It" to deal with less personal topics. However, such is not the case. Even when she is confronting a part of nature of no emotional consequence or Plath uses characteristics of the object "It" to express or illustrate a part of the experience of being a human "I." For instance, Plath insisted that "Elm", written in April 1962, was merely a poetic exercise using the giant elm that shaded her house in Devon. However, the poem "Elm" is not simply a poem about a tree. The "I" in Plath's work is always on the way toward a new state of being. The poet's task is to externalize the self without mediation in the objects and processes of the outer world. In such poems as "Elm," for example, the mind merges with the object it contemplates, expressing all internal perceptions in the language of the external world of objects.

In "Elm" Plath establishes through the structure of dramatic monologue a set of oppositions between "I" and "It", Moon and Elm, reader and poet. Instead of providing a poetic description of an elm, Plath animates the tree, allowing a human personality to speak through the elm. Elm is a female character who experiences maternal jealousy. Not one to stay calm and wait for a time of suffering to pass quietly, Elm rails loudly against the elements that haunt her.

Now I break up in pieces that fly about like clubs.

A wind of such violence

Will tolerate no bystanding: I must shriek. (19-21)

Thus "Elm", a staunch tree of flailing branches, represents a strong and outspoken woman who confronts problems.

The poem begins by boasting of her experience and knowledge of "the bottom" (1) attained through her "great tap root" (1). She makes no effort to calm her listener or tone down her boast, especially when she points to the reader and asserts bluntly, "It the bottom is what you fear" (2), implying the direct opposite that she courageously fears nothing. From the beginning, the reader is placed in a position inferior to that of Elm, a character of great self-confidence. No reader likes to be reminded of his or her human frailties. In particular, humans try to conceal their fears from the notice of others. However, Elm does not allow any avenue of escape for the reader. Elm's attitude might be tolerable to the reader as long as the reader knew that Elm herself had something to fear. However, Elm forestalls any such hope by claiming to "know the bottom" (1) or the worst of the situation.

Elm may have convinced herself that she has conquered all her fears, but readers notice that she does have an extraordinary preoccupation with the moon:

The moon, also, is merciless: she would drag me

Cruelly, being barren.

Her radiance scathes me. Or perhaps I have caught her.

I let her go. I let her go

Diminished and flat, as after radical surgery. (22-26)

Elm seems uncertain, even hesitant, about her relationship to the moon. Elm fears more than just the moon herself. Elm's fear is also directed toward the moon's barren

condition, a seemingly depraved physical state which makes the moon act "cruelly" (23). Elm allows the rival Other to escape, yet the moon does not leave altogether, as she retains a powerful influence over Elm.

How your bad dreams possess and endow me.

I am inhabited by a cry.

Nightly it flaps out

Looking, with its hooks, for something to love. (27-30)

Nevertheless, Elm may secretly worry that her creativity will dry up if the moon and her barrenness, the sterile condition Elm fears, abandon Elm who is stimulated by the tension. While tension may foster productivity, it is never comfortable to live with. In contrast to Elm's earlier assertion that she does not fear the "bottom," (1) Elm now admits that she is "terrified by this dark thing / That sleeps in me" (31-32). Ultimately, Elm admits both defeat and victory when she remarks, "I am incapable of more knowledge" (37). A reader could contend that Elm really does know everything. However, if she knew it all, why would she remain "terrified" (31). The reader might also propose that she is simply too tired and depressed to acquire more knowledge or that she has been so saturated with knowledge that she cannot absorb any more. Elm has admitted that she is bound by limitations in her mental and physical capacity. That is why she allows the "cry"(28) to inhabit her; evil though it may be, it grants her the irrational understanding, the voice to assert the final truth that goes beyond knowledge: "These are the isolate, slow faults / That kill, that kill, that kill" (41-2).

These "faults" described by Plath do multiply, burdening not only the characters, but readers as well. However, while characters are locked into their



contexts, readers may alter theirs by putting down the text and severing the relationship with the poet's created world.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

In the twentieth century playing on traditional values, many poets were seeking new techniques and forms in poetry. In contrast to traditional poetry based on impersonality, confessional poets try to develop and find new ways to express themselves through poetry. In the mid-1920s, confessional poetry emerged as an innovation and a new kind of experimental attempt in American poetry. The development of confessional poetry, therefore, is a new trend in contemporary American poetry. As a literary movement, confessional poetry was embraced by a number of poets in the 1950s and 1960s who were called "confessionals." Confessional poetry is an autobiographical mode of verse that reveals the poet's personal problems with unusual frankness. The term is usually applied to certain poets of the United States from the late 1950s to the late 1960s. The great examples of confessional poetry are Sylvia Plath's poems on suicide in *Ariel*.

The only confessional poets are Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and W.D. Snodgrass. What they had in common were several definitive social conditions. First, they had developed close personal affiliations. Lowell was the teacher and mentor of Snodgrass, Sexton, and Plath, who also knew each other's work very well. Second, they had all been through early psychological breakdowns and treatment, following rather early marriages. Third, all four poets had become parents – of daughters, as it happens – not long before writing their confessional poems. Finally, they understood the dynamics of family life in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis.

The modern techniques that confessionals used gave them fame and popularity. Confessional poetry is blended with the poet's inner psychology and

directly related with their lives and personal experiences. The poems were presented in the first-person voice with little apparent distance between the speaker and the poet; they were highly emotional in tone, autobiographical in content, and narrative in structure. Using aesthetic forms and styles, the confessionals try to reveal something about their lives to show and share with others. Confessionals use their own personal experiences or major personal traumas, depression, and relationships as a source of their works. However, they do not just record their emotions on paper; craft and construction are also important to their work. Therefore, the subject "I" becomes the central and explicit expression of private life, and confessional poets express themselves through themes such as madness, alcoholism, liberation, sexuality, and despondence.

Plath experimented with different styles. First, she began writing about nature. At college, she was interested in traditional poetic forms, and she mostly wrote sonnets. Then she experimented with confessional poetry, not as a place for her to share personal experiences and thoughts, but as a new stage to be explored. Moreover, by means of the style and the structure, Sylvia Plath's poems are really different from traditional poetry. She writes free verse with run-on lines, minor stresses, irregular rhyme and irregular rhythms and meter. Her poems rhyme like a beat in music. There is rhythmic richness in Plath's poetry. Additionally, she enriched each of her poems with metaphors and figurative language.

In traditional poetry, words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern with regular accents, and they are carefully selected for sound, accent, and meaning to express ideas and emotions. Each poem has rhythm, melody, imagery, and form. Poetry follows patterns of sound. It uses rhythm, rhymes, meter, and alliterations. Plath uses assonance, consonance, alliteration, along with free verse rhythms. Poetry should



include and consist of rhythm, figurative language, and harmony, otherwise it would neither be a poem nor different from prose, because they are inseparable parts of poetry. It is a text with a regular or irregular rhythm, it may be metrical, and creates images. The pattern of beats is a regularly arranged order of stressed and unstressed syllables. English meter is based on combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables. However, Plath's poems are free verse which have no metrical pattern but depend on the natural cadences of speech. Plath focuses on the sound and rhythm of words and writes many of her poems with unstressed syllables followed by stressed ones. Like music, poems have melody through sound devices. A poet chooses words both for their sound and their meanings. Rhythm is a kind of sound device that contributes to melody and the musical quality of poetry. Plath's poems have rhythm, her language is rich and versatile, there is a harmonious structure in her poems, and her concepts are remarkable.

Using assonance, consonance, alliteration and rhyme, Plath creates melodious structure. For example assonance can be seen in "Lady Lazarus." Plath writes, "Soon, soon the flesh/ The grave cave ate will be/ At home on me." (16-18). Use of alliteration and consonance is found in "Death & Co.": "I do not stir./ The frost makes a flower./ The dew makes a star," (26-28). Another example is from "Cut:" "O my/ Homunculus, I am ill./ I have taken a pill to kill:" (22-24) in these lines "ill" rhymes with "pill" and "kill." In one poem, Plath employs rhyme with alliteration, assonance, and consonance. For example, in "Medusa," the use of assonance starts from the beginning: "Off that landspit of stony mouth-plugs" (1). The roughness started with "o" sound continues in the poem. The sound used in each line is rough, not fluid. Each word appears as a separate phrase. "Eyes rolled by white sticks/ Ears cupping the sea's incoherences" (2-3). There is alliteration in the second stanza: "Plying their

wild cells in my keel's shadow, / Pushing by like hearts" (7-8). Both alliteration and rhyme with "r" consonance convey the speed and power of the poem: "Red stigmata at the very center, / Riding the rip tide to the nearest point of departure" (9-10). There is alliteration in the following stanza in lines "Dragging their Jesus hair, / Did I escape, I wonder?" (11-12). Use of consonant and vowel sound highlights the strong dependence of sound in the poem: "My mind winds to you" (13). There is assonance created with "e" sound in the following line: "Keeping itself, it seems, in a state of miraculous repair" (15). Then alliteration and assonance are used together: "In any case, you are always there" (16). In the next line, there is assonance "e": "Tremulous breath at the end of my line" (17). There is repetition of vowel and consonant sound in lines: "Curve of water upleaping/ To my water rod, dazzling and grateful, / Touching and sucking" (18-20).

In the next stanza, the repetition of the same sentences and phrases increase the power of the poem: "I didn't call you. / I didn't call you at all" (lines 21-22) and "Nevertheless, nevertheless" (23). The sound of "ea" suggests the speed of the poem: "You steamed to me over the sea" (24). The use of assonance can be seen in the following lines: "Fat and red, a placenta" (25). In the next stanza, there is alliteration of the "b" sound: "Squeezing the breath from the blood bells" (28). The next line starts with assonance of "e" and "o" sounds: "Overexposed, like an X-ray, / Who do you think you are?" (35-36). Following lines show the use of assonance of "a" and "o" sounds and alliteration of "b" sound together: "A Communion wafer? Blueberry Mary? / I shall take no bite of your body, / Bottle in which I live" (37-39). "Berry" rhymes with "Mary" and "body", "Take" rhymes with "bite." There is a repetition of "s" sound and assonance of "a" sound through the last stanza: "Ghastly Vatican/ I am sick to death of hot salt/ Green as eunuchs, your wishes/ Hiss at my sins" (40-43).



Also, there is assonance of "o" and "e" sounds in the last stanza: "Off, off, eely tentacle!" Although Plath's poems are written in free verse, they have melodious structure created by various forms of rhyme, alliteration, assonance and consonance.

The poems in *Ariel* are generally based on the effects of rhythm and sound, and are unforgettable for their subject matter, voice, metaphor, and turbulent production. Some of them rely on traditional meter but they highly depend on rhythm and sound for their effect and meaning. Rhythm and sound transmit meaning in poetry. Rhythm is neither outside a poem's meaning nor an ornament to it. Rhythmic structures are expressive forms, cognitive elements and communicating. Rhythmic consciousness suggests that we recognize rhythmical patterns in poems generally without realizing it. Rhythmic patterns are recognized by the mind as meaning and emotion, and a sense of rhythm and sound accompanies the emotional side of a poetic passage. Poetry cannot occur without rhythm, language, and harmony.

Plath's works have the basic formal elements, and her poems are effective. Furthermore, the poems in *Ariel* are different from her earlier works and demonstrate a great deal of poetic growth, development, and refinement. For example, Plath's best-known poem, "Daddy," is accepted as the poem where Plath declares her love and hatred against her father because of emotional deprivation of a father figure from her childhood. "Daddy" became one of her best-known poems because it can be used as a proof that the father-daughter relation is the primary source for Plath's writing process. "Daddy" was a poem about a girl with an Electra Complex. Her father died while she thought he was God. Her father had a poignant and prolific impact on her work. Plath writes the poem with unstressed followed by stressed syllables that echo the heartbeat. Also, the poem is written in the song rhythms that echo nursery rhymes



which often depend on nursery rhyme for their fast-moving cadences. "Daddy" has an astounding emotional range within the persona's voice.

As in "Lady Lazarus," Plath connects her childhood memories with comprehension of the world as a grown woman. Yet, she still appears as an old child who looks for love and attention and finds nothing because the father as a desired object is lost. She wants to be her father's daughter. "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" have the same theme, images, symbols, and language. Along with "Mary's Song," they are called Holocaust poems. In these poems, Plath identifies herself with the Jew suffering under the Nazi regime as a victim of the Holocaust. For references to "Jew," "Nazi," and the "Holocaust" in "Daddy," Plath's identification with the Jews who suffered at Auschwitz has a hollow ring. For the formalistic aspect of the poem, the auditory genius of the poem, which works on one single returning note and rhyme, echoing from start to finish "You do not do, you do not do/ .../ I used to pray to recover you/ .../ Ach, du." (1-15).

There are a lot of repetitions in the poem "Daddy" of the same words or the phrases throughout the poem: "You do not do, you do not do" (1), "Of wars, wars, wars" (18), "Ich, ich, ich, ich," (27), "An engine, an engine" (32), "And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack" (39), "Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You" (45), "The boot in the face, the brute/ Brute heart of a brute like you" (49-50), "And get back, back, back to you" (59), "And I said I do, I do" (67), and "If I've killed one man, I've killed two" (70). Repetition generally shows relation between similar words and makes readers notice the familiarity, but repetition of a single word or phrase creates an opposite effect and causes defamiliarization. Repetition breaks open the relation between the signifier and the signified, and it shows how the gap widens and words become unfamiliar and get away from the objects they intend to name. The more a word is

repeated, the more obscure the meaning becomes. Even the sound of a word becomes unfamiliar. Plath addresses her defamiliarization with the line "I have always been scared of you, / With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo." (41-42) Gobbledygoo is the abbreviated form of "gobbledygook," which refers to a complicated unclear language that is hard to understand or even incomprehensible. Plath admits that "I could hardly speak" (28) because the language she uses is already on the edge of fracturing. Thus, "The black telephone's off at the root, / The voices just can't worm through." (69-70). Labeling "Daddy" as "a poem of total rejection, when she writes that "the black telephone's off at the root," she is turning her back on the modern world as well. Such rejection of family and society leads to that final rejection, that of the Self. Her suicide is everywhere predicted, in poems of symbolic annihilation and human fascination with death.

The poems in *Ariel* are written in free verse, which has its own kind of rhythm and rhyme. For example, "Elm," written in free verse, has fourteen stanzas of three lines each, composed of varying line lengths. The poem is a dramatic monologue in which Plath personifies objects, and the speaker of the poem becomes a tree. The elm is perceived as a woman in labor. Plath uses three pronouns; "she," "I," and "you" which are the divided selves of an identity in three separate characters. The first line, which is one of the longest lines in the poem, starts: "I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root." (1). Image of the elm occurs as a woman who knows the bottom, which can be the essential nature of truth through personal experience. In the second stanza, the speaker has knowledge of truth in herself, and this knowledge is represented by the image of the sea. The phrase "the voice of nothing" (6) alludes to Shakespeare's famous lines from *Macbeth* (1606) "sound and fury, / Signifying



nothing." The poet creates an atmosphere of maddened sound and fury to unfold bitter experience.

For Plath, metaphor is a rhetorical device as a figure of speech, but at the same time it enhances thought. Metaphors not only carry new ideas or information but also they operate the similarity. Metaphors create new meanings of various types; without them, neither knowledge nor language can grow. Metaphor not only enhances literal statements but also produces insight. Plath's poetry is like a prism each word and line has a separate face and side. In her poems metaphor is not just a decorative device, but that metaphors express truths that cannot be expressed otherwise. Thus, apart from the ornamental function of metaphor, it is a powerful cognitive device. Metaphors are also stylistic elements and affect both speaking and writing. They function as a rhetorical means. Rhetoric is the art and skill of using language and words effectively, and rhetorical language can be grand and impressive. Most important, metaphors express ideas that cannot be stated in plain language without losing the meaning.

Metaphor is complex and open-ended because it not only uses existing similarities but also creates new ones throughout linguistic creativity. Therefore, Plath accepts metaphors and symbols as an everlasting source to create her own images. For example, Lazarus is a character in the Bible, but she twists the meaning and creates her own metaphor imposing femininity and calls it "Lady Lazarus," so that Lazarus becomes not a symbol of a man reborn after death, but something new and different. Thus Plath produces her own imagery through her art. Metaphors have an essential role in Plath's poetry. One of the commonly-used metaphors in Plath's poetry is pregnancy. Plath develops the metaphors of pregnancy, labor, fertility, and barrenness. Some of Plath's poems that share these themes are "Childless Woman," "Barren Woman," "Munich Mannequins," "The Fearful," "The Rival," "Three



Women" and "The Other." During her early years of her marriage, Plath begins to worry about not being able to get pregnant, and she implies that she can sacrifice her writing career to have children.

The title "Lady Lazarus" also recalls the image of rebirth because Lazarus is based on a biblical story about a man resurrected after death by the miracle of Jesus. "Lady" echoes the biblical Madonna and Lady Godiva, who were legendary in their suffering and ability to withstand various forms of torture. Additionally, both "A Better Resurrection" and "Lady Lazarus" are connected with each other. Plath enacts her death repeatedly in order to cleanse herself of the "million filaments" of guilt and anguish that torment her. After she has returned to the womblike state of being trapped in her cave, like the biblical Lazarus, or of being rocked "shut as a seashell," (40), she expects to emerge reborn in a new form.

"Tulips" marks a new stage in Plath's development. Her earlier efforts to train her vision outward, toward the landscape, and to concentrate on realistic details, as well as her early efforts in set forms combine with the Yaddo exercises to produce her final poems, of which "Tulips" is the first example. "Tulips" is an unusual poem, written as a first-person narrative poem with the speaker being Plath herself. It is not a cheerful poem, but it moves from cold to warmth, from numbness to love, from empty whiteness to vivid redness, a process manipulated by imagination. It reveals what Plath means when she states the manipulative mind must control its most tarrying experiences. The poem demonstrates how the mind may generate hyperboles to torture itself, and how this generative faculty may have not only a positive but also a negative function.

The poem shows the way in which the mind may intensify its pain by objectifying it. The poem is full of images and symbols. The imagery of the first four

stanzas is repeated and reversed in the imagery of the last four, and in this way the poem moves into and out from a central stanza with unusual symmetry. The poem does not allow the speaker to sympathize and unify with the environment because the responsibilities and commitment to the family remain constant:

The tulips are too excitable, it is winter here.

Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.

I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly

As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands.

I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions. (1-5).

In the beginning of the poem, Plath implies her desire to disappear in the whiteness to feel peace and tranquility. Plath wants to be invisible "nobody" as she wants to get rid of all social categorization.

Plath was born to be a writer, and she improved her writing to be one of the greatest poets of her time. Sylvia Plath's inherent melancholia and rejection stems, for the most part, from her estrangement with her father after his death, and the rejection and infidelity of her husband Ted Hughes. In *Ariel* she effectively expels and conquers these oppressing figures that once governed her life. Through the rituals carried out in her poems, she is resurrected and she even transcends death. The separation of the body and soul is a central theme in Plath's work and conveys her distorted and detached sense of self and difficulty with self-realization. From that exact sense stems her unique, twofold nature of death, as a resurrection through the defiant conquest of death and her vision of actual or imminent death.

Plath's unsure attitude towards death is characterized by both fear and fascination by it, a dread of the decaying image of the flesh and an intriguing and bold desire of the resurrection of the self. Most fascinating though, is the underlying hope

present in some of her more melancholic poems where death seems to be permanent. However these poems seem to convey a paradoxical sense of transcendence, death is not the end of all ends but instead an ulterior existence beyond the physical level. As such death is a transformation of the self and means to rebirth. Plath's poems would constitute the same thing even if she had not committed suicide, however, that is not to say they are not truly, and on the deepest level, confessional in nature. It is arguably so that her late poems came into existence because of the sheer fact she was seriously depressed and that she invested so much in them they became inseparable from her. As such, they are a true representation of her private self and, a testament of confessional poetry.



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**The Humanistic and Spiritual Junctures: A Study of St. Paul's Impact on  
T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi"**

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**LINCY R.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN11)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**



## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the project entitled **The Humanistic and Spiritual Junctures: A Study of St. Paul's Impact on T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi"** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

*Lincy R.*  
**LINCY R.**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **The Humanistic and Spiritual Junctures: A Study of St. Paul's Impact on T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi"** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Lincy.R during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project entitled **The Humanistic and Spiritual Junctures: A Study of St. Paul's Impact on T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi"** analyses the special bond T.S. Eliot has with St. Paul who is a convert like himself in his search for the possible and correct solutions to the human dilemma through the traditional material and imagery of Christianity. It also captures the shaft of hope radiated by the poems that a tedious spiritual journey would definitely come to a fruitful end.

The first chapter throws light on the salient features of English Literature with a special focus on T.S. Eliot's poetic graph and his unique contribution to English Literature.

The second chapter highlights how for both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot faith had been the outer manifestation of inner heart in communion with God.

The third chapter reiterates the fact that the great need of the world is to be revitalized with a renewed spirit of hope in God.

The fourth chapter asserts that the renewal of mind has been the key factor towards spiritual rebirth in both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot.

The fifth chapter sums up all the key premises dealt with in the preceding chapters and establishes beyond doubt that both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot understood the true quality of spirituality, love for God and love for fellow human beings.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Author and philosopher of great fame, Thomas Stearns Eliot was an innovator in placing side by side Western philosophies and opening up new long narrow view of thought. T.S. Eliot gave a new direction as a writer and continued his intellectual pursuits till the last. He was a versatile writer. During his long creative career, he wrote poetry, prose, drama, critical and social essays, etc. He also worked as a journalist and editor. The study "The Humanistic and Spiritual Junctures: A Study of St. Paul's Impact on T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of Magi" probes the varied poetic influences that went towards the making of T.S. Eliot's poetic mind.

"A writer depends," Eliot wrote "on the accumulated sensations" of the first twenty-one years. The earliest influence was his mother in whose writings there are the qualities of a true poet. His mother, Charlotte Stearns was an enthusiastic social worker as well as writer of calibre. Mrs. Eliot thought of the poetry and her religion together. Some of her poems are energized by a sense of drama, best realized when she turns as she often does to the lives of the saints and martyrs. Most of the heroes or central characters of Eliot are saints or martyrs. Martyrdom is one of the important themes in his plays. The poet's grandfather was a man of academic interest and in course of time became the founder of the Washington University at St. Louis and also left behind him a number of religious writings. Thus it is clear that Eliot's grandfather and his mother contributed a lot to his development as a writer, especially as a religious poet. Mr. Eliot's complex, many sided personality was the outcome of a number of inherited factors. The other influences were the influence of his family, the symbolists like Mallarme, La Forge Baudelaire, Corbiere,

the Imagists like T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, the Oriental philosophy, the American influence, Donne and the other metaphysical poets, Dante and Christianity etc. Chief among them is his new religion - Anglo Catholicism and the Holy Bible especially the teachings of Lord Jesus Christ and St. Paul.

T.S. Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1888. He enjoyed a long life span of more than seventy-five years, and his period of active literary production extended over a period of forty-five years. He has come to be regarded as one of the greatest of English poets, and he has influenced the course of modern poetry more than any other poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was the youngest of the seven children of his parents. His parents were both descended from old New-England families. His paternal grandfather had come to St. Louis from Harvard Divinity School to establish the city's first Unitarian Church and then to establish and preside over Washington University. Eliot was first sent to school at St. Louis day-school where he studied till 1905. The poet was at Harvard from 1906-1910 where he pursued a wide ranging course of studies in language and literature; the Classics, and German, French and English literatures. Particularly keen was his interest in comparative literature.

Eliot graduated from Harvard in 1910, and prompted by his interest in the French symbolists, he went to France and spent a year at the Sorbonne University at Paris, studying widely in many contemporary writers. In 1911, from Paris, Eliot went to Bavaria, Germany, where he came into contact with important German writers and read their works. He returned to Harvard later in the year and studied philosophy, specially Indian and Sanskrit literature and philosophy. In 1913, he was elected the President of the Harvard Philosophical Club.



Even when Eliot was a student, he had begun creative writing. He founded and edited the renowned critical journal *The Criterion*, and became a director of the publishing firm Faber and Faber. He was naturalized as a British subject in 1927, and in a volume of essays published in 1928, he laid down his point of view as a "classicist in literature, royalist in politics and Anglo- Catholic in religion."

It was Ezra Pound, the famous imagist poet who encouraged Eliot to compose poems. He also helped him in getting book reviewing job. So in 1917, Eliot continued reviewing books and writing poetry. Some of his select poems were published under the title *Prufrock and other Observations* containing the famous poem entitled the "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." (*Prufrock and other Observations*) brought Eliot name and fame. He began to be hailed as a great budding poet of "sophisticated observations of people, of social behaviour and of urban landscapes." In 1920, his next volume *Poems 1920* was published. This established him as a poet. He began to be compared with W.B. Yeats. In 1922, his long poem "The Waste Land" was published. This poem invited much criticism all over Britain and America. In 1925 another famous poem entitled "The Hollow Man" was published.

After Eliot became a naturalized citizen of Britain, he declared himself to be a religious poet. In 1927, he composed "Journey of the Magi" in 1930 *Ariel Poems* and "Ash Wednesday" were published. In 1932, he composed a dramatic fragment *Sweeney Agonists* which was not completed. He also composed a set of choruses for a pageant entitled *The Rock* in 1934. His first verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral* was published in 1935. The next play entitled *The Family Reunion* came out in 1939. He wrote two more plays, but only after a gap of ten years. However, he continued writing religious poetry. In early

1940's, he published his famous religious poem *Four Quartets*, divided into four sections.

Eliot is also a distinct prose-writer. His critical essays appeared in *The Criterion* and various other magazines and journals. His famous critical work *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* appeared in 1933. His book *The Idea of a Christian Society* was published in 1939. His work entitled *Towards a Definition of Culture* was published in 1948. In 1949 he wrote the play *The Cocktail Party*. In 1953 appeared *The Confidential Clerk* and in 1958 came out *The Elder Statesman*.

Eliot earned the highest honour in the literary world both in England and in America. He visited the U.S.A. several times as a visiting professor. In 1948 he was awarded the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for literature. On the death of his first wife he married his private secretary, Miss Valerie Fletcher in 1957. This woman nursed him to his last time. After his illness, he died on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1965, in London. He was cremated and his ashes were buried in the little village of East Coker in Somerset from where his ancestors Andrew Eliot, had migrated to America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus a void was created in the literary world.

Eliot may not to be a popular poet, but he is a great poet. During his life span and even after his death he dominated the English literary scene, wielded wide authority and influence, and came to be known as the "Pope of Russel Square" or "the Shakespeare of the 20<sup>th</sup> century".

His most famous work is "The Waste Land," written when he was 34. On one level this highly complex poem describes cultural and spiritual crisis which is aptly described by him in his "Tradition and Individual Talent"

"The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps

related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways." (125)

T.S. Eliot was certainly a man of complex personality. He possessed a many-sided personality. He was born in America, tutored through Europe and finally became a citizen of Britain. Besides this, he was a blend of many things – a classicist, innovator, critic, social thinker, philosopher and mystic. His character was thus the result of a cosmopolitan influences.

Eliot's poetic career can be divided into five periods :

The First Period (1905-1909) was the experimental period when he began poetic exercises while still a boy at Smith's Academy. The poems of this period are immature, juvenile productions, mere school boy exercises, yet showing signs of poetic talent. The poems were published in various college and school magazines, as the Smith Academy Record and Harvard Advocate.

The Second Period (1909-1917) was the period of urban poetry of Eliot. The collection entitled *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917 came out. The most important poem of this collection are : *The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *The Preludes*, *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*, *The "Boston Evening Transcript"*, *Mr. Apollinar*.

The most significant poems of the third period (1918-1925) are: "Gerontion", "Burbank with a Baedekar", "Sweeney Erect", "A Cooking Egg", "Sweeney among the Nightingales", "The Hollow Man", "The Waste Land".



These poems reveal the poet's dejection at the decaying modern European society. Most of the poems are black in tone, therefore generally called pessimistic. Their gloom is the resultant of the poet's inner gloom consequent upon overwork, ill health, the continued mental illness of his wife, and the harrowing, nerve shattering impact of the world war on a sensitive temperament. The poems reveal a considerable maturity of the poet's powers. The characteristic style and technique of Eliot are now effectively used.

The Fourth Period (1925-1935) is the period or phase of Eliot's religious or Christian poetry. The most important poems of this period are : "Ash Wednesday," "Journey of the Magi," "Animula," "Marina," Choruses from "The Rock," Coriolanus, "A number of minor and unfinished poems."

During this period, Eliot had joined the Anglican Church of England. This change of faith is markedly reflected in the poems of this period. The poet searches for a right way, a right solution to the human dilemma, and he does so through the traditional material and imagery of Christianity. The tone is rather optimistic, and there is indications of the solution which the poet is likely to reach.

The Fifth Period (1935-1943) is the period of the famous Four Quartets of Eliot, published as follows : "Burnt Norton" (1936), "East Coker" (1940), "The Dry Salvages" (1941), "Little Gidding" (1942).

The poems of this period are also religious, but they are different from the Christian poems of the earlier period. In both the phases Eliot is a religious poet – as he ever was but in the previous period he used Christian imagery and tradition, while now he examines the eternal problems of men without reference to the Christian tradition.

As a dramatist, Eliot is known for the revival of English poetic drama. His dramas

are: *The Rock*, *A Pageant Play* (1934), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1950), *The Confidential Clerk* (1954), *The Elder Statesman* (1959).

As Eliot had always shown himself interested in poetic drama, believing that the most direct means of social usefulness for poetry is the theatre, it was to be expected that sooner or later he would write a play in verse. In the unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926), he used contemporary music hall rhythms as the basis for an Aristophanic melodrama. Eight years later he wrote the works for a church pageant, *the Rock*, followed by a full-length verse-play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, on the murder of Archbishop Thomas Beckett, first produced at the Canterbury Festival in June 1935, and later played in London with great success. *The Family reunion* (1939) is a verse play on a subject from Greek mythology with a modern setting, dealing not with crime and punishment, but with sin and expiation.

T.S. Eliot was an outstanding prose-writer. Most of his prose writings include his literary criticism. In fact, Eliot stands in the long line of illustrious poet-critics beginning with Ben Johnson and including Dryden, Dr. Johnson, Coleridge and Matthew Arnold. Eliot's principal critical works include: *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (1948), *Selected Essays* (Third Edition, 1951), *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), *To Criticise the Critic* (1965). Besides these, his more popular critical works are *Tradition and Individual Talent*, *Poetry and Drama*, *The Function of Criticism*, *The English Metaphysical Poets* and *The Frontiers of Criticism*. Apart from literary criticism, Eliot also involved himself in journalism. He edited *The Criterion* from 1922 to 1939.



Among all apostles and saints whose contribution to Christianity has been immense, St. Paul stands tall. No description or adjectives can do justice to the genius of St. Paul, truly a multi-faceted personality. A far-sighted soldier of Lord Jesus Christ and faithful servant to his Saviour, he has finger on the pulse of the believers of the early church. St. Paul, famous for his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, was a founding father of the Christian Church. His profound and perceptive writings have been read for spiritual support, divine inspiration and encouragement for one 2000 years.

St. Paul was an apostle of grace, through his teaching and administering the counsel of God to various churches. St. Paul was the one who revealed the matchless grace of God. Although he had much natural ability, as highly educated, and had risen to a good position in his profession before he came out to serve God, he always depended on the grace of God for his life and his ministry. The sufferings and pains he joyfully endured, the exemplary life he lived, the powerful ministry he practiced, the missionary journeys he undertook, the teachings he boldly propagated, the humility he revealed – these add to many of the beautiful traits he already had, were all to the glory of His grace.

According to the Scriptures, St. Paul, originally called Saul was a Jew, a Roman citizen born in Tarsus in Cilicia in 4 A.D. He was brought up in Jerusalem as a student of Gamaliel and was given strict instructions to practice the Law of his ancestors. The early years of Saul's life were passed in an environment entirely saturated with religion. Paul was the son of a devout and highly respectable Jewish family who had improved themselves by acquiring the status of Roman citizens. His parents perhaps had earlier thought to moulding him as a student of the Law, and later a Rabbi; but in accordance with the admirable Jewish custom, they did not fail at the same time to apprentice the young



Saul to trade. He was ahead of most fellow-Jews of his age in his practice of the Jewish religion, and was much more devoted to the traditions of his ancestors.

During St. Paul's era, the Christians who were considered the revolutionary cult, as appealed to the deprived and affected elements of the population and had grown to pose a serious challenge to the then establishment. When their leader, Jesus Christ, was executed, it was thought that the seditious sect which had grown up around him had finally been wiped out, but, disturbingly, this was not the case. Following news that Christ had been seen alive again on earth, the authorities were shocked at increasing number of the Christian population.

Government instituted ruthless to eradicate the movement. Houses were raided, many were people taken into custody and whipped; exemplary punishments were handed out. Among those arrested was a man named Stephen, who was brought before the court on a charge of blasphemy. His attitude was not one of contrition; instead with his face lit up, he made a defiant speech, provoking his judges and the crowd to fury. Incensed, the mob seized him and rushed to stone him to death.

It is at this moment that Saul, aged in his late twenties, steps on to the pages of history for the first time. In that confused, hysterical scene seeking of sweat and blood, at whose centre a man is being pulped to death, Paul stands apart – a voyeur. He is guarding the stoner coats and watching the violence in a thrill of excitement, pleasure and satisfaction.

In Saul, the religious authorities had found the ideal employee for their operation to exterminate the Christian sect. He is an excellent organizer, indefatigable, highly motivated and a workaholic. Sober, dependable, single-minded and rigidly orthodox, he

was the perfect bureaucrat.

The ruthless punishments exacted on members of the cult and Stephen's public execution largely succeeded in driving the Christians out of Jerusalem. Paul pursued, arrested and had whipped those who remained hidden in the city people. When Jerusalem was effectively cleaned, he requested permission to extend the operation to Damascus. He obtained official orders to arrest the Christians in that city and bring them bound to Jerusalem for trial.

Saul was fired with an extraordinary zeal to persecute the followers of Jesus, whose rapid growth in numbers was beginning to attract the attention of the Jewish authorities. To prevent the growth of the Christianity, Saul rose up, a champion, to defend the ancient faith to the death. Convinced that he was discharging a sacred duty towards the Jewish faith in its hour of peril, Saul became obsessed with a desire to maul and to massacre the Christians. He became an avid persecutor. When Saul was satisfied that he had struck Christianity its death-blow in Jerusalem, he turned his attention to the progress the sect was making outside Judea. Damascus was two hundred miles away. Accompanied by an escort of militia, Saul set out on a journey that would take twelve days. He rode surrounded by his soldiers, his orders and letters of authority in his saddlebag and his mind busy with plans for the forthcoming operation, and then something happened. As revealed by Saul, suddenly, without any warning, the world split open with light. The light struck Saul, knocked him from his horse and threw him to the ground. Sprawled there in the dust, stunned, Saul – and his companions - heard a voice asking him that why he persecuted Him. Saul asked who he was. The voice said that He was Jesus whom he persecuted. The voice ordered him to get up and go into the city, where he'd be told what to do.

Saul's personality was totally shattered. He had been broken into fragments, then thrown together again in the space of seconds, but he wasn't in any way the same man. His whole nature, his entire being was changed. He was transformed by what had been revealed to him as, blind and traumatised, he was led by the hand into Damascus. There, after three days of being unable to eat or drink, his sight returned to him. Asking to be baptized a Christian, as Paul he ate some food, went directly to the city's main synagogue and addressed the crowd, relating what had happened to him and claiming that the executed Christ was the son of God.

Paul continued speaking in the synagogues, telling the avid crowd of his experience and the extraordinary news about the executed Christ. He spoke with an authority and power which won over many of his listeners, confusing the Jews and fuelling their anger. His actions threatened the Roman government as he proclaimed himself a greater emperor than Caesar; they threatened the Jews in their orthodox religion; He traveled continually. His journeys took him through the lands which now know are Israel, Syria, Turkey, Macedonia and Greece, and finally, at the end of his odyssey, to Rome. He was, in the truest sense of the word, a man with a mission. But everywhere he met with difficulty, opposition and worse circumstances. His travels and his hardships continued for thirty years, but his courage and diligence never faltered. His whole nature had been transformed, but he was still the perfect civil servant.

At last Paul returned to Jerusalem. Within a week of his reappearance in the city he was arrested. He was tried before a Jewish court for bringing non-Jews into the Temple's inner court – an offence which carried the death penalty. He was sent under guard to Rome. For two years Paul remained in Rome under house arrest, waiting for his case to come



before the Emperor Nero, who had a record of instability and had already shown himself to be no friend of Christians. While awaiting trial, he wrote letter to the various communities he had founded around the eastern Mediterranean which were now active churches.

Encounter with Christ made Paul a different man. It was a beginning of a New Life. He submitted himself to the will of Lord Jesus Christ and in turn, Christ had transformed him from a persecutor and blasphemer into an Apostle. God did great ministries through Paul by making him His labour in his vineyard. His life and his ministry shone for the glory of God. St. Paul has written 14 epistles out of 21 epistles in the New Testament to various churches.

T.S. Eliot was one among them who have been influenced by the spiritual messages of St. Paul. The messages which were packed with life and power comforted Eliot who had an inner gloom because of ill health, overwork, the continued mental illness of his wife and the harrowing, nerve shattering impact of the world war on a sensitive temperament.

European society in those days was organized on a religious basis. After the Renaissance, this religious basis was replaced by a secular one. The Old Greek conception of Natural Law was revived to take the place of religion. It is the failure of Natural Law to provide human society a stable foundation that makes Eliot to advocate a return to the conception of the Catholic order of society.

Eliot focused a new sort of poetry which seems to represent withdrawal from the outer world and an exploration of the inner life under the guidance of Christianity. The new poetry begins with "Ariel Poems." These poems are the "Journey of the Magi (1927), A Song of Simeon (1928), Animula (1928) and the touching personal poem Marina (1930).

"Ash Wednesday" was Eliot's first considerable poem written after his conversion. It has connections with *The Waste Land*, but remarkable changes have taken place. The poem ends with a note of quiet wisdom, a kind of rule of life, which was to be repeated again and again with variation in Eliot's later works:

Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain,  
 spirit of the garden,  
 Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood  
 Teach us to sit still  
 Even among these rocks,  
 Our Peace is His Will. (5 – 9)

"The Journey of the Magi" and "A Strong Simeon" are religious poems from which the tender sentiment of traditional Christian verse is rightly excluded, and replaced by an austerity. For this poet, religion is no sudden glory as it was for Hopkins but a hard and difficult path of patience and renunciation :

This set down  
 This: were we led all that way for  
 Birth or Death ? There was Birth, certainly,  
 We had evidence and no doubt I had seen birth and death,  
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death. (11 – 16)

The period between 1927 and 1930 was very significant in Eliot's spiritual development. It was during this period that "Ash Wednesday" took shape. In "The Waste Land" he saw the world through its dark glasses, but saw it with a strange clarity, and

drained of its colour variety. But in the poems that followed, especially in the "Ariel Poems" the darkness of "The Waste Land" becomes a kind of twilight. From within that twilight the poet catches sight of brightness, far off perhaps, but still a brightness which is full of colour. Instead of gloomily watching the desolation and emptiness, the poet turns away from the outer world of men to ponder over certain intimate personal experience. The intensity of apprehension in the earlier poetry is replaced by an intensity of meditation. Significantly this change in attitude corresponded with his acceptance of the Christian Faith and entry into the communication of the church.

"Ash Wednesday" marks the change in the content and style of his poetry which confronted with this change in faith. The mystery that lies behind "Ash Wednesday" is mystery of conversion. As the very title implies, it is a poem of purgation; it deals with penitence, the mortification of the natural man, the effort to control the will. This theme of penitence and the aspiration towards holiness, the acceptance of the church's discipline, of self-examination, contrition is crossed by an intimately painful personal experience. In religious terms, the theme is penitence, and penitence can be defined as a proper attitude to the past, a recognition of the present and a resolve for the future.

The Holy Bible, especially, St. Paul messages in his epistles to the various churches in respect of Faith, Hope, Penitence and Rebirth influenced Eliot. T.S. Eliot used them as major themes in his religious poems – "Journey of Magi" and "Ash Wednesday" which are more religious in tone.

This thesis could be divided into five chapters like 'Introduction', 'Faith as the Corner Stone,' 'Hope of the Humanity,' 'Spiritual Rebirth,' and 'Summation'. Ultimately this present dissertation will guide to expose the wide reading of poems, journals and



magazines and would try to prove beyond doubt that the elements of Faith, Hope, and Rebirth used as major themes in Eliot's poems are based on the Conception of Faith, Hope and Rebirth conceived by St. Paul in his epistles.

Through his faith, St. Paul was configured to Jesus Christ and has become light to the world, salt of the earth, and yeast for this troubled world of ours. By God's grace, St. Paul's life serves as an inspiration for others. The quest for spirituality in St. Paul and T.S. Eliot ultimately led them to this supreme state of divine union and eternal merger of God and Human Person for the redemption of Human Person and the glory of God. And that was at once the consummation and the culmination St. Paul's and T.S. Eliot's irresistible quest for spirituality which could be well understood in St. Paul's epistles and T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi."

## Chapter Two

### Faith as the Corner Stone

If one have no faith, one would have no proper understanding. Without faith, all our understanding of spiritual matters was but misunderstanding. A person can, with his natural brain, understand the natural things of the natural world. But to understand things of the other world, one needs supernatural brain called 'faith'. Human understanding is limited. Once faith comes into our heart, our understanding becomes unlimited like an ocean. However, when faith is gone, spiritual understanding is dead.

Faith is always connected with the present and is neither of the past nor of the future. Faith is not hope, expecting something to happen later; faith is 'now' in the present – not expecting but accepting what God promised. Faith is the sixth sense, the invisible eye with which invisible things are seen, experienced and enjoyed.

Faith in Christianity, as in other Abrahamic religions, centred on a belief in God, a belief in the reality of a transcendent domain that God administers as his kingdom, and in the benevolence of God's will or plan for humankind. The Christian faith is founded on Jesus Christ and His resurrection. Christian faith is about seeking and knowing Jesus Christ with all facets of the human character. It's about loving Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Faith is trusting God. It is lying in a relationship with God that is motivated and sustained by one's conviction that God does keep his word. Faith was believing that God keeps his promises and then accepting his grace from Jesus, his Son. Faith is living in this relationship of trust moment by moment in accordance with God's will. Both God's grace and faith are His gifts to those who believe.

Faith was a journey. It is dynamic; not static. It is an on - going process. Faith is

alive. It moves. It pulsates with the life of God. If we are to mature in our faith, we must see ourselves as prime candidates for a deeper walk with God. Henri Nouwen has described the spiritual life as a movement from inauthenticity to authenticity. First of all, it is a movement from legalism to grace. Martin Luther said that the greatest day in the life of a Christian is when he moves from hearing God say, "You must" to hearing Him say, "You may." This means that the whole basis of faith shifts from threat to privilege. God ceases to be the cosmic policeman and becomes the loving guide.

Second, it is a movement from the periphery to the centre. Slaves are on the outside. They don't really feel a part of the family. They merely receive orders and then dutifully carry them out. But friends are on the inside. They have a sense of what is going on. In fact, they sometimes help to shape what is happening. This is the kind of life Jesus offers to us.

There were times when problems pile up and our backs are against the wall. Sooner or later, people cry out to God for help. When the answer does not come when they want it or in the way they prescribed, they casted about for explanations. At that point they turn inwardly and wonder what's wrong with them. Most of us have been raised with the idea that faith is something one must produce before God will act. Therefore, if He does not act immediately one diagnose the difficulty as our lack of faith. Lack of faith is used as an explanation for why problems are not solved, broken relationships are not healed, and sicknesses persist.

The Holy Bible is undeniably clear that faith is a gift, not something produce. Faith is a gift from God to us. The quality of our faith is not what prompts God to act. Faith does not produce an intimate relationship with God; an intimate relationship with God



issues in faith. Faith is the outer manifestation of inner heart in communion with God. The more of Him that dwells in our hearts, the more faith we will have for our problems. Faith is our response to the loving presence of a God who comes to us in our problems.

When problems pile up, our need is not to have more faith to get God to solve them, but to seek God for Himself. Problems are an alarm signal of our need for Him. When we are distressed and cast desperately about for faith to endure, we miss the end by focusing on the means. God is the source and end "the author and finisher" of our faith.

One can thank God for problems because they are opportunities to co-operate with Him in His continuing creation. Problems bring us to a realization of how much we need Him. Our quest for faith is often a substitute for communion with God. One doesn't need more faith; One needs more of God! Instead of longing for more faith to get more from God, one need to get more of God into us. When problems cause panic, it is a sure sign that our hearts need God rather than more faith. Saint Augustine opines that "Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe" (42). Mother Teresa views that "I do not pray for success, I ask for faithfulness" (43).

Faith made us right with God and makes us capable of facing our problems with-staying power. But before one leaps to the self-justifying impulse to try to manufacture that quality of faith, one need to hear Paul:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9)

This faith, which God gives us to reach out and accept His grace through Christ, cannot be earned, deserved, or acquired by effort. The Lord gives it to those who respond to His call to seek His face.

The faith He provides becomes the rock. Remember Jesus words to Peter, "....You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). Simon's new name meant rock. What was the rock? Faith! The Lord did not build His church on Peter apart from his rock like faith.

Endurance was the Lord's Spirit in us. He poured Himself into us so we could go back into our problems as courageous people. We could wait for the promise that we would be repeatedly filled with the Holy Spirit, not once, but daily. With each problem we would be given power.

In all his 14 epistles to various Churches, St. Paul has attached more importance to 'Faith' and stressed the importance of having faith in God: 'God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, Because there is no difference at all;' (Rom. 3:22). 'For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved.' (Rom. 3:28). 'Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave, be strong' (I Cor. 16:13). Put yourselves to the test and judge yourselves, to find out whether you are living in faith' (I Cor. 13-5). 'so that it is no longer I who live, but is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me' (Gal. 2:20). 'Only the person who is put right with God through faith shall live. But the Law has nothing to do with faith' (Gal. 3:11-12). 'It is through faith that all of you are God's sons in union with Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:26). 'For when we are in union with Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor the lack of it makes any difference at all; what matters is faith that works through love.' (Gal. 5:6). 'For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith.' (Eph. 2:8). 'In union with Christ and through our faith in him we have the boldness to go into God's presence with all confidence., (Eph. 3:12).

'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all mankind, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all.' (Eph. 4:5-6). 'At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil one.' (Eph. 6:16). 'Perhaps my life's blood is to be poured out like an offering on the sacrifice that your faith offers to God.' (Phil. 2:17). 'Keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught.' (Col.2:7). 'Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself;' (1 Tim. 6:12). 'I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day and not only to me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear.' (2 Tim.4:7-8).

Faith encourages us to seek God with all our heart and count all things as loss in order to win God, says St. Paul.

At some time or another almost everyone struggles with the question of suffering why people must go through it, where it comes from, and what it's all about. Many saints and sages have asked these questions themselves and have concluded that there were no paths, easy answers to them. We can definitely receive insight from studying God's Word and from prayer. But at some point for every person, dealing with the questions surrounding suffering will become an exercise of faith. We all know that there is no single all encompassing theological answer to the above question and aware that there is a connection between faith and suffering beyond doubt. We firmly believe that regardless of where suffering originates, God is now, has always been, and always will be in control of His Universe. God is sovereign! He is God! Whatever happens in His universe has



happened with God's knowledge and permission. And this includes suffering.

A believer has to face two types of trials. Only when one gets victory in the first type, can one get victory in the second. Both kinds of trials are mentioned in James Ch. 1. "But a person is tempted when he is drawn away and trapped by his own evil desire" (Jas 14). This is the trial of sin. It is not from God. This is the first trial. One read of second trial in verses 2, 3. "My brothers, consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure." (Jas.1:2,3). The other trial cannot be counted as joy. When one faces sinful temptations one must overcome them. But when one faces a trial of faith one must rejoice in it. We must have got victory over our sinful desires, thoughts, etc. if we are to overcome in the trial of faith. One would not encounter the trial of faith until one would have got victory in the trial of sin. Samson's first trial was a trial of sin. He never got victory in it. So he never had any trial of faith. It is our victory in the trial of sin that gives us the strength and power to overcome in the trial of faith.

But in order to be moulded by our sorrows, we must choose to be 'mouldable.' Being mouldable means becoming yielded clay in the Potter's hands. How do we achieve this moldability? It is best achieved by surrendering to Him whatever pain, anger, or unresolved questions have resulted from our suffering, trusting Him to use them for His purposes in our lives. This type of surrender is definitely a first step of faith. If all pain were removed and all questions answered, faith would not be the central requirement of our commitment

Throughout Paul's epistles, one finds evidence of God's using trials to refine Paul's character. Paul even learned to 'rejoice in [his] sufferings' because he found that "suffering

produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Rom.5:3-5). Throughout his "thorn in the flesh," Paul came to understand and glory in his weakness.

Eliot's major themes are drawn from his concern for the contemporary world, its boredom, horror and glory. Faith is one of the major themes of the poetry and drama of Eliot. The influence of St. Paul on T.S. Eliot in the conception of faith is clearly evident in the "Journey of the Magi" and the "Ash Wednesday".

The "Ash Wednesday" is definitely Christian in theme. It is concerned with the difficulty of achieving faith, and handles theological ideas in a compressed and allusive manner. It examines the tension between the world and the achievement of faith through repentance, contrition and prayer. *The Aerial Poems* including the "Journey of the Magi" strike a new note of spiritual consolation which he was trying to find in religion and also in a sense of the discipline that each soul is capable of achieving Eliot who was regarded as the spokesman of a disillusioned generation has become the poet of Christian mysticism.

"The Journey of the Magi" belongs to a group of poems known as the *Ariel Poems*. They were written as contributions to an annual volume of poems published at Christmas time, and belong to the period between 1927 and 1929.

Belonging to a stage subsequent to *The Waste Land*, it marks a definite stage in the poet's spiritual development, his progress from despair to faith. The passage between the death of the old and the birth of the new is marked by no milestone. It is a transit- a 'journey.' Emotionally it is equivocal and uncertain. "The meaning of the new birth is obscure, full of doubt, accompanied by pain, not joy and perplexing in the extreme." (53)

Bryant Adams states that :



The poem is based on an incident described in the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Wise Men or the Magi were led to the newborn Jesus by a new star, which guided them to the home of Jesus and then disappeared. At first they sought the help of Herod, the King of Jews. He pretended to help them but his real purpose was to kill the child as soon as his identity was known, because he wanted no rival king to the Jews. The Wise Men reached the infant Jesus and worshipped him. It was then revealed to them that they should not report their discovery to Herod. The Magi were the priestly class among the Babylonians and the ancient Persians. According to a later tradition, they were three kings. Their names are given as Melchior, or king of light, Gaspar, the white one and Balthazar, the lord of treasure. The three days following the New Year day are held sacred to them. (111).

Eliot's treatment of the theme is symbolic. His old faith or faithlessness is dead and his journeying towards a new faith. The quest is perilous and even the success of the quest carries with it nostalgic yearnings for the old faith. The new faith appeals to them but even that fails to give them calm or happiness. The method of the poem follows a pattern which Eliot has discerned in the prose of Lancelot Andrews, and the opening line of the poem is a direct quotation from one of his Nativity sermons. In his sermons, Andrews forced a concrete presence upon his hearers even before extracting all the spiritual meaning of a text.

One of the Wise Men from the East who came in quest of Jesus and worshipped him soon after his birth, recounts the obstacles they confronted during their journey. The journey was full of difficulties. The determined faith never openly stated, comes through



the description of the character of the journey and its results. In the background there is the regret for the kingdoms they have left. One after another, all the obstacles provided by both men and nature to oppose and frustrate the journey, are enumerated.

It was a cold winter, the worst time of the year for such a long journey. The paths were difficult, and the weather sharp. The camels developed sores and rebellious and refused to obey their master. The camel men also cursed and grumbled and ran away because they missed their liquor and women. The night fires went out. The Magi had no shelters. The cities were hostile and the towns unfriendly, the villages dirty and charged very high prices for everything. The Wise Men heard voices singing in their ears saying that "this was all folly."

The narrator expresses no rebellion at all this. All he remembers is the faith that urged them forward, the sense of urgency which made them quicken their pace and which conquered not only practical impediments and their own fatigue, but also their own doubts.

The quest for infant Jesus had been certainly worth the while. The Magi would undertake it again, if they were given the chance. But what puzzled them was the effect of the quest on their faith. It has killed their faith in the old religion and given them a new faith. According to Helen Gardner,

The journey undertaken by the Magi to Bethlehem is not merely a physical journey. It is a spiritual quest. The difficulties met by the wise men are symbolic of the struggle of the human soul in its search for spiritual renewal. In fact, the poem itself is considered to describe Eliot's spiritual journey, his conversion from agnosticism to Anglo-Catholicism. (105)

The voices are doubts and misgivings the Wise Men had about their belief as well

as the outcome of their journey. They wondered whether it was foolishness to have undertaken it. The Magi learnt nothing about the birth of Jesus but they felt encouraged to proceed further. With Faith they continued their journey and their quest ended successfully. As Kristian Smidt observed,

Eliot's career as a poet may conveniently be divided into five phases or period and the fourth phase (1925-1935) is the period of Eliot's Christian poetry. Eliot joined the Anglican Church of England in 1927, and this change in his faith is reflected in the poems of this phase. The poet searches for a right way, a right solution to the human dilemma, and he does so through the traditional material and imagery of Christianity. The tone is rather optimistic, and there are indications of the solution which the poet is likely to reach. The more characteristic poems of this Christian period are: "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi."

Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" gives an account of the journey undertaken by the Magi to see the Nativity of Christ. But the journey symbolically revealed Eliot's inward journey and reflected on the development of his personality consequent upon the change of his faith. The journey was a spiritual quest of the poet (210-11).

The period between 1927 and 1930 was very significant in Eliot's spiritual development. It was during this period that Ash Wednesday took shape. In *The Waste Land* he saw the world through its dark glasses, but saw it with a strange clarity, and drained of its colour variety. But in the poems that followed, especially in the 'Ariel poems' the darkness of *The Waste Land* becomes a kind of twilight. From within that twilight the poet catches sight of brightness, far off perhaps, but still a brightness which is full of colour. Instead of gloomily watching the desolation and emptiness, the poet turns away from the



outer world of men to ponder over certain intimate personal experience. The intensity of apprehension in the earlier poetry is replaced by an intensity of meditation. Significantly this change in attitude corresponded with his acceptance of the Christian Faith and entry into the communication of the church. "Ash Wednesday" marks the change in the content and style of his poetry which confronted with this change in faith. The renunciation of hope can bring rejoicing but the poet in "Ash Wednesday" believes that it is in faith and penitence alone that such an attitude can be sustained. Instead of the endless torturing, turnings of self-debate, he submits himself in prayer to the mercy and judgment of God: "Teach us to care and not to care Teach us to sit still."

The wings of his spirit are no longer the wings of aged eagle referred to in the beginning of the poem, but nevertheless they do not drop or droop. They beat the air; retain their winnowing function and their action suggests his own chosen condition of active patience in the small dry air of complete deprivation of hope.

"Ash Wednesday" is the first long poem written by Eliot after his 1927 conversion to Anglicanism. Published in 1930, this poem deals with the struggle that ensues when one who has lacked faith in the past strives to move towards God.

T.S. Eliot was influenced by St. Paul in the conception of faith and all that Eliot remembers is the faith that impelled him forward. In his epistle to the Church of Corinth, St. Paul escorted it "to be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave, be strong". Yes; Eliot was alert and stood firm in the faith in his spiritual quest and ended it successfully. Rev.S.B. Earnest used to say that say that we can live our life in two ways. Birds could walk and birds can fly. Buy walking a bird can cover a distance. But by flying it can cross mountains and rivers and other hindrances. A life that is guided by faith is like a bird flying.



Faith has a test. The testing instrument is called trial. In the time of trial, those who lose their faith cannot be called believers; those who keep their faith are heroes of faith. The heroes of faith will stand for the faith, live for the faith, fight for the faith and also die for the faith.

Our faith in God is the firm foundation upon which we can build our lives. Yes, trials and dangers face to face us every day. But when remain steadfast in our faith convictions and feel close to God we have nothing to fear. Fearfulness has no place in the life of a believer. In God one have our security, for He is the sure foundation upon which one could live our lives. One need not fear that we are going in the wrong direction, for He is the Way. One need not worry whether we have an adequate understanding of the meaning of life, for He is the Truth. One need not be troubled about what will happen to our souls after death, for He is the Life. Confidence in God gives us the ability to move forward in faith and to make progress on the way that leads to the Almighty God.

## Chapter Three

### The Hope of the Humanity

History tells us that Alexander, when setting out on one of his expeditions of conquest, distributed his tips with such lavish profusion as to lead to the question from one of his friends, "What did he reserved for himself?," his reply was, "Hope". It was a noble response from a lofty mind, and has served from that day to the present as an inspiration to others.

Men live more upon the past and the future-than upon the present. Their memory, and their hope are the chief sources of their happiness. Other passions change or cease as situations change and circumstances vary but hope, never. And human life seems rather a transition from hope to hope than from pleasure to pleasure for very few sit down contentedly to enjoy what they have- but are ever restless to gain something which they have not.

As one social commentator put it humorously: "Mankind stands at a crossroads. One road leads to hopelessness and despair. The other road leads to total destruction. Let us pray that we will have the wisdom to choose correctly." (57) Yes, it would seem at times as if only two roads are before us: hopelessness or destruction. But there is an another third road the road of hope.

Hope is the only answer for all the miseries in human life. Hope means, according to the *Revised & updated Illustrated Oxford Dictionary*, the expectation or desire combined; a person, thing, or circumstance that gives cause for hope, ground of hope, promise. The New International Webster Dictionary defines hope as 'to desire without expectation of fulfillment; to wish; want; or desire accompanied by expectation. The

Chambers Dictionary defines Hope as 'to cherish a desire (that something good will happen); with some expectation of success or fulfilment; to have confidence; to desire, with belief in the possibility of fulfilment; desire for something good, with a certain expectation of obtaining it; confidence; anticipation'.

First, let's think a little more about hope itself. What are you waiting for? What does tomorrow look like for you? How big is your hope? The Holy Bible gives us the answer, because the Bible is pre-eminently a book about hope. Evangelical futurologist Tom Sine calls it a wild hope. It's the affirmation that almighty God is at work within history- within one's own history-to bring forth a future by which all things will be made new. Such a biblical hope provides the unshakable foundation from which one can face and engage the mounting challenges all around us.

St. Paul glorifies hope in his epistles and says that the great need of the world is to be revitalized with a renewed spirit of Hope in God. In the following passages St. Paul spells out the power and glory of the hope: "And so we boast of the Hope we have of sharing of God's glory! We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces Endurance, endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us". (Rom. 5: 2-5). 'Abraham believed and hoped, even when there was no reason for hoping, and became "the father of many nations".' (Rom. 4:18). 'Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles, And pray at all times (Rom. 12:12). 'May God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace by means of your faith in him, so that your hope will continue to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 12:13). 'I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in



order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints' (Eph. 1:18). 'As for us, our hope is that God will put us right with him; and this what we wait for by the power of God's Spirit working through our faith' (Gal. 5:5). 'There is one body and one spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you.' (Eph. 4:4). 'My deep desire and hope is that I shall never fail in my duty.' (Phil. 1:20). 'But we belong to the day, and we should be sober. We must wear faith and love as a breastplate, and our hope of salvation as a helmet.' (1 Thess. 5:8). 'May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our father, who loved us and in his grace gave us unfailing courage and a firm hope'. (2 Thess. 2:16). 'We struggle and work hard, because we have placed our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all and especially of those who believe.' (1 Tim. 4:10). 'I was chosen and sent to help the faith of God's chosen people and to lead them to the truth taught by our religion, which is based on the hope for eternal life' (Tit. 1:3).

From the above verses, we come to know that St. Paul attaches a great importance to hope. He spells out the various dimensions of this great hope :

Hope is personal. Christ himself is the hope. There's no hope outside of him. It's as big as He is. Hope is immediate. The Christ who is our hope is "in us," or better translated "in the midst of" us. He is among his people to be all the things. Colossians describes as His character and his ways. Thus hope is primarily corporate. When Paul says Christ is in the midst of 'you', the Greek word is plural. He is this for all of God's people, in all ages and at all times. This hope has a missionary dimension. It isn't just for our sake alone. It is to be proclaimed and manifested through us for the sake of the nations. The hope God gives us is profound. It is a "mystery", Paul says. Our hope is inexhaustible. Our hope in Christ

deals with ultimate issues. It is the "hope of glory" it is the hope of the full revelation of all the glorious things that God has prepared for us (both now and through all eternity) in the person of his dear Son. And that's why, for Paul, hope has become his message and his ministry. He wants to bring this hope to every person, both by preaching the message of hope, by discipleship, and by prayer.

T.S. Eliot was greatly influenced by the conception of 'hope' echoed by St. Paul in his epistles. Emphasizing the greatness of 'hope,' in his epistle to the Roman church, St. Paul proclaimed that "we also boast of our troubles, because we know that troubles produce endurance, endurance brings God's approval, and His approval creates hope.

Eliot was confirmed into the Anglo-Catholic Church in 1927. After his conversion, he became religious. Change of faith had brought many hardships and troubles in the life of Eliot. During this period, St. Paul's epistles were great consolation and source of inspiration to Eliot. With hope in living God, he endured all kind of troubles. This 'hope' did not disappoint him at the end. His religious bias runs through all his poetry and is the connecting link between the earlier and the later phases. In the early poetry, his approach is negative, while in the later phase it is positive.

In fact, "Journey of the Magi" is considered to describe Eliot's spiritual journey, his conversion from agnosticism to Anglo-Catholicism. The journey undertaken by the Magi to Bethlehem is not merely a physical journey. It is a spiritual quest with a 'hope'. The difficulties met by the wise men are symbolic of the struggle of the human soul in general and T.S. Eliot in particular in its search for spiritual renewal.

The Wise Men had a very cold journey. It was the very dead of winter. The paths were difficult, and the weather sharp. The camels were sore-footed and rebellious and



painfully suffered, showing their resentment by lying down in the melting snow. On many moments during the journey they regretted their comfortable life in the summer palaces on slopes, the terraces and the silk clad girls who brought drinks. There were other vexations during the journey, for their liquor and women. The fires that they lit at night went out and there were no shelters. The cities were hostile and the towns unfriendly, the villages dirty and charged very high prices for everything. They had indeed a very hard time until in the end, they preferred to travel all night, taking occasional snatches of sleep. All the time voices seemed to sing in their ears this quest was all a mere folly.

Gunther Bornkamm observes:

Hope is the mainspring of human action the lunar influence that keeps the tide of human affairs in perpetual and healthy motion. Without hope, all things would settle down into an offensive and pestiferous stagnancy. T.S. Eliot has a living hope which impels to labour, sustains it, and makes its fatigues tolerable.

Eliot's 'new hope' does not mean living in the clouds, reaming of a better life. It leads him to discover seeds of a new world already present today, because of the identity of our God, because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This hope is a source of energy to live differently, not according to the value of a society based on the thirst for possession and competition (75).

In the Holy Bible, the divine promise does not ask us to sit down and wait passively for it to come about, as if by magic. Before speaking to Abraham about the fullness of life offered to him, God says, "Leave your country and your home for the land I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). To enter into God's promise, Abraham is called to make of his life a



pilgrimage, to undergo a new beginning. In "The Journey of Magi," Eliot makes a pilgrimage with a living hope.

Then at dawn they reached a temperate valley, a valley of hope. The description of the valley in the second stanza is realistic with symbolic overtones. It was well below the snow line and smelt of vegetation. There was a running stream and a water mill beating the darkness and indicating bustling activity. There were three trees on the low sky and an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

As the poem progresses, the images become symbolic, as well as realistic. The narrator continues to report faithfully the external details of the scene but some of these have a special significance to the hearer. The new path is different both from the old summer ease and luxury and from the struggle through the darkness. The rhythm softens and flows more easily. There is dawn and dampness, and the smell of growing things with reassuring intensification with a running stream and a water mill beating the darkness. The water and the mill are both vital forces symbolic of driving life, denying the voices that this was all folly.

Crossing the high mountains, they descend into a pleasant valley. Then they come to a village by the side of a river. The water and the mill and the fertile valley and the trees and the "old white horse galloping away in a meadow! and the vine leaves over the door of the tavern," all speak of hope and freedom and fruitfulness. The Magi learnt nothing about the birth of Jesus but they felt encouraged to proceed further. Their quest ended successfully. They discovered and saw Jesus at the right time. Suffering from an unquiet mind in spite of this new faith the Wise Man hope for another death which would lead him to redemption.

Parts of "Ash Wednesday" were published separately. Part II appeared in 1927, Part I in 1928 and Part III in 1929. The poem as a whole appeared in 1930. The poem was written after Eliot's conversion to Catholicism. The title associates the poem with a day of combination and humility, and the poem itself suggests the Mass at many points. In the ritual for "Ash Wednesday" the priest, dipping his thumb in ashes, makes the sign of the cross on the forehead while he intones: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shall return." This reminds us of the exile from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 5). Hence the need of man to turn from the world to God. This provides the basic turning theme of the poem and implies the contemporary theme. During the lent reason, the Christians observe fasts and charitable works and turn to God with a hope to renew their relationship with Almighty God. Sometimes referred to as Eliot's "conversion poem" "Ash Wednesday," with a base of Dante's *Purgatorio*, is richly but ambiguously allusive and deals with the aspiration to move from spiritual barrenness to hope for human salvation.

It is not a single continuous poem but a group of poems on aspects of single theme. In religious terms, the theme is penitence, and penitence can be defined as a proper attitude to the past, a recognition of the present and a resolve for the future. From the title it is further clear that it is meant to be a lent poem. Lent is the period traditionally associated with the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His resurrection which is celebrated in Easter. Lent is thus a period of mourning, lamentation, penitence, reaffirmation of religious life and so on. Accordingly, the tenor of the poem is penitential.

"Ash Wednesday" marks the change in the content and style of his poetry which confronted with the change in faith. The mystery that lies behind "Ash Wednesday" is the mystery of conversion. As the very title implies, it is a poem of purgation; it deals with



penitence, the mortification of the natural man, the effort to control the will. This theme of penitence and the aspiration towards holiness, the acceptance of the church's discipline, of self-examination, contrition is crossed by an intimately painful personal experience. This double theme gives to every line, a deep ambiguity and gives to the poem a peculiar intensity.

"Ash Wednesday" is the most obscure of Eliot's poems because it has a haunting beauty of a mind that suffers and a mind which creates and a mind which finds communication very difficult. The experience is incommunicable and the poet is not wholly willing to share his secret, perhaps, because it is still in part a secret from himself.

"Ash Wednesday" is an account of deeply felt experiences of vacillation, doubts, penitence and painful conflicts which accompany the choice of subduing one's self to the will of God. Broadly speaking, it is an account of man who is dust and ash. The poem is predominantly a lyric of George Herbert or like the divine poems of John Donne.

The poem begins with the translated quotation from Cavalcanti, and this is immediately broken up into fragments suggesting the speaker's struggle to find expression. The first part of the poem explores the position of the speaker between his past (non-Christian) and his future (Christian). He is like the Fisher King apparently in a state of reluctance to move effectively in any direction. The mind is awake and aware of its loss; it expressed regret; it is penitent, and determined to improve the future by the denial of the world's attractions. The first poem turns on the subtle distinctions between nearly allied conditions; the distinction between regret or remorse and penitence, between indifference and detachment. The mind is awake and aware of its loss, it knows that power has gone never to return, and that a once glorious vision has fled forever. The mind has to get



adjusted between the bitterness of regret and the cynicism of relief. The infirm glory of the positive hour is associated with a place where trees, flowers and springs flow, whose seductive delights are described with greater elaboration at different points throughout the poem. The denial of the world's attractions, in this spiritual preparation is to be complete. The intensity of the poem comes from the concentration of the will, which prevents either the note of hopeless regret or that of bitter irony. Each is felt drawing the mind away from its attempt to repose in mercy and judgment from accepting that "God is greater than our heart and know all things".

The renunciation of hope can bring rejoicing but the poet, in "Ash Wednesday" believes that it is in faith and penitence alone that such an attitude can be sustained. Instead of the endless torturing, turnings of self-debate, he submits himself in prayer to the mercy and judgment of God.

The Christian note, struck in this poem, expands and envelops the entire length and breadth of "Ash Wednesday." The poem marks the summit of Eliot's lyrical and devotional achievement and the complete fusion of language, rhythm, tone and emotion into a single lyrical movement. It has no parallel elsewhere in modern poetry. Here the awareness of the hollow men takes the definite Christian form of repentance and contrition and prayer and the poem is as remarkable for echoes of Liturgy as for the traditional symbols of Orthodox Christianity. It is essentially a Christian poem.

Despite the poem making a number of allusions to literary and religious work and the Church rituals, "Ash Wednesday" is not an intellectual poem as *The Waste Land* is. It is spiritual in the sense Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is and which it follows in its essential structure: the progress of the poet's soul parallels Dante's journey through the Hell, the

purgatory and the Paradise. 'With the beauty of its sound', as Matthiessen says, and its predominant rhythm being 'a kind of ritualistic chant', "Ash Wednesday" is capable of making its appeal to a larger number of common people than Eliot's early poetry.'

In the first part deals with the process of self-exploration and self-examination. Despair is a necessary prelude to, and element in, the joy of faith. The 'aged eagle' in the first verse is a striking image. The poet calls himself an aged eagle. In part II, the poet experiences the dissolution of all that produces his worldly appetites. He is dismembered, devoured, and scattered, and his clean and scattered bones sing a song of devotion to an image of purity which transcends and brings into order all the discords of worldly experience. The image is a lady in a garden. She is dressed in white, and withdrawn in contemplation. The bones too are white, and the leopards, the agents of the purification, are also white. The section ends with a further assertion of detachment from the world, and attachment to a universal principal, still and silent :

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining  
 We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other,  
 Under a tree in the cool of this day, with the blessing of sand,  
 Forgetting themselves and each other, united  
 In the quite of the desert.

These are the poet's bones, but no feeling of resistance to detachment from the world is gone. Once the idea is expressed through these images of clarity and stillness, the resistance which thinking about it brought, is dispersed. The desert is not harsh now, but quiet and reposeful, the sand is gentle and purifying, the wind listens to the song of the bones, and the song tells of the rose and the garden which unify all things, as do the desert



and the wind. Concentrated in purpose in devotion to God, the bones and hence, the poet, caring for God, have ceased to care about the world, or self, and have learnt to sit still. The spirit is at rest.

The framework of the IV Part is provided by Dante's vision of the rise of Beatrice from her fleshly existence to the spiritual. 'Who' in the opening lines stands for Beatrice, through the figure could also be Mary. The figure 'Going in white and blue' could as well stand for the penitential self of the poet progressing further on its way to Paradiso, particularly when we know that blue and green symbolize penitence.

Finally, in Part VI, the poet, who has, now heard the word, has seen the sign, which he had not in Parts I and II, is able to return to contemplate the world without the anxious pressure to turn from it. He is confident that in following the spiritual discipline he will be restored to unity with God. And so, although he 'does not hope to turn again,' he does turn to images of worldly beauty. He is able to enjoy the experience of the senses confident that he is not in bondage to it.

Every saint has a past, but every sinner has a future. By the grace of God a person's life can be radically changed. We must thank God for calling us to a new and abundant life. In all his epistles St. Paul, again and again, emphasizes the need of conversion of mind. According to him 'penitence' means a change of heart and spirit that ultimately leads to Salvation. This is 'Hope' of the humanity.

This hope is of priceless value. It is the very secret of meaningful life. It is completely foreign to a world that does not walk with God. This hope fires the soul of Eliot with its desire and expectation, and sets it upon mightily energizing to attain the desired object. Not only does this hope preclude wickedness, it cleanses Eliot from being tied too



rightly to the circumstances of daily life, giving him stability rooted in the eternal trustworthiness of God. This hope is not based on wishful thinking, but on the reality of God's promises. It's this Christian hope that gives Eliot the joy, the self sacrificial love, the boldness, and the endurance to carry on-even in tough times.

For Eliot, helplessness is not the last word. Christ is his sure hope. In Christ he has more than enough reason to hope. And with Christ, he lifts up and sustains, with the strength of his hope, those burdened and overwhelmed by helplessness.

## Chapter Four

### Spiritual Rebirth

The entrance requirement for God's kingdom is a rebirth. Eternal life begins at the moment of spiritual rebirth. (John 3:36) "And all who trust Him God's Son to save them have eternal life". Spiritual rebirth means dying to one's old life. "Spiritual Rebirth" in the Holy Bible refers to something God does when we turn to Him with repentance and faith.

Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. He also said "I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die". 'Rebirth' is nothing but 'Spiritual Rebirth', according to Lord Christ. "Spiritual Rebirth" means 'new life' in God; victorious life over sin. 'Faith,' Hope,' 'Penitence,' 'Surrender,' 'Look at Him' etc. are definitely some important steps of 'Spiritual Rebirth'

'Spiritual Rebirth' means leaving our old ways. Again and again in the stories of the New Testament we hear how Jesus' followers left everything to follow him. It started with the shepherds on the Bethlehem hills leaving their flocks to seek out the child in swaddling clothes. It continued with the fishermen leaving their nets and following Jesus who promised to make them 'fishers of men'. It finds another focus in St. Paul, who wrote: 'But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ...' (Phil. 3:7-8)

As Robert Jewitt observes,

The renewal of mind is the key factor towards spiritual rebirth. When our mind is

made up to be something or do something, our whole life becomes geared to achieving what our mind is set on. If we want our minds to be renewed, if we are prepared to enter the battle to stop them being conformed by the pressures and values of this world, then we must first 'set our minds on things that are above' (65).

When one looks at Jesus' ministry in the Gospels, one sees a transforming presence working in all who put their trust in Him, shaping the whole outlook of those whose minds were made up that He was the Messiah. In other words, Jesus changed those whose minds were set on Him. St. Augustine said so aptly that we are called to be in the world but not of the world. One has here no lasting city, for one is but a sojourner, stranger in a strange land. Is it any wonder that one feels at times, that one does not belong, that our cares are beyond the limitations of this world, and that one is destined for things greater than what the world can offer? May one store up for oneself treasures in heaven, so that one might one day enjoy the fruits of doing the Lord's work here on earth.

At the onset of this important midlife predicament, nature itself internally programmes the eagle to fly to its nest high up in the mountains to initiate this process of rebirth. There on a lonely mountain peak it ruthlessly breaks its bent beak on the hard rock and waits patiently till the new replacement appears. No sooner does its new beak come functional than it proceeds to savagely tear out its useless talons and there follows another long wait till a brand new set grows in their place. With the help of this new set of sharp beak and claws it proceeds to meticulously pluck out its feathers one by one, no matter how severe the pain – till it is almost bald and bare. A further seemingly endless wait till it gradually begins to sport a new coat of supple feathers. It is now as good as new. The entire process takes about three agonizing months after which it is ready to fly off and live for



thirty more glorious years of a better and trouble-free existence.

This process that every eagle reportedly goes through is simply its own adapted version of the Paschal Mystery, a dying and rising that every eagle must go through in a very dramatic way. In fact, almost every single creature and the whole of nature as well endure a similar process in which death at one level gives way to new life on a higher plane. An example very familiar to all is the butterfly that enters into the cocoon stage before emerging as a colourful altogether new creature: a butterfly. Jesus expressed this fundamental law of life succinctly when he said: 'Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains but a grain. But if it dies, it produces a hundredfold.' Jesus not only taught us this, but he actually lived it himself too, even from the very inception of his earthly life.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Phillippians, tells us that "Although He was equal to God, Jesus did not cling to his equality with God. Rather, He emptied himself taking the form of a servant. And being found in human form, He became humble yet, even to becoming obedient.....unto death, death on a cross and therefore God has highly exalted Him so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father (Phil.2:5-11). If anyone has the moral authority to recommend this painful path as the true way to obtain new and abundant life, it would be Jesus because He Himself learned to obey through suffering.

Someone had not taught it about metamorphosis the process through which caterpillars change their total form from being creepy-crawlies into one of the most delightful creatures in God's world. A butterfly is not a caterpillar with a couple of wings

fixed to its back, rather it has come into being because of a deep transformation of its whole nature. In fact, that is what the word 'metamorphosis' means, because it comes from two Greek words 'meta' which means 'change' and 'morphosis' meaning 'shaping or moulding'.

One can see this when we watch a potter working at his wheel. He throws a lump of shapeless clay on to the wheel and fashions it into a vase, but then, changing his mind, uses his skills to shape a curved plate. The plate is as different from the vase as the butterfly is from the caterpillar. They are both examples of that deep change we call metamorphosis.

Personal transformation results in a completely new nature. It replaces the old, which had been corrupted from the beginning. The Apostle Paul describes it this way: "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature; the old has gone, the new has come!". Consider other terms used in the Holy Bible to describe the stark contrast between the old and the new. A person, on becoming a believer comes out of darkness into light (Acts 26:18); out of bondage into freedom (Rom. 8:21); out of death into life (Rom. 6:13).

In 'Acts,' chapter nine, one reads of the dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the early Christians. This encounter with the risen Jesus transformed him into Paul the apostle, one of the most effective teachers and evangelists of all time. Michael Green, Anglican clergyman, evangelist and advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury says of gradual change in direction. However, sudden or gradual change as it may be, any change in direction can only happen if something and some power makes it happen. We need something to make it happen. In fact, that is one of the most fundamental laws of science. 'A body keeps going in the same direction until a force acts upon it to change its direction.' This is very true as far as changing our minds is concerned. We shall keep



thinking the way we do until another power acts upon our minds, causing them to change direction.

It seems that there have been two sources of the same power at work. First of all, people like St. Paul have been exposed to Holy Spirit working in and through those around them, the source of power has been outside themselves. Second, there has been an internal revolution when power has acted inside them. The source of change is not within us, nor under our control. Repentance, God's power to work that mind-change within us, is in His hands, and we receive it by gift. Decision; leaving old ways; the mind-change, are the three dimensions of repentance, and all are required. One are responsible for the first two, only God can create the third, and one can only receive it as a gift from Him.

It is with a full and compassionate comprehension of our human predicament that God calls us to turn our eyes on Him. And it is His promise that if we look first to Him, He will take care of whatever else we're worried about (Matt. 6:33). "Change your focus," He seems to be saying, "Look at Me, just look at Me, and you'll be surprised at how those pieces of your life will begin to pull together into a meaningful whole."

Once Jesus called Peter to come to Him by walking on top of the water (Matt. 14:28-31). Peter was able to do that only so long as he kept his eyes focused on Jesus. It was as though the molecules of the water held together and made a solid path for Peter's feet so long as his gaze was upon the Lord. But once his eyes dropped down to focus on the water, the path gave way, broke apart, dissolving into its liquid state, and Peter began to sink.

Peter, being a fisherman, was well aware of the 'impossibility' of what Jesus was asking Him to do. He knew that people cannot walk on water. And yet because of his



overwhelming faith in Jesus, Peter was willing and able to suspend his belief in the basic properties of liquid in favour of a higher belief.

This story is a wonderful metaphor for the Christian walk. Jesus calls every child of His to come to Him, walking on the water of life's complications. He calls every one of us, His followers, to voluntarily suspend our belief in the discouraging 'facts' of our situations and to believe instead in His overcoming life and power. When we keep our inner gaze, the eyes of our spirits, focused on Christ, the complexities and complications hold together in Him and make a solid path for our feet.

The Chambers Dictionary defines 'Rebirth' as "reincarnation; revival of, eg. an interest; spiritual renewal" According to the Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, 'Rebirth' means a new incarnation, spiritual enlightenment, a revival (rebirth of learning). The themes in the poems of T.S. Eliot have been variously interpreted. Critics have found these themes illustrated even in his plays. The major themes of the later phase are religious. Eliot was confirmed into the Anglo-Catholic Church in 1927, hence his religious leanings are apparent now. The change is noticeable even in *The Hollow Men*. The hollow men are aware of their spiritual emptiness, and such awareness is the first step towards spiritual rebirth.

'Spiritual Rebirth' means leaving our old ways. Again and again in the stories of the New Testament we hear how Jesus' followers left everything to follow him. It started with the shepherds on the Bethlehem hills leaving their flocks to seek out the child in swaddling clothes.

In the course of the journey of "Ash Wednesday," the speaker passes from profane to sacred, from death to life, from illusion to reality, from temporal concerns to an

aspiration toward the infinite. Both rituals - the Mass and Purgatorio provide, as well, an objective correlative for the conflicting emotions of despair and hope. Both are identified with the themes that only through suffering and sacrifice can one achieve purgation of the spirit and that salvation comes from without, as well as within, as man is propelled upward by divine love. The myth of Dante's journey through Purgatory gives to "Ash Wednesday" vitality and comprehensiveness not otherwise available in the "Ash-Wednesday" Sacrifice of the Mass. Like the whole of the *Commedia*, "Ash Wednesday" is characterized by movement the movement of the spirit, progression and regression through the dark night of the soul, to the final moment of submission. The drama of "Ash Wednesday," as of the Purgatorial, rests on the struggle; the unity of the whole is dependent on the recognition.

At the beginning of "Ash Wednesday," we find the speaker in the same moral and spiritual uncertainty experienced by Dante's pilgrim on the shores of Purgatory. Behind him lies the waste land like Dante's Hell, the place where God is absent. His lack of hope recalls the pilgrim's apprehension on the lonely plain upon hearing Cato's injunction to clothe himself in humility. "Ash Wednesday" opens with almost the very words of the exile Guido Cavalcante, who, bidding farewell to his lover, says "Perch'io non spero di tornargiammai . . ." (Because I do not hope ever to return) (32).

The condition of hopelessness is further explored in the speaker's contemplation of the vacancy of his temporal world. The moment of deepest dejection comes when his will is paralyzed and movement upward is impossible. His soul has been stripped of its desires as he regards the futility of earthly striving: Why should I mourn The vanished power of the usual reign? The rejection of the world prefigures the subsequent rejection of the self. The knowledge that in his present state he is unable to drink from the life-enhancing fountain



recalls the stage in the Mass when the penitent renounces all worldly pleasures and himself. More important, the inability to enjoy the cooling draught or the blessed face emphasizes a condition of sin that precludes a reunion with sacred objects.

Indeed, what follows here in the climax of the first part of "Ash Wednesday" is prayer and the discipline preparatory to enforced purgation. The speaker has made some progress; he has felt humility and has recognized the need to "construct" something. The formula posed in "The Dry Salvages," the "rest," reflects the substance of all myth: rite and prayer, or the invocation to a supreme being. And in invoking God, he rejects reason that renders him impotent. Obviously, understanding must emanate from another source. In "Ash-Wednesday," the desiccation of the temporal world and his own inability to soar like Dante's visionary eagle recall the pilgrim who thirsts for knowledge reason cannot slake. Not in his culture ("The air ... thoroughly small and dry") (18) nor in "argument" nor in his will alone has he found the wings which should impel him forward. Like Dante's pilgrim, who nevertheless is aided by reason, he must find them in a divinatory vision. Salvation, here as in the *Commedia*, will come from outside one's will and one's self, and will "teach us to care and not to care," instructing one in the lessons of *caritas*, detachment, and the humility of obedience. In essence, what the speaker requests is a motto spiritual that will make salvation possible. Thus, the invocation which closes Part I is reminiscent of the pleas of the penitents whom Dante meets at the outset; all men must ultimately bear the burden of all sinners: Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

The invocation at the close of Part I announces the theme of symbolic death. Part II of "Ash Wednesday" is a dream vision in which the speaker witnesses the death of the



total self as a joyful prelude to his spiritual rebirth. The invocation to the Lady introduces the drama that will terminate in the reconciliation of all opposites in the garden. The entire poem is suffused in a cool whiteness that suggests not only the purity of the Virgin and the efficacy of the stripping-away process but also the merciful void of forgetfulness. The three leopards who consume the flesh under the juniper tree are salutary agents of the disintegrative process the juniper tree echoing both Elijah's own regenerative experience and the magical juniper of Grimm's tale of transfiguration. The number three is significant. Dante's own ascent through Purgatory witnesses the purgation of disordered love: lust, gluttony, and avarice - all three divisive elements in the universe and in the individual man. If Dante's journey to Beatrice is the discovery of the harmonizing elements in the cosmos - of the divine love that moves all things then here, as well, the beneficent leopards will effect the transfiguration of disordered love. But movement upward is far from automatic. As we shall see, the dangers of these fleshly temptations are ever-present and must be heeded constantly.

The question that God asks Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" hovers over the poem, more sternly phrased to testify to the unyielding judgment of divine will: "And God said / Shall these bones live?" The entire spirit of the allusion suggests Purgatorial, where the penitents are painfully conscious, not only of their own efforts, but of their dependence upon divine mercy. The answer Ezekiel gives, "O Lord God, thou knowest," echoes this conviction. The fulfillment, the rebirth, will come, as it does in the Book of Ezekiel, only after the bones "hear the word of the Lord." This will be possible with self denial, the rejection of temptation, faith, and prayer.

Spiritual rebirth brings changes in the life of T.S. Eliot and his goals. It's in the

Bible, II John 3:9: "The person who has been born into God's family does not make a practice of sinning because now God's life is in him; so he can't keep on sinning, for this new life has been born into him and controls him he has been born again."

As Paul puts it "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal". (2 Cor. 4:18). T.S. Eliot begins to get a proper perspective on both worlds, the world of the spirit and the world of material things; the relationship between them and the relative value of each. In reality, Eliot has experienced a second birth. The first was a natural birth, which came with a fallen nature. The second is a spiritual birth, free of this basic defect. It is a brand new start. T.S. Eliot becomes a new person!

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Of all the founders of the Church, St. Paul was perhaps the most brilliant and many-sided, the broadest in outlook, and therefore the best endowed to carry Christianity to alien lands peoples.

The most quoted of New Testament writers, St. Paul has given us a wealth of counsel, aphorisms, and ethical teachings; he had the power of expressing spiritual truths in the simplest of words, and this, rather than the building up of a systematic theology, was his contribution to the early Church. A man of action, St. Paul reveals the dynamic of his whole career when he writes, "I press on towards the goal, to the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus." Although he himself was forever pressing onwards, his letter often invoked a spirit of quiet mediation, as when he ends his epistle to the Philippians with the beautiful lines: "Whatever things are true, whatever honourable, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever lovable, whatever of good repute, if there be any virtue, if anything worthy of raise, think upon these things."

T.S. Eliot was a literary genius beyond comprehension. But then, literature is not predominantly pagan nor outrightly secular nor purely humanistic without elements of divinity and trace of spirituality. Religion, theology, spirituality everything falls within the larger domain of literature. Needless to say, therefore, that a literary writer or a creative artist reveals his spirituality, idea of God, certitude, truth in his/her writings. And T.S. Eliot is not an exception either. The quest for spirituality is instinctual and innate. And spirituality has been the everlasting quest for the human person. It could be expressed in the biblical term: "As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God. I



thirst for you, the living God" (Ps. 42:1-2).

There is striking similarities between St. Paul and T.S. Eliot. Both Paul and Eliot were multi-faceted personalities. St. Paul is a talented orator, great writer, profound philosopher and holy saint. T.S. Eliot was a blend of many things a classicist, innovator, critic, social thinker, philosopher and mystic. He was a master craftsman, a poetic genius and a modernist who believed in tradition. He was versatile and original in his choice of theses, structure and diction. He was an universalist.

St. Paul, a great writer has written fourteen epistles out of 21 epistles in the New Testament. And Paul the letter-writer gave us not only some of the profoundest pieces of early Christian theological reflection, but also some of the finest, most poignant writing in history.

Both Paul and Eliot were well educated and learned. St. Paul was a student of Gamaliel, the most highly respected teacher in Israel whereas Eliot was a student of Harvard and Oxford Universities. Both of them have a cosmopolitan background. St. Paul was born and brought up in a cosmopolitan city in Cilicia and T.S. Eliot was born in America, toured through Europe and finally became a citizen of Britain.

The remarkable feature was that both Paul and Eliot were converts. St. Paul converted from the Jewish religion to Christianity whereas T.S. Eliot's conversion was from agnosticism to Anglo-Catholicism. Interestingly, Christ was the focal point of their conversion. Needless to mention that both Paul and Eliot were legends of their own times.

In all his epistles to the various churches, St. Paul takes pain to explain the importance of the virtues in the lives of the believers to attain salvation. During the second phase of his career, T.S. Eliot wrote the religious poems. In these poems, he underlines the

importance of the virtues such as faith, hope, penitence, rebirth, holiness etc.

Two outstanding men of knowledge and wisdom St. Paul and T.S. Eliot are discussed (compared) in this study in terms of their deep spiritual aspirations and aptitudes. St. Paul, the theologian and T.S. Eliot, the creative artist aspired to attain spirituality. The comparative analysis brings out the universality of human experience. The teachings of Christ was the most basic corner stones which helped St. Paul and T.S. Eliot in theologically and exegetically expounding the meaning of and concretizing their quest for spirituality. Spirituality leads to liberation. Liberation is the realization of one's union with God.

The quintessence of spirituality which both St. Paul and Eliot hold is the one of suffering. Spirituality is the constant and continuous struggling towards the fullness of life. Fundamentally, it is realization within oneself; and such realization of the fullness in oneself leads one to suffer for the welfare of one's fellow beings. Both Paul and Eliot well understood the true quality of spirituality love for God and love for fellow beings, the first and best of all the commandments described in the Bible: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

The study beyond doubt, clearly proves that St. Paul's messages had profound influence on T.S. Eliot in writing his religious poems. This thesis aims at discussing and proving that St. Paul's messages had profound influence on T.S. Eliot in writing his religious poems.

The first chapter introduces the scope of the study mainly focusing on the different influences such as family background, religious and philosophical background that shaped



the genius of both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot.

The second chapter focuses on 'faith' as the basis of worshipping and serving the living God. Both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot proclaim that faith is the corner stone in achieving spirituality. Their faith has instilled in them both a strong love for and a deep commitment to their sacred scriptures, namely, the teachings of Redeemer Jesus as the powerful instruments to sharpen and interpret their quest for spirituality. Their interpretations eventually led them to show new ways to lead a life of love. Christianity is commonly said to owe as much to St. Paul as to Jesus. Paul declared that 'faith in Christ' made the Torah unnecessary for salvation, exalted the Christian church as the body of Christ.

Faith, according to St. Paul, is composed of several elements; it is the submission of the intellect to the word of God, the trusting abandonment of the believer to the Saviour who promises him assistance; it is also an act of obedience by which man accepts the Divine will. Such an act has a moral value, for it "gives glory to God" (Rom. 4:20) in the measure in which it recognizes its own helplessness.

T.S. Eliot's old 'faith' or faithlessness is dead and he journeying towards a new 'faith'. The new faith appeals to him but even that fails to give him calm or happiness. Eliot expressed no rebellion at all this. All he remembers is the 'faith' that urged him forward, the sense of urgency which made him quicken his pace and which conquered not only practical impediments and his own fatigue, but also his own doubts. 'Faith' is a tremendous gift, a gift more precious than silver or gold.

Why do the wise men have to endure hardship in their journey? They know that they can only get to Easter if they first experience Good Friday. The sorrows of their lives do not have the last word. Through the power of God's grace, every dark day holds within



it the promise of brighter days to come and every cross that they carry leads them closer to the joys of heaven. Though the sufferings might be intense, it soon gives way to joy of great measure. So it will be with those who believe and remain steadfast in the 'faith'. T.S. Eliot remembers the words of St. Paul : "I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing to the glory to be revealed". The magi follow the light of the star and find the Light of the world. The Feast of Epiphany celebrates the discovery of Jesus, the true Light by visitors from distant lands.

The third chapter emphasizes the importance of 'hope' in everyone's life. 'Hope' is personal, as for as St. Paul is concerned. God Himself is the hope. There is no hope outside of him. It's as big as He is. Our hope in Christ deals with ultimate issues. It is the "hope of glory," Whatever our problem might be, God is the solution. When we draw near to Him we find healing and grace, and we find that our lives take on a greater significance. That is hope.

Change of faith had brought many hardships and troubles in the life of T.S. Eliot. During this period, St. Paul's epistles were great consolation and source of inspiration to Eliot. Without the cross there can be no resurrection, without suffering there can be no glory. With 'hope' in living God, he endured all kind of troubles. This 'hope' did not disappoint him at the end.

We have seen that fallen man being unable to arise again unaided. God in His mercy sent His Son to save him. It is an elementary and often repeated doctrine of St. Paul that Jesus Christ saves us through the Cross. Christ suffers physical death to save us from the moral death of sin and preserve us from eternal death. The death of Christ is represented as a redemption, the payment of a ransom, as the result of which man was delivered from

all his past servitude. Christ having once died and risen, the Redemption is completed in law and in principle for the whole human race and Christ is the only 'hope' for the whole human race.

According to T.S. Eliot spiritual Rebirth should be the ultimate goal of human beings and one must strive for it. 'Rebirth' is nothing but 'Spiritual Rebirth.' 'Spiritual Rebirth' means a new life in God; a victorious life over sin. 'Faith,' 'Hope,' 'Penitence,' 'Surrender,' 'Look at Him' etc. are definitely some important steps of 'spiritual Rebirth.' Spiritual Rebirth means leaving our old ways, says St. Paul.

In "Journey of Magi," the wise men have undertaken a spiritual journey. The new path is different both from the old summer ease and luxury and from the struggle through darkness. There has been a kind of spiritual rebirth. The birth brought 'hard and bitter agony' as it destroyed old values and ideals; it was like their own death. And the wise man feels that he should be glad of another death; a death which will end the unquiet and may lead him to the bliss of heaven.

Though at first he opposed, St. Paul was captured by the presence of the Risen Lord. The words of St. Thomas became St. Paul's as he beheld the Lord Jesus in his spirit and exclaimed, in faith, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus invitation struck T.S. Eliot to the core, and caused within him a change that not even his closest friends could have ever predicted. He was wise enough to respond generously to the Lord's life changing invitation to follow Him along the path of everlasting life. There were plenty of voices that seek to influence T.S. Eliot, the voices of materialism, individualism and hedonism to name but a few. Yet what were the fruits that they bear? Greed, loneliness and broken hearts. Our world experiences plenty of the darkness of sin and corruption. The culture around us neither



enlightens nor enriches the soul. Jesus is the light that scatters the darkness and He does so by shining through those who believe in Him. Through the epistles of St. Paul, Eliot drew closer the Lord Jesus and he embraced the call to radical conversion of heart.

The surrender to the Lord Jesus is indeed one of peace, one that gives comfort to our souls and renews our strength to serve Him. Both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot are truly blessed, for though their eyes have never seen Him, the gift of faith affords them access to His holy presence.

The firm foundation of faith, hope and rebirth is one upon which a person can build a life of virtue and holiness. In spite of what the world might say, the good life is measured by integrity, justice, and a right relationship with God. The good life is not spared the proverbial rains, floods and winds. But the strengths of its foundations in the teachings of the Lord will allow it to endure to the end. A wise man once said, "Tough times never last, but tough people do." Both St. Paul and T.S. Eliot found their strength in the Lord, whose promises are always fulfilled. They understood that there was no task in life more noble than following the Lord. Fame, riches, fortune and glory might bring momentary delight, but true satisfaction in this life lies in giving God our very best, dedicating everything we say and do to His glory and honour. Our relationship with the Lord is the water of our lives: essential for our well being and the source of our joy.

Without the Lord people would wither away like dried leaves. With Him they have life, life to the full. When people allow the Lord to direct their lives they not only want for nothing, they find themselves in a state of abundance. Those who trust in the Lord are never disappointed. Only Lord satisfies the longings of our heart. The pursuit of holiness is the only worthy endeavour for those who seek the finest things in life, for it is the spiritual



treasures that endure. Jesus is the gateway to new and abundant life. When we search for security outside of Him we find only chaos. But with the Lord Jesus we find salvation. We find new life here on earth, and we enter upon the pathway that leads to the restful waters and verdant pastures of heaven. Lord who is the vine, the source of life. Sin separates us from God, making it impossible for us to bear fruit. Only God can reconnect a withered branch to the vine and fill it with life and fruitfulness. Such is the power and the mystery of His Divine Mercy.

One person can influence so many others, either for the good or for the bad. Virtue breeds virtue, and vice begets vice. We are called to be beacons of light in this troubled and confused world of ours. By choosing what is good and distaining what is evil we exercise an important witness in our world. St. Paul is a positive influence in the lives of millions and millions of people through the ages including T.S. Eliot. Out of the shadows comes invincible light, from the darkness comes the brightness of God's glory. This dissertation, beyond doubt, clearly proves that St. Paul's messages had profound influence on T.S. Eliot in writing his religious poems especially "Ash Wednesday" and "Journey of the Magi"

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**Love and Discord: An Eco-Feministic Perception of Sudha Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula***

A project submitted to

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the reward of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

**MANCY.D**

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled *Love and Discord: An Eco- Feministic Perception of Sudha Murty's Gently Falls the Bakula* submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

*D. Mancy.*  
MANCY.D

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Love and Discord: An Eco- Feminist Perception of Sudha Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula*** is submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Mancy.D during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Love and Discord: An Eco-Feministic Perception of Sudha Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula*** gives a detailed analysis about the hidden aspects of love, marriage and discord.

The first chapter **Introduction** throws light on a short biography of Sudha Murty discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in Indian Literature.

The second chapter **Conflicts and Struggle** highlights the characters Conflicts and Struggle which was experienced even before their marital relationships and throughout their family commitments.

The third chapter **Materialistic Greed** depicts the materialistic greed that has been experienced by the characters throughout which leads to segregation and separation between them.

The fourth chapter **Ecological perceptions** focuses on the Ecological perceptions employed in the novel. The symbolic representation of the flower 'Bakula' which plays a major role in both the characters life journey.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the highlighted aspects dealt in the preceding chapters. The message of how marital relationships should be is stated.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Indian English Literature has travelled a lengthen voyage to reach its magnificence and stateliness. Indian English literature refers to the body work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co native language could be one of the numerous language of India, its early history began with the works of Michael Madhusudan Dutt followed by R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao who contributed to Indian fiction in 1930. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian diaspora, such as V.S.Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kovind Gupta and Salman Rushdie who are of Indian descent.

Indian Writing in English was for a long time relegated to a position of marginality on the world literary stage. Within India itself, regional literature enthusiasts would often point to its incompatibility in terms of culture and assert that only the literatures in the regional languages could authentically portray the lived experience of Indians. In spite of Srinivasa Iyengar's and M.K. Naik's determined efforts to secure for Indian Writing in English the status of canonical literature, the Indian academia would not until recently touched it even with a barge pole.

The beginning of Indian literature in English is traced to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By this time English education was more or less firmly established in three major centres of British power in India: Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. English literature in India is also intimately linked with the words of association of the Indians this creative writing in English is looked at as an integral part of the



literary traditions in the Indian perspective of fine arts. The truthfulness and honesty of the writer writing in English is often made a theme of suspect in their own country.

Indian women novelists in English tried their best to deal with pathetic plight of forsaken women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. The women novelists portrays the miserable life of an average Indian woman. The role of women in India from the colonial period seems to be dependent on their men. They are denied from utilizing the opportunities of education and refinement. They have been excluded from social and political activities. They are ignorant of their basic rights as individuals because of illiteracy and ignorance. Except a few women of the nobility, the lives of the general women are not worth living. In short the admittance to social justice and equality are denied to them. The social evils from rites to Sati, Devadasi system, Pardha system, Child marriage and Dowry deaths are some of the evils that have been caused to trim down the position of women in India.

After independence, Indian constitution has enshrined many rights to women. Indian government has provided equal educational opportunities to women. Women's writing in the present world have made a deep impact on the social and cultural ambience. Women's literature is now perceived as an individual entity, bringing women's consciousness, experiences and values in the act of reading. Literatures produced by women exhibit the subjects, motifs, and problems exploring their usage for self-definitions, at times by flouting the structured norms of propriety as well as discarding the prescribed norms of gender relations.

Women's literature emerges out to be an outcry of a group of people who have remained suppressed, disregarded and abandoned under patriarchy and vested political groups. The dominant male discourses tied with each other to demote womanhood to subjectivity, neglect, infirmity and structured silence. An Anthology of female writers focuses only on one particular genre of literature fiction. It is a multi-disciplinary critique of novels written by South Asian female novelists like Neelum Saran Gour, Kamala Das, Jhumpa Lahiri, Monica Ali, Rama Mehta, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Manju kapur, Namita Gokhale, Githa Hariharan, Anita Nair, Anita Desai, and Kamila Shamsie.

Robert Southey in a letter written to Charlotte Bronte declares "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life and it ought not to be". Female writers of the Indian Diaspora too have carved a niche for themselves. Literature by women presents an "imaginative continuum". In women novelists, a commonality of motifs is observed. They deal with gender issues and roles, female subjectivity, exploitation and oppression, the concept of being 'other' in a patriarchal society, the theme of growing up from childhood to womanhood, that is, the Bildungsroman, self-liberation via self-quest, sexual deviance and sexual autonomy, human relationships, realism, magic realism, fantasy and surrealism, the image of the New woman, traditional Indian culture, image of 'exotic India', globalization, migration, expatriation, diasporic consciousness, East-West confrontation, the clash between tradition and modernity, socio-psychological aspect, Independence struggle and partition, etc. Indian women English writers have quietly and confidently shaped their literary endeavors. Let them have their walks speak for themselves. It has done most eloquently, establishing Indian English literature as an inextricable part of Indian literature.



Indian writing in English has been acclaimed around the world for its innovation, radical new approaches to the art of storytelling and reworking of language. Womenwriters in India are moving forward with their strong and sure strides, matching the pace of the world. They are recognized for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavor of the soil that they bring to their work. The works of women novelists in English mirror the exact realistic picture of contemporary world where innocence is suffocating in the corruption, here is a prevailing sense of gender discrimination in an average house of India, where the helpless women have to bear the burnt of patriarchal domination.

The novels of early 1950s and 1960s dealt with the binaries like tradition-modernity and rural-urban. The period witnessed writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, who took up new subjects and new themes dealing with women's self-awareness. For many Indian women novelists the quest for identity as impacted by the patriarchal system has been the favorite theme.

The novels of 1970s are women-centered and it became popular for the new dynamic Indian women. A radical thought for those times was Telugu writer Snehalatha Reddy's drama *Sita* (1974), which critiques *Ramayana*, and upholds the rights of Sita as a wife, as an individual and as a woman. Reddy depicts Sita as being a rebel against Rama and his pompous masculinity. Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975) which was awarded The Booker Prize and Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) are good examples of female protagonists' struggle for control over their lives. Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977), and Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992),



which won The Common Wealth Writer's prize for Best First novel in the Eurasian region, are other novels which highlight an educated women's quest for her roots. *The Thousand Faces of Night* portrays the mother, daughter bond as well as depicts the life of three different women, of different generations. Many novels deals with domesticity, such as Anjana Appachana's *Listening Now*, which depicts the 16 years of the life of Padma, who is a lecturer in a university.

The 1980s saw a maturity in the use of language, style and technique. Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Arundathi Roy, Vikram Seth, Kavery Nambisan, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, Armament, Gita Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and others brought international recognition in western liberal morality. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege, and Vidyut Bhagat are some essayists and critics who write in favor of feminism in English. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* and Anita Nair's *Satyr of the Subway* similarly deal with human relationships. Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai both write on middle class family. They project the alienation and identity crisis of their male dominated female characters. Their quest is for an identity different from role playing as a daughter, a wife or a mother. Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* and Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, plunge the depths of female psyche in the characters of Sarita and Sita. They have to find within themselves the strength to be emancipated while living within traditional roles of the society. Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu* moves out of the traditional boundary of India into the land of dreams and exposing the other side of materialism and loneliness. She sees women in various stages of suffering within the folds of a cruel

society, subjugated by husband, by children, by mother-in-law, by daughter-in-law, and coping with it.

The 1990s produced novels focused on today's women of Modern India and leaves the reader to gauge whether the status of women has undergone a change for the better or for the worse. These writers do not carry with them the colonial baggage but show a refreshing and different face of contemporary India. Their creations revolve around the general theme of middle class, in rural as well as urban set up and also the clash of values and systems, when the twain meet. Namita Gokhale's *Gods, Graves and Grandmothers* (1994), is about social realism. Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984) is satirically comical where Paro is married several times and has an adulterous relationship with a younger man in contrast to a model Indian woman, who is subjugated and chaste.

The 1990s novels are centered on female protagonists and their awareness of what it entails to be a woman in a male-centered, tradition bound society, as in the works of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Another theme to emerge is that of the lives of women during India's struggle for independence. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998) follows the journey of Ida, who traces the life of her mother Virmati and her grandmother, in a quest to understand them. Singh gives credence to the fact posited by Santhosh Gupta that, "Women novelists of the 80s and 90s portray women characters in search of self-fulfillment" (Singh, 1998:44). Many women writers have written novels of magic realism, social realism and regional fiction. Suniti Namjoshi (1941) and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956) employ magic realism in *Mistress of Spices* (1997), and *The Mother's of Maya Diip* (1989). Suniti Namjoshi stands out for her use of fantasy.



The 2000s and recent novels are about representation of middle class women who have a career, and a development of a feminine sensibility beyond being a feminist. These novels of 2000s show a lot of variety in genre and themes. Meera Syal's *Life isn't All Ha HaHeeHee* (2000), depicts the dilemma of British- Asian men and women caught between the crossfire of traditions and customs of birth and adopted countries. It narrates the tales of Indian women from 1919 to present day, from youth to grandmothers. In *Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri explores the clash of cultures and generations and the painful experience of assimilation into alien culture. Anuradha Marwah-Roy's *Idol Love* (1999) presents a terrifying picture of an Indian dystopia in the twenty-first century. Anita Rau Badami's third novel *Can You Hear the Night Bird Call* (2006), explores what endurance in difficult situations mean. *Nightbird* spans from 1926 India to 1985 Canada. The three narrative female voices; Sharan, Leela and Nimmo, share the tragedy of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* (2006) revolves round the life of child widows, and pictures the stark life of misery that they live in. Some of the major themes of contemporary women writers are feminism, sex, identity crisis, alienation and loneliness.

In this galore of Indian women writers Sudha Murthy is an Indian philanthropist and writer in Kannada and English. Murty began her professional career as a computer scientist and Engineer. She is the chairperson of the Infosys foundation and a member of public healthcare initiatives of the gates foundation. She has founded several orphanages, participated in rural development efforts, supported the movement to provide all Karnataka government schools with computer and library facilities, and established, the Murthy classical library of India at Harvard University. Murty initiated a bold move to



introduce computer and library facilities in all schools in Karnataka and taught computer science. She got "best teacher award" in 1995 from Rotary club at Bangalore. Murthy is best known for her social work and her contribution to literature in Kannada and English. *Dollara* novel originally authored by her in Kannada and later translated into English as *Dollar Bahu*, was adapted as a televised dramatic series by zee TV in 2001. Murthy has also acted in the Marathi film and the Kannada film *prarthana*. One of her famous work was the "How I taught my grandmother to read and other stories". The book was translated into 15 other languages. It reflects her childhood association with her paternal grandparents.

Sudha Murthy won many prestigious awards she got recognized for the Raja-Lakshmi award by the Sri Raja-Lakshmi foundation in Chennai in 2004, and she won the award for her outstanding performance in social works. She won the Padma Shri, the fourth highest ranking official as per government of India and even obtained a doctorate for her publications. Some of her favorite quotes are "Life is an exam where the syllabus is unknown and question papers are not set. Nor are there models answer papers". "Struggle is life". "Money is one thing which rarely unites and mostly divides people". "A cuckoo should never dance and a peacock should not try to sing!"

Sudha Murthy has written four novels, four books of short stories and two novellas. Though a female writer, she does not deal with the issues related to women only. Main thrust of her writing is the deep psychological upheavals in the minds of Indian youth in the age of globalization. The Indian economy changed drastically in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of twenty first century. Sudha Murthy encountered the ill impact of globalization on today's generation from the social and psychological

point of view. Sudha Murty's writing is a wonderful combination of old Indian and the new twentieth century Indian culture. She is a psycho-analyst as well as an entrepreneur. Her works reflect a rare combination of philanthropic attitude and logical thoughts. Her writings take us deep into the human mind with all its complexities. The delineation of characters depicted by her represents new reality which is revolutionary feature in modern literature. She is not a feminist in traditional sense who fights for women's cause. She writes about men and women both struggling for their own existence in globalizing India

Sudha's marriage with legendary Narayan Murty and her active association with the voluntary social services through Infosys Foundation have an indelible impact on her writing. Her themes emerged out of her first-hand experience of the individuals working in the field of Information Technology. India gave up its pernicious lease and license policy and plunged into new competitive world economy. It brought innumerable opportunities to the doorstep of new generation in India. Sudha Murty dealt with the theme of eroding effects of the globalization on the domestic relations in neo-rich couples in the new era in India.

Chandru in *Dollar Bahu*, Anand in *Mahashweta*, Sanjay in *House of Cards* and Shrikant in *Gently Falls the Bakula* came from struggling middle class families. Chandru obtained highest Bachelor's degree in Information Technology and migrated to America with his wife for better career opportunities there. In *Gently Falls the Bakula* Shrikant also acquired a Bachelor's degree in Technology and rose to a position of Vice President of a multinational company in India. Anand and Sanjay became specialized doctors through tireless striving. This shows that Ms. Murty chose to write on the boys and girls



who took advantage of the liberalizing atmosphere in India. But the same boys were spoiled by the money and position they got in the latter part of their life.

Anand got married with Anupama because he liked her melodious voice and stage skills. In spite of initial opposition, Sanjay and Mridula got married due to their unadulterated affection for each other. The same was true about Shrikant and Chandru. Sudha Murty has successfully demonstrated that all the couples led happy and contented life through their attachment to each other. Financial needs kept them together in the initial phase of their married life. Tables turned with the unexpected influx of money in their life. It made them phobia restless to have more of it. The four boys in four novels of Sudha Murty who were deeply concerned with and sincerely possessed by the four respective girls in their life, gradually drifted away from them. They had neither love nor inclination to have amiable dialogue with their wives. The promises that they had made to each other and vows that they had taken were conveniently forgotten by their rich and reputed husbands. Life of the lovers that had started with big hopes ended in disillusionment and separation. The richness made the boys arrogant to their wives and other members of the family. They were blinded to the domestic facts of life. Money became their God and they were ready to do anything to propitiate it, because they had experienced the truth that Goddess of Lakshmi was more venerated than the Goddess of Saraswati in modern times. The moral values lost their significance in their life. Ethical practices became a thing of bygone days for them. Dr. Sanjay who fought against rampant corruption in government hospitals began to practice unjustifiable treatment to the patients in his private hospital. Money corrupted all of them and this is what Sudha Murty highlighted in her novels.



Chandru, Anand, Shrikant and Sanjay are the male characters in Murty's novel they all forgot to keep the promises that they had given to their wives before their marriages. When their wives reminded them of the days before marriage, husbands had no time to heed to them. They unexpectedly became arrogant to their own wives, which created a chasm in their relations. The gap gradually widened and resulted into their separation. It must be noted in all the four novels that the boys had to cut off their relations with their parents and other close relatives.

Sudha Murty has been successful in bringing out the brutal effects of money on family relations in modern India. She showed that Indians have become globalized but their perspective remained stagnant at local level. They equated their success with the amount of money they earned and spent. Sometimes it meant severing their ties with their close relatives. Wife, sister, brother, mother and father were gauged and evaluated only by the financial yardstick and measurements. It acquired the most hideous dimension in *Gently Falls the Bakula* when Shrikant squashed the thought of having a child because he felt that it will work as an impediment in his personal progress. He did not accept his wife's request to have a child because he thought it as a challenge to his autocratic nature.

Sudha Murty has shown the dark side of globalization in India. Indian culture for a longtime believed in mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence. The agrarian nature of the Indian economy created and maintained the community life. Their life blossomed along with the blooming of crops in fields. The surrounding goats, dogs, cows, bullocks and buffalos were the part and parcel of their existence. They breathed together. Though these people did not voice their concerns for their wives, they had deep seated sense of belonging to each other, particularly to the women section of the family. Honour of the

family was closely linked with the honour of the girls and women of the family. All this was blasted and torn off into pieces by the advent of air- conditioned wooden offices and lifeless gadgets there. People lost direct contacts with each other and preferred to establish virtual world around them. As a result they have online followers but not close blood relations. Sudha Murty's men protagonists refrained from personal and public talk with others. Two lovers wrote to each other before marriage. In *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Shrikant wrote emotionally charged love letters from Bangalore to Shrimati. Anand sent letters to Anupama regularly before marriage.

Sudha Murty did not advocate the resurrection of old value system and family structure of bygone days. She neither said nor suggested that modern technological world was essentially bad and must be abandoned. Though she seemed to be disappointed with the changes in personal relations in modern India, she did not expect the old world to return. She expected the new world to modify itself by picking the best from the old lists in English. Her female protagonists are rare combination of tradition and modernity. Though they fall in love, they get married only after they are permitted to. They take care of their mother in law after marriage. Secondly, though they suffer a loss of their personality they do not react disastrously. As long as possible they compromise with the situation. Even after they leave their houses they do not malign their image in the public. Female writers generally put the blame on the men for women's sufferings. Sudha Murty also showed this conflict but did not squarely blame the men for it. She blamed the other women of the family in equal proportion. She showed the tug of war between daughter in law and mother in law.



Sudha Murty has set all her novels in rural and urban centers. Generally the boy and the girl came from rural background. They have their roots in the social, cultural and economic activities of the villages. Sudha Murty seems to be well acquainted with the various customs, conventions and traditions of the village life. She knows the habits and hobbies of the people in the villages and she made use of this knowledge in the plot, story and action of the novels. Second part of her novels is set in the cosmopolitan cities like Bangalore and Bombay. Villagers carry superstitious ideas. They believe in horoscopes and their reading before finalizing their marriages. Villagers get free time after the season of harvesting which they use for harmless gossiping. Sudha Murty has made use of these features in her writing. Her characters shift to the metropolitan cities for jobs. Mad rush there takes their lives out of them. They run after money, position and physical facilities so much that they lose their human qualities in the process. Naturally close relations are strained and broken.

This novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* deals about the main concepts 'what is more important to the life'- A successful career or a happy marriage. The protagonist Shrimati's marriage loses her ambition and her self-interest takes her as tall. She identified herself and moves her life in narrow way. *Gently Falls the Bakula* is the story of a marriage that loses its way as ambition and self-interest takes their toll. The novel is a beautiful tale about the ideologies the family conflicts, the stereotypical mother-in-law and sister-in-law verses hatred daughter-in-law, the illusion about educational qualification, marriage and matchmaking all are familiar. Shrimati the protagonist by becoming a dutiful, educated, sincere and affectionate wife, she enabled him to reach the peak of glory in his IT profession. The second chapter deals with the subject of love, here Sudha Murty shows



how love is superior to everything and also she explains about the conflicts and struggles which has been faced by the characters.

## Chapter Two

### Conflicts and Struggle

Sudha Murty's first novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* is the story of a marriage that loses its way as ambition and self-interest takes their toll. The novel is a beautiful tale about the ideologies, the family conflicts, the stereotypical mother-in-law and sister in law v/s hatred daughter-in-law, the illusion about educational qualification, marriage and match making all are familiar.

The main theme of this novel is women's continuous struggle to find and maintain her own identity in the rapidly changing scenario in India. Writer's dedication of this book is "To all those women who allowed family commitments and responsibilities to overpower their own aspiration". Women in India have been expected to willingly surrender themselves to the man made maxims of culture, traditions, conventions and identity. Tagore in *Sadana* says.

"Where a man tries to raise himself to eminence by pushing and jostling all others, to achieve a distinction by which he prides himself to be more than everybody else, there he is alienated from that spirit" (first chapter of Rabindranath Tagore's book *Sadana – The Realisation of Life* )

Women in the past did not mind it as it meant security coverage for them. Social workers like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Dhondo Keshav Karve and political activists like Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar helped Indian women to cross the threshold of their houses and take up jobs in offices and private sectors. Liberalization of Indian

economy and internationalization of opportunities opened up for girls. Clash between man and woman seemed to have started at this juncture.

Many Indian girls since nineteen ninety two have taken advantage of the available opportunities to educate and train themselves in various fields. Some of them have surpassed their male counterparts in families. Such girls acquired positions of significance in industrial and service sectors, which unfortunately gave birth to the conflict of interests in their personal lives with their families. Women's new role posed Shakespearian dilemma of "To be or not to be". They had to opt for one of the two lives—professional or family. Though they were capable of carrying out both the roles efficiently, they were expected to choose one of them.

Shrikant was intelligent right from his childhood and had been competitive since his school days. As he was the only child to his mother, she had pinned all her hopes on him. He was the apple of his mother's eye and that she had pinned all her dreams on him. Ms Shrimati deshpane was a slim, tall girl, with a wheatish complexion and good, clear features. She had unusually long hair that reached below her knees. And she was also one of the brightest student in her class. Though Shrimati was his rival in various school competitions, shrikant had no personal grudge against her. He always appreciated her success whole heartedly and accepted his defeat sportingly. Shrikant was filled with tenderness for Shrimati in his college days. Shrimati, a charming girl and shrikant, an amiable and handsome boy fell in love with each other . He wrote sensuous letters from Bangalore back to Shrimati at Bhandiwad. He wrote his heart out in one such letter in the following words,



I was worried that your people would also start searching for someone for you. If that happened, then my Shrimati would slip away from hand and become someone else's Shrimati. In this fear, I proposed to you, though I am still a student. You are very precious to me.(54)

Shrikant had taken her for granted. He had a rare diamond in his hand but he was searching for a worthless glass of achievement.

Shrimati could get married with Shrikant only after Nagamma's approval. Horoscopes were matched, marriage ceremony with all traditions was arranged. After their marriage they moved out of the small town in Hubli to Mumbai. Shrikant becomes a super successful IT professional, he worked obstinately and reached the height of his trade ,while Shrimati with a masters in history, discarded her academic ambition and became his uncomplaining shadow, silently fulfilling her duties as a corporate leader's wife.

Shrimati entered into shrikant's house as an unwelcomed daughter-in-law. Though she tried to win over shrikant's mother, Gangakka. But Gangakka teased Shrimati and blamed her for the family's unfortunate situation as Shrimati hails from poor family. Gangakka was unable to tolerate her rival's daughter as her daughter-in-law. Gangakka frequently taunts Shrimati and it made her dejected. When Shrimati tried to help her in kitchen, Gangakka avoided her presence by saying, 'You have just married. You do not know our customs. So please don't bother about cooking'.(70)

Shrimati was impressed by Shrikant's academic records and by his riches and physical beauties. She did not even know about his physical property. She thought that

equivalence in their educational levels would bring equivalence in their relations as well. But unfortunately it did not happen in reality which resulted into their separation. As Shrimati was physically far away, Gangakka had to find out other ways to trouble her. Though Shrimati invited Gangakka to Bombay many times, but she refused to go. She said that she would get bored there. Besides, it was Shrimati's house, after all. Sarcasm in Gangakka's tone showed her utter dislike for Shrimati. Though Gangakka had accepted her as Shrikant's wife, but she had refused to accept her as daughter in law.

Shrimati allowed her husband Shrikant to grow in all directions without thinking about her own aptitude, and convenience. But when it became unbearably too much, it extinguished the burning fire in her life, meanwhile she had to take decision of leaving her husband in order to save herself from being scared. Shrimati had to face the wrath of her mother in law right from her marriage with Shrikant. "Gangakka was envious of Shrimati. All these days, Shrikant was solely her property. She could not bear the fact that now he also belonged to Shrimati. Gangakka's happiness was inversely proportional to Shrimati's". (76)

This novel portrayed the painful journey of Shrimati's life from selfless love for her boy friend to a disillusioned wife of a multimillionaire. She made every possible adjustment to maintain the healthy relationship with her husband. She worked restlessly, saved money through haggling in the market, pleased Shrikant's mother and sister just to save Shrikant and to provide him with the necessary peace of mind. Shrimati was a name of Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth for Shrikant in the beginning. All her attempts to gain and sustain human relations with her own man failed miserably for her. Marriage



captured her in a cage which provided her security without liberty. She looked after Shrikant's by providing him teas, snacks and food on time.

Shrimati, postponed her research work and she worked in a small import-export company against her own liking just to be able to reduce the financial load on Shrikant. she was unaware of the plot entwined by her mother-in-law. As a typical Indian wife, she takes her husband's burden as her own. When shrikant questions her for repaying his loan she answers, " When you are mine, your loan is also mine. It comes as a package. I cannot say I want only my husband. His joys and difficulties are also acceptable to me."(77)

She also agreed to postponed a birth of a child till Shrikant settled down in life. In short, she had dissolved all her personality into Shrikant's personality. After that shrikant received a letter from Ravi Patil by informing that now shrikant was one of the prominent person in his field in India and in abroad.

Over a period of time, he required someone at home too, who was smart, reliable and able to take responsibility, and most importantly, intelligent and obedient. Shrimati soon became extremely efficient personal secretary that Shrikant Deshpande had wanted at home. Shrikant did not have to create an official position for her. She believed that Shrikant was doing a great job and it was her duty to help him.(100)

Shrikant continued to advance from one position to another position at the cost of his wife's happiness. When she had to choose between her career and her home she opted for her home.



Shrikant reasoned, Either I reject my offer to go to Delhi or you stay alone at Bombay to do your Ph. D. If I go to Delhi, I can come here only once a month. No Shri. Neither option is acceptable. I don't want you to forgo your promotion by rejecting this offer, nor do I want to stay alone. We will stay in Delhi for one year and I will take up my studies next year". (83-84)

This assurance served as an example of Shrimati's continuous willingness to sacrifice her interest for Shrikant, so that he can succeed in fulfilling his objectives. She believed that her career can wait a bit for the future.

Shrikant was caught in a race and he had no time to look back to his wife at home. But he could provided her with a well furnished flat, facing Arabian Sea at the Marine Drive, richest costumes and diamond jewellery. He allotted her a special car to facilitate her going around without him. But he could not give her his time as it had already been purchased by the market forces. She became an object of decoration in the office and house for him.

Shrimati was totally broken when Shrikant turned down her request to have their own child Shrikant and Shrimati postponed the birth of a child initially to save time and energy for earning money and settling down in life. The same Shrikant, even when he became millionaire he did not want a child because he had begun to dislike human touch. He thinks that Child in the family meant wastage of time. He thought that child was an interruption in his career advancement. When Shrimati put forward a proposal to adopt a child his immediate reaction was,

Shrikant suddenly became very serious. 'Shrimati, think again. Other people's children will never be ours. I am not comfortable with that idea, somehow. Shrimati, you are an intelligent person. Use your energy for more constructive work. Shrimati was stunned by Shri's words. The very thought that she wouldn't experience motherhood was hurting her deeply.

(99)

It was not that he actively hated Shrimati but that he could not spare time for her. He had sold his entire time and mind to the commercial machinery. Once when Shrimati fell ill, she was immediately hospitalized by Shrikant's company. She was looked after by well paid nurses at the hospital and at home. Only Shrikant had neither time nor inclination to meet her in person. She vainly longed for his medicinal touch. But Shrikant had lost all human qualities of good husband and a sensible person. "He was a man who could not take a negative answer" for anything.

Shrimati in the beginning rendered her space to Shrikant voluntarily with a noble intention to advance together. The same space was slowly captured by her husband through cajoling and a dialogue. But her entire being was gradually taken over by Shrikant which abolished her independent existence. Now she was caught in two minds. She experienced an abode of split personality within her. She could neither accept his behavior any longer, nor could she dare to leave him all alone. Ultimately she left him in order to save herself from ultimate fall.

Sudha Murty's heroine in this novel is a perfect reflection of an emerging Indian woman today. Indian woman today is impressed by the new vistas of opportunities of

progress in front of her. But her problem is that she is not prepared to forgo her traditional links with the society. As a result she carried a burdensome dual personality within her. Shrimati was an unfortunate prey of such dual existence of a woman.

Shrimati could not sleep. She kept thinking. If I die, no one would ever know. What kind of life is this? It was so empty, so lonely in spite of all the wealth that Shrikant had earned!. (106)

The description of Shrimati's restless mind showed that the money instead of solving problems had compounded them.

Like other heroines of Sudha Murty, Shrimati was also affected by the bouts of desperation after her husband denied her expectations. Shrimati kept aside her academic interests in order to fulfill her husband's dream. She abandoned her job to look after the health and wealth of Shrikant. In fact her employer in import export firm was ready to make all sorts of adjustments including a hike in salary and offer of suitable working hours to enable her to continue in office. Yet she preferred to devote her time for Shrikant and to his mother.

The same Shrimati broke down when Shrikant ignored her in his personal and professional life. He had no time to talk to Shrimati after he was promoted to the position of manager. This made Shrimati desperate. She had lost the sympathy of her parents by getting married with Shrikant against their wish. She lost her Shri very soon due to his mad pursuit for his own name and fame. Ravi complimented Shrimati for her intelligence and compassionate nature in his letter to Shrimati. But Shrikant ignored the letter.



Shrimati wanted Shrikant to read Ravi's letter and talk about it. So she kept it next to his plate on the dining table. In her hearts she hoped Shri would read the compliments Ravi had paid her and say a few words of praise to her. Shrikant did read the letter and without any emotion, he said "Please enter the contact details in my personal diary and our system. (103)

This remark showed the professionalism of Shrikant. Ravi's contact number was more precious than his appreciation of Shrimati for Shrikant.

One of the most obvious reasons for Indian girls wretched conditions is the simultaneous existence of two persons in them. They are free to a certain extent. They are allowed to choose their own husbands within their own caste. They have academic and financial liberty of earning and spending in a limited sense. But the same girls fail to free themselves from traditional thinking on husband-wife relations. They fail to accommodate to their role as a wife and as a separate individual. As a result they are inflicted by depression.

Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can affect a person's thoughts, behavior, feelings and sense of well being. People with depressed mood can feel sad, anxious, empty, hopeless, helpless, worthless, guilty, irritable, ashamed or restless. They may lose interest in activities that were once pleasurable, experience loss of appetite or overeating, have problems concentrating, remembering details or making decisions and may contemplate, attempt or commit suicide. Insomnia,

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excessive sleeping, fatigue, aches, pains, digestive problems or reduced energy may also be present."

This description is a clear reflection on Shrimati's mind.

Thousands of girls from rural India have taken advantage of the encouraging government policies to come out of their cocoon. They have acquired various degrees in professional training institutions and gained positions of significance. Yet they refrained from taking revolutionary steps in their personal life. First rank officer outside her house plays a role of a dutiful mother and wife at home. Some girls fall in love with boys secretly but get married with the same boy only after the rightful consent from their parents and relatives. They are forced to match their horoscopes before marriage. The couple generally belongs to the same caste. This shows their calculated opposition to the past. Such girls honour the old values like fidelity to their husbands, reverence to their relatives and observance of family traditions at the cost of their own liberty and individuality.

Shrimati, When ascertains that shrikant lives his life for himself and for his own ambitions, she feeled like a worn-out traveller in a desolate tract looking for an oasis.

The grief that was in her heart was as deep as the ocean. She wouldn't have any identity of her own. Her life would be that of "a planet which shines with reflected light, rather than that of a star which radiates its own light."(150).



Once Shrimati comprehended that their interests, likings and insights were different, her grief grows as deep as the ocean. So she decided history as her future instead of shrikant now. "A house is made up of four walls. But a home is where there is love, affection and a meaningful relationship. When that was not there it was only a house and the best thing was to get out of it."(152)

Shrimati explains thus

Shri, I loved history and i loved you. In fact, once upon a time I loved you more than History. But when you lost your finer sentiments, chasing the success in the world of business, I was left alone with nothing other than history...you knew your goal. Now, Iam also clear about my goal and I want to achieve it. (162)

Shrimati who becomes annoyed, hearted, dissatisfied, restless, and above all on every occasion where her anticipation were bluntly deprived of, starts exploring her situation and ponders the next decision to be chosen. Prof.Collins guidance, her concern for history, her discontentment as a businessman's spouse, her childlessness, her husband's reputation for the adoption all these had made her to pick the role as a student of History, hoping to find autonomy and contentment though not for wealth but at least to discover her distinctiveness. Though disappointed with Shrikant, she did not think about extramarital relations with a revengeful intention to teach him a lesson.

Husbands in India in the first half of the twentieth century in most cases they were considered to be an image of God. Girls used to perform various religious activities to earn the husband and to sustain the relations. Shrikant was a victim of Indian ethos to

be rich which forced him to victimize his own wife and mother later on. Shrimati's sudden decision to leave her husband before she perished shocked Shrikant.

He regretted his action now, after losing the fortune he had forgotten he possessed. He experienced the same shock, the same disappointment and the same agony that he had felt when he had lost his first rank, seventeen years ago. After all these years Shrikant felt that he had then lost a meaningless rank, but today, he had lost his most precious Shrimati.(168)

Now Shrikant lost his wife, mother and other close relatives in spite of himself. Tragic part of his life was that he also lost his invaluable soul in the market economy. He spoiled his deliberately balanced life with Shrimati and he was solely responsible for his loneliness in the end. The third chapter depicts the materialistic greed that has been experienced by the character throughout which lead to segregation and separation between them.

## Chapter Three

### Materialistic Greed

This chapter deals with the eroding effects of money madness on the close domestic relations in neo rich families in India. Indian Government adopted the economic liberalization policy in the nineties of the last century. It opened the international gates of progress and prosperity for Indians. Some of the Indians who till then had been earning barely enough to make the two ends of income and expenditure of family income meet suddenly got an opportunity to acquire lakhs of rupees. Palatial houses, luxurious cars, air-conditioned offices, branded electronic gadgets became the approved signs of their status. Naturally, individuals aspired to gain all these riches. They strove hard to earn money in national and international currencies. The mad rush resulted into breaking traditional web of respectable husband and wife relations.

Sudha Murty has presented the importance of human values than materialistic values through the characters Shrikant and Shrimati. Shrikant and Shrimati came from the secluded village Bhandiwad in Karnataka state. It had a small Government hospital without facilities.

People spent their time indulging themselves in all sorts of bad habits. It was a purely patriarchal society where the head of the family decided everything—be it arranging a marriage, making a donation to a temple or an ordinary household matter. The women were always in the background, suppressed and subservient, irrespective of their age. (12)



Various schools curricular and co-curricular activities became a topic of hot discussion in that village. Though the houses of Shrikant and Shrimati occupied adjacent locations, their families never had cordial relations with each other. Shrimati and Shrikant got married with each other in spite of a strong resistance from both families because their innocent love was stronger, than the surrounding hurdles. Shrimati was impressed by Shrikant's plain nature and his desire to succeed in life. Shrikant also liked Shrimati's studious nature and her devotion to self selected task. The same couple fell apart due to Shrikant's incessant ambitions to earn money and his reputation in the later part of their married life.

Shrimati stood first in the school essay competition held on the ancient historical figure of Ashoka. She gained highest first rank in Secondary School State Board examination, leaving all the boys of the class behind her. Shrikant was her competitor in that examination. Their parents had inherited the feeling of enmity for generations. So Shrimati's glorious achievement was not appreciated by Shrikant's family. "Though they were neighbours, their forefathers always fought like cats and dogs, at the slightest provocation. Actually it was their mountain like egos that was responsible for the continued enmity." (13). In spite of the long cherished hatred in the family, Shrikant and Shrimati had developed a secret tenderness for one another. The pair dared all odds and came together to pick up the challenge because of their mutual infatuation.

The marriage between Shrikant and Shrimati did not mean only the physical union of the two. It signified their utter desire to complement each other's ambitions in the face of opposition from their parents. Their life in the beginning was simple and easy.

Each one of them was anxious to make adjustments for the other. Whenever she tried to fall back to the past, Shrikant would not allow it by saying that,

'Shrimati, get out of that old custom! When I can call you by your first name, you should also be able to do the same. First, we were good friends and now I have become your husband. That's all.' Shrikant would always tease her saying that he knew she would someday become his wife and that is why he wanted her to call him Shri. (71)

Thus Shrikant had accorded equal status to Shrimati without any expectations. Shrimati initially was impressed by such considerate gestures of Shrikant. Shrikant a determined person from the beginning resumed his career as a software engineer in an IT company in Bombay. Then he climbed to the position of corporate leader in no time.

Initially men work for money but soon money becomes unimportant. It is power. There is nothing like power. Power is like a liquor. Once the intoxication of power catches hold of an ambitious person, there is no escape from it. It is a vicious circle. Like a whirlpool it is difficult to come out of it. More work, more involvement and more power. The individual loses the ability to see and enjoy anything outside his work. He is immersed in work throughout the day. Work is his breath...To achieve that kind of success, one required a supportive, intelligent but docile and unambitious wife. Intelligent women are normally ambitious. Someone like Shrimati, who never ever demanded anything from her husband, was rare....What would have happened if Shrikant had married a person like Prabha, who was not very supportive or Rekha, who was an executive in



the company? The answer was simple. Shrikant would have deserted her or she would have deserted him. (142)

Shrikant had become totally insensible to finer aspects of life. He had been reduced to the level of machine and once he entered into his work he seemed to forget his mother, sister, wife and they would be replaced by computer, competition and products.

On the other hand, Shrimati began to feel nothing is more important to her than her husband's happiness, to this extent, brushes aside her PH.D work in a foreign country. In her married life, Shrimati became the silent secretary to her husband at home. Her constant assistance enabled him to achieve greater heights in his profession in short time. Consequently her desire to become mother is not satisfied and she earned the wrath of her mother-in-law to bear the blame of 'being barren'.

Shrikant pleasantly allowed Shrimati to take up a job in private import-export firm to supplement their meager income. Shrimati on her part carefully distributed her time in her job and in home chores. Shrikant too concentrated on his assignments. They together discussed the path of their life almost everyday. Their basic aim was to prove their decision right to their friends, relatives and families.

Initially, they looked as if they were made for each other. Shrimati gave up her studies in History to manage the house. She managed the family finances without bothering Shrikant about it a bit. She saved money from her daily expenses and she sent some of it to her mother in law at Bhandiwad. Though Gangakka despised her, Shrimati reciprocated it with a noble heart by sending her money regularly. Shrikant on his part relied upon Shrimati so much, that he never questioned her intentions and actions.



Shrikant was a hard working person and a dutiful husband. Right at the beginning of the month he would hand over his entire salary to her. He had told her, "Shrimati my mother has sacrificed so much for my education. So, every month, you must send her thousand rupees. Then with the rest you manage the house. I won't ask you anything. (76)

This continued as long as they were earning moderately. They sacrificed their personal interests for the uplift of both.

It is often said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. One can say in the same vein that money corrupts and too much of it corrupts the concerned person to the core. Money many times blinds the holder of it. Sometimes person is supposed to be possessed by evil spirits. Money possesses the person in this sense sometimes. Shrikant's heart and mind were filled with the thought of Shrimati till he settled down in life. Once he began to earn in abundance, wealth began to control his soul and mind. It occupied his entire being leaving no room for Shrimati. Once he told her, "Shrimati in real life you should always decide with your head, not with your heart. If you don't do that, it is disastrous." (87) Money had made him to distinguish between the language of heart and the language of head.

Shrikant's handsome salary and managerial position in the company brought overwhelmingly diabolic sense of self importance in Shrikant, which gradually transformed into arrogance and culminated into acute hatred and recklessness for others. He became insensitive to living beings around him. The thought of having a child disgusted him because he loved himself so much that he did not want a share in it. He

feared that his position in the company would be thwarted by the arrival of another person in his family.

Sudha Murty through the character of Shrimati refers to the character of Bhamati, who dedicated herself to the sage husband when he was writing *Dharmasatra* and ultimately dies without achieving anything in life. In this context, while Shrikant appreciates the sage's tremendous concentration, Shrimati applauds Bhamati's silent support. Their view reflects their attitude and lack of right understanding between them. In course of their life journey, Shrikant reached glorious heights and improved his material well-being but Shrimati's loneliness heightens day by day for not fulfilling her desire of becoming a mother.

When life goes on like that, Shrikant goes abroad for foreign assignment. During this period, Shrimati falls sick, but does not inform him as it disturbs him mentally. Her husband does not acknowledge even this goodness and humanity. However Prof. Collins understood her sadness during his visit to India and he advised her to take up the research work to rekindle the spark of happiness.

Once in a party when his friend dolly criticizes Indian culture Shrimati reacted vehemently. Her husband rebuked her for her reaction. Shrimati, who usually be silent, expressed unhappiness and disagreement for the first time. In due course, Shrikant became more materialistic, more selfish to grow professionally. On the other hand, Shrimati, who has helped her husband with perseverance to reach glorious heights, realizes that life is fiasco and decided to live her life where she finds peace and happiness. She recalls the story of Bhamati in desperation and thinks, "The story of Bhamati that she had told Shrikant long ago, Every woman could not become Bhamati.



Each woman had her own limits and Shrimati too had to come to the end of her patience." (156). Gangakka is also material minded that's why she rejects Shrimati as Daughter in-Law because Shrimati belongs to poor family. Shrikant's gradual transformation from loving boy friend to a reckless husband, from lower middle class rustic villager to a powerful director of a multinational company, from considerate son to self centered individual is seen in this novel.

Decision making is the important one in this novel *Gently Falls The Bakula*. In Shrimati's life, end has taken place in respect patience. She revolves to encounter Shrikant's egotism and stimulates herself introspect her stand in her family as woman. She defies with the traditional belief "...a woman should stay with her husband, irrespective of what he was..." (157) and she makes up her mind to leave the house. Shrimati puts an end to her loneliness and craves for equality. She strongly appealed that she has no longer bares loneliness, nor can live with artificial values that eulogize materialistic success. In fit of her tormentation, she tells that she has loved him more than her studies, respecting his sentiments, but the very decline in his attitude toward her feelings made her disapprove his deportment and free herself from slavish attachment with him any longer. She says to Shrikant "Shri, I am leaving and I do not have any plans to return, I am handing all the responsibilities of the house to you" (160) In this modern world women lack in making a correct decision but Shrimati takes a decision to be independent and to find her identity after Dr. Collins advise. These were some of the reasons she found to justify her decision for separation. "... you do your duties to your company because you are paid and given a status. What about my work? And what is my



role in this marriage....you have an obligation to your wife. If you do not fulfill it, I will not stay in this house". (149)

I used to welcome your guests, keep your accounts, look after the house and fulfill the duties just the way your personal secretary does. I was your valuable glittering ornament in the social circuit. (150)

A house is made up of four walls. But a home is where there is love, affection and a meaningful relationship. When that was not there it was only a house and the best thing was to get out of it. (152)

She could become a student again. She felt life had opened a new door for her. This time she was making a decision with her head and not with her heart. (155)

She had to go to some place where she could get the same joy that Shrikant got from his work. That pleasure was more valuable than money. She was going away not to earn money but to find her own individuality. (156)

I don't want a divorce because it is merely a document that permits you to remarry. It has no other significance... You cannot change your life style. You are bound by that. Your job requires that kind of commitment and you can live without it. But I cannot adjust to that. In the best interest of both of us, this is the only solution. (162)

However, both of them fail to understand that genuine love demands its sacrifices and the existence of incompatibility is a challenge to more vigorous effort.

While discussing about the task of the institution of marriage, Prof. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says,

Recognition of the spiritual ideal of marriage requires us to regard marriage relation as an indissoluble one. So long as we take a small view of life and adopt for our guide the fancy or feeling of the moment, marriage relation cannot be regarded as permanent. In the first moments of infatuation we look upon our partners as angels from heaven, but soon the wonder wears away, and if we persist in our passion for perfection, we become agitated and often bitter. The unrest is the effect of a false ideal. The perfect relation is to be created and not found. Irreducible peculiarities there will always be and the task of the institution of marriage is to use these differences to promote a harmonious life.

Though society criticise women for their decision of parting from their husband, Shrimati is a bold woman takes a decision with guts to face all the consequences. But the other and, it is to be noted that married couples now a days do not know to tackle their married life which leads to divorce.

Sudha Murty was not against modern technology. She herself had been closely associated with the world famous IT Company, Infosys. She wanted Indian boys and girls to accept and meet the challenges of the modern world. She was also not against the hard earned riches. The only thing that pained her was deadly effects of riches on personal and domestic relations. According to her money was not bad, but it must be looked at as means to an end rather than the end in itself. All her novels portrayed the life of the boys



who believed in the money at the cost of human relations. The riches ended not only the covered relations in wife and husband but also led to its possessor to an inevitable doom.

Erich Fromm, one of the most famous psychologists of modern times noted, "A new question has arisen in modern man's mind namely whether 'Life is worth living and correspondingly the feeling that one's life is a failure' or 'is a success'. This idea is based on the concept of life as an enterprise which should show profit." This remark showed that human life today has become a trade.

Shrikant was a prey to this thinking. He was appointed as an ordinary employee, which paid him enough to carry on his life with. He could not buy a decent flat for two in Bombay with the amount of his salary. The same Shrikant ran hard like Pahom in Leo Tolstoy's famous story *How Much Land Does a Man Require?* Shrikant wanted to prove himself by earning too much. He left everybody from family behind and soon lost sight of his dear wife as well. He wanted to show 'profit' to his employers and have 'share' in it. Life was not equal to living for him; it was like a task to be carried on and on. He gained a lot in terms mundane success but lost the invaluable in him. In Shrimati life, end has taken place in respect patience. She resolves to encounter

Sudha Murty believed in the traditional family structure in India in which parents and close relatives had honourable place. Gouramma in *Dollar Bahu*, Radhakka in *Mahashweta*, Ratnamma in *House of Cards* and Gangakka in *Gently Falls the Bakula* handled the cases of their son's marriages. Gouramma in *Dollar Bahu* tried to rule her son's life but soon became wise. Ratnamma in *House of Cards* never came to her son though she did not hesitate to take money from him. Radhakka in *Mahashweta* kept her distance from her son Anand after a year of his marriage. All this showed the wisdom



that reigned in the life of old people in India. They were greedy; they collected and saved money. But they never allowed money to ride their destiny. Sudha Murty's novels send a clear message that human relationship is of prime importance and must be maintained at all costs. Life is an art of co-operative existence and interdependent dealings between the members of the family and society. The fourth chapter focuses on the Ecological perceptions employed in this novel.

## Chapter Four

### Ecological Perceptions

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary study that focuses on the relationship between literature and environment, it includes everything related to the human and nonhuman elements i.e. earth, water and sky, houses, agriculture, caves, hills, plants, trees, oceans, seasons, animals, wind, ancient architecture, rocks, soil etc, are considered a beautiful gallery of portraits in ecocriticism. Literature has to its credit so many writers who explore universal subjects along with issues and problems peculiar to India.

Ecocriticism as a concept first arose in the late 1970s at the meetings of Western Literature Association (WLA) and it began developing in 1990s, which special focuses on the relationship of human and nature. The word Ecocriticism was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay, '*Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*'. His purpose was to focus on the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Thus, the relationship between man and the environment will be the most important concept on the study of ecocriticism.

Now a days this approach has become a part of literary theory in literature, contemporary literary text are deals to environment and literature, both are closely relationships between men and natural. On the other side other literary theories deal with class, race, gender, but ecocriticism theory represents nature and environment. Besides the appreciation of natural beauty, ecocriticism is welcomed as a movement of environment protection. Lawrence Buell defines, "ecocriticism...as a study of the

relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (430).

Estok argues that ecocriticism is more than simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analysing the function—thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds (16-17). The association for the study of literature and environment helped in the emergence of the field of ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism plays an important role in the study of human association with nature as it implores nature and the natural world for better understanding. Ecocriticism is a recently developing literary theory in the field of literary criticism. Literary texts are looked upon from eco conscious eyes of the critics and they seek the environmental consciousness of writers in a work of art. Most environmental conscious literary texts deal with a common concern that is the problem of environmental degradation caused by several human activities. Man has crossed the age of environmental limits consequently damaging the planet's ecological (basic life cycle) system

As Thoreau once wrote, "There can be no history but natural history-if one believes that by "nature" we mean the human as well as non-human world. It is also focuses on the rhetoric of cultural texts and material practices that are related to the environment. All the religious scriptures Veda, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata and old places are also represents to ecocriticism. "The Rigveda appeals "Do not cut trees because they remove pollution. The Yajur Veda refers



to pollution and exhorts man do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere" (qtd in Sulphery and Safeer 392). Ecocriticism emphasis on literary and environment studies through literary text, which is based on cultural world.

Literature, the microscopic version of the macroscopic universe, houses in it the multidimensional approaches of worldly wisdom. The World Literature is a marvelous accumulation of varied perceptions and is known for its rich cultural discourses. A literary scholar is gifted to peruse the intellectual deliberations of the writers, critics and researchers and there is easy access to different ideas, debates and criticisms worldwide through its pages.

The power structure has always a pivotal role to play in the lives of human beings or in the fate of a nation or society. While the mid-twentieth century it raised it's voice against the domination of women, the latter part of the century gave voice for ecological issues. Thus androcentric and anthropocentric ideas were questioned and an appraisal of the prevalent ideas in those fields was attempted, not only by women but also by men. Feminism, Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism paved the way for analyzing the relationship between man and woman, human beings and nature, woman and nature respectively. But in all the three, man plays a vital role as he is responsible for subjugation of both woman and nature. In ancient times, man led his life in tune with nature. But in due course his stance altered owing to the extension of his comfort zone.

Shrimati, the protagonist of *Gently Falls the Bakula*, is a suppressed woman who craved to find her real self. Environment played a major role in her lives both in realization and redemption. Environment paved the way for establishing feminine identity – Shrimati's association and analysis of places gave a concrete stature to abstract

ideas and reassure her scholarship. She aspired to become a scholar in history "I am more inclined towards history. Moreover, I have a principle of my own". (27) but she is fatally entrapped in the marital net. Being subservient to her husband, she exploited all her intelligence and shrewdness for the development of her husband's business while her craving for history is deep buried inside. Shrimati had the inner urge to be connected with nature as her passion for knowledge and creativity demands such unity. Vandana Shiva comments about the plight of such women thus "Women's knowledge and work as integrally linked to nature are marginalized or displaced, and in their place are introduced patterns of thought and patterns of work that devalue the worth of women's knowledge and women's activities. This fragments both nature and society" (66) Thus societal codes restrict women's desires and individual talents by drawing a boundary line which compels them to oblige to the patriarchal norms thus prioritizing men's needs and commands.

The cravings of Shrimati have become repressed desires. Unable to cope up with the artificial environment, they suffocate and long to be in contact with the real world. While culture becomes their restrictive measure, eco-phenomenology stirs the underlying longing and makes the subdued undercurrent gush out of the cultural boundary. David Wood defines Eco Phenomenology in his article "Eco-Phenomenology is the pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and those of other creatures" (213).

Eco-phenomenology is an emerging field that scrutinizes the relation between or inter-influence of phenomenology and ecological philosophy. Brown and Toadvine emphasizes the special feature of Phenomenology thus "Phenomenology is set apart from



other theoretical methods by its unique capacity for bringing to expression, rather than silencing, our relation with nature and the experience of value rooted in this relation" (xii). In addition to this, Brown comments on the space provide by phenomenology to ecological philosophy as, "phenomenology makes possible a new philosophy of nature respecting the integrity of everyday experience" (14). Wood further says that eco-phenomenology would "activate and reactivate the intricate articulations and relations of things, restoring through description, through dramatization, a participatory engagement (bodily, imaginative, etc.) with things". (119)

The protagonists undergo such experiences in their lives – for Shrimati the participatory engagement is 'bodily', that is her contact with the places of historical importance where she feels oneness. Thus environment paves the way for establishing feminine identity – Shrimati's association and analysis of places give a concrete stature to abstract ideas and reassure her scholarship.

Shrimati's affinity towards the environment does not stop with aesthetic experience but goes a step further to know the history of the places. This attitude is nurtured by her mother right from her childhood. It is clear that the importance of ecology and its places is instilled deep in a mind by a woman by ordinary ways without any theories to substantiate. It further reveals how women are naturally connected with nature. Alice Walker too acknowledges that she has inherited the talent of the art of storytelling from her mother in "In Search of My Mothers' Gardens" thus: "But the telling of these stories, which came from my mother's lips as naturally as breathing, was not the only way my mother showed herself as an artist" (408). She further observes, "Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength-in search of my mother's



garden. I found my own" (409). Shrimati's statement sounds similar to that of Walker and it is inferred that Walker's observation is not unique to Black American women but it is universal.

When Shrimati has grown up, she becomes passionate about history; starts detaching it from the emotional point of view and becomes more aware of the facts as a true historian. She steadily progresses from aestheticism to criticism. The experience of the former and the mastery of the latter settle upon eco-phenomenology that her discourse reverberates in perfect harmony between the two worlds. While Brown and Toadvine examine the interdisciplinary influence of phenomenology and ecological philosophy, they opine that, "Phenomenology opens a space for the interdisciplinary examination of our relation with nature, for a scrutiny of the historical and institutional construction of the "natural," and even of the role this concept plays in the formation of our cultural and self-identities" (xii). Shrimati's examination and analysis of the making of the historical places and monuments, and her deep knowledge in the cultural history of India come in line with this new space provided by eco-phenomenology.

Shrimati's passion for history could be perceived by a history professor Mr. Collins as he sees an aspiring historian in her. When she acts as guide to him to historical places, she feels elated as she comes in contact with the environment. Her exalted state and bubbling enthusiasm while narrating the historical importance of the places like Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Ujjain, Mandu could very well be comprehended by Mr. Collins

Their first destination was Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's capital city. Then they moved to Ujjain. Ujjain is a place with a very rich history. If one loves Sanskrit, one cannot miss reading about Ujjain. It appears in Kalidasa's

plays. Kalidasa was a great Sanskrit scholar who belonged to Ujjain. Once upon a time this place was called Avantika. From there they went to Mandu. There Shrimati related to professor Collins the famous legend of Raja Baj Bahadur and Rani Roopmati. (111)

“Shrimati explained everything from two perspectives, one from the local folk tales and the other from important historical events” (112). The historical facts and incidents come alive through her vivid description as there is a perfect interplay of the subject and the object.

Mr. Collins advises her to take up research in America as it is an apt platform for aspiring scholars like her. But unfortunately her husband Shrikant does not give space for the historian at the right time. Owing to his promotion and shift of places, Shrimati goes on postponing her wish to pursue higher studies. She even undertakes a job that she does not like to support Shrikant in his financial crisis. She leads a dreary life with Shrikant and she becomes an efficient personal assistant to him sacrificing her desires. She reaches a saturation point that she decides to leave Shrikant forever.

The Word ‘Bakula’ in the title of the novel refers to Shrimati. Bakula is the paradoxical personification of Shrimati. Bakula flower is described as

The bakula is about the size of a neem tree and has a dark green leaves. The tree lives for atleast a hundred years, and the more it rains. The bakula flower is very unusual—it is tiny, pale greenish brown in colour, and is shaped like a crown. As flowers go it is unattractive, but it has a divine fragrance. Even when the flowers dry and become brown the mild



fragrance remains. When the tree is in bloom, the flowers form a carpet on the ground beneath it. The bakula flower is favourite of the gods too! (16)

Though the flower did not have attractive features *prima facie*, its fragrance continued to mesmerize till it wilted completely. Shrimati was simple, unassuming and considerate girl right from her childhood. She did not allow family feuds to come in her way of her love for Shrikant. Like bakula between the two houses, she joined the two adjacent families into close relations.

Shrikant liked the bakula features in Shrimati throughout his life. When the two seemed to be drifting from each other, he remembered,

"Many ancient stories that connected the bakula with romance. It seems in the olden days when young men travelled far distance for many days, they would carry small objects in memory of their loved ones. The bakula flower was one such memento that those young men carried, because though it would dry up, it would still give the same fragrance like the beloved's love. Shrikant had come to associate the bakula flower with Shrimati". (19)

The Bakula tree, witnessed the romantic episodes of Shrimati and Shrikant, After completing their schoolings they usually had a talk under the bakula tree. "Shrikant and Shrimati would meet every day near the bakula tree, and talk about various things. Shrimati would diligently gather the bakula flowers, while Shrikant would talk about his college and his dreams". (29) It symbolizes their love.



Before going to college Shrikant said that he would miss the early morning meetings under the bakula tree. This showed that his attachment towards bakula flowers. On hearing this

He was sure that he would miss the early morning meetings under bakula tree. Shrimati lowered her head and bent down to pick up the delicate bakula flowers. Shrikant said to her, ' Shrimati, I'll miss your company and our flower'. Shrimati promised then I will enclose a flower in every letter.(32)

As she promised she never forgot to enclose a bakula flower in her letter.

The author hints at the break of their relationship by making the Bakula tree gently fall towards the end. Shrimati justifies her decision thus:

'I cannot live in this kind of an atmosphere with these artificial values. I require to breathe fresh air. I do not want to live as your shadow. I want to find my own happiness. Shri, if I had not been sensitive and bright, I wouldn't have had to suffer such loneliness. I could have enjoyed your wealth. When I was thinking about my life so far, what my goal has been, I have realized what I want'. (161)

Shrimati, separated from her husband not for her selfish motto, rather herself is exploited and is not given recognition. So she seeks the place where her communion with the environment could become stronger. The protagonist's decision to assert her individuality is revealed. Shrimati was frustrated by the parties and the plastic smiles as they are artificial, moreover instrumental in boosting up their husband's business. she considered

such occasions as waste of time contrary to the ideas of Shrikant. Shrimati realized that her place is not amidst gossipers and merry-makers but in the circle of intellectuals. The non-natural world cannot hold her longer and finally she land upon the place where her feet, mind and heart should be. Thus the communion between women and nature is emphasized through eco phenomenology. Women's duty is to be aware of the connection and to stay connected to gather real knowledge and wisdom. The fifth chapter sums up all the key premises dealt with in the preceding chapters.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Sudha Murthy's novels portray the life of urban technocrats who fall victims to consumerism and prestige. They fail to live life in its real meaning. Her female protagonists are also very strong, determined and highly intelligent. Unlike the stereotyped, helpless women, whom they represent the real Indian women. When money and power overrules a person, the family shatters into fragments. In the corporate families, women are the silent sufferers who always abandon their own dreams and aspirations for the success of their husbands.

In her novel *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Sudha Murthy, focuses on realistic problems faced by women in the modern society. She talks about Man-Woman relationship and how the single minded ambition of one partner can spoil a beautifully nurtured relationship. It reflects on the educated woman's role as a wife in love marriage, her submissive life, and her problem of loneliness. She turns to be subservient to her husband's egotistic tendencies tantamounting to realize her freedom as an independent woman. Sudha Murthy projects the marginalization of Indian women at the hands of their husbands through Shrimathi and Shrikant. This book records in a sensitive way, how marriages disintegrate as ambition and self-interest take their toll.

The novel remains remarkably relevant in its analysis of modern values and work ethics. Manu, the first law giver in the Hindu tradition, himself has assigned a high status and dignity to women. His dictum is an evidence of this: "*Yatranaryastupujyante, ramantetatradevata*" (III,56), which says, "God exists where women are respected" but



very few women exercise their freedom. Most of them are either oppressed or neglected to a secondary position. Determined to rebuild her life against all odds, she becomes a revolutionary woman. "For success there is no odd and even hour. Every minute is precious"(92) says Shrikant Deshpande, the workaholic, technocrat in *Gently Falls the Bakula*. Sudha Murthy explores the life of the educated rich urban who thinks money making is the only aim of life. She portrays the step by step development of two class mates, Shrikant Deshpande and Shrimati. After the industrialization, have been achieved technological progress and scientific advancement, financial independence and all other facilities but what is lost in this progress is the foundation stone of life, and family. As the chairman of Infosys, Sudha Murthy knew all these things than any other individual.

She has dealt with the new Indian woman and her relations with her husband, other members of the family and the society in the age of globalization. In her other novels all of them have got married with the boys of their choice with the consent of the elders. But relationship between the same girl and the husband later on becomes tense to the point of breaking up. Unfortunately, the main victim of the clash is the girl, who loses her identity and suffers the pangs of loneliness. In *Gently falls the Bakula*, Shrimati gets a break from Shrikant. "Shrimati closed her eyes and she said, 'Shri, I am leaving you and I don't have any plans to return'(160).

The novel presented an absorbing story of Shrikant and Shrimati from a small village named Bhandiwad in the state of Karnataka. As SudhaMurthy herself has mentioned in a preface to *Gently Falls the Bakula*, she purposefully set her novels in the rural parts of Karnataka state. "This novel is set in north karnataka in the 1980's"(preface).SudhaMurthy has been well acquainted with the life of rural people, their

customs, conventions and traditions, their festivals and ceremonies. She made use of all this knowledge to present behavioural patterns of her characters.

The marriages mentioned in her works are fixed after confirming the validity of horoscopes of the concerned boys and girls. They two got married out of their intense liking for each other. The first phase of their married life was marked by their spirit of sacrifice for and dedication to each other. Life in the absence of one was unbearable for the other then. Both of them together purchased residential flat, provided financial help to each other's parents. Initially, Shrimati worked in a private firm in order to supplement family income. Shrikant forced Shrimati to leave her job and be content with the role. Slowly, Shrikant rose to a position of vice president of the company. His salary and position created a gap between the two.

Shrikant's extraordinary success in life turned the tables of their pleasant coexistence. He could not spare time and energy for his beloved wife after that. He gave her exclusive flat, obedient servants and hefty bank account as a compensation for not being able to spare quality time for her. Shrimati did not want any of the riches Shrikant had bestowed upon her. She wanted her Shrikant of the old times back. The physical and psychological distance between them increased so much that it engulfed the sweet relationship between them, which resulted into their final separation.

SudhaMurty has been successful in bringing out the brutal effects of money on family relations in modern India. She showed that Indians have become globalized but their perspective remained stagnant at local level. They equated their success with the amount of money they earned and spent. Sometimes it meant severing their ties with their close relatives. Wife, sister, brother, mother and father were gauged and evaluated only



by the financial yardstick and measurements. It acquired the most hideous dimension in *Gently Falls the Bakula* when Shrikant squashed the thought of having a child because he felt that it will work as an impediment in his personal progress. He did not accept his wife's request to have a child because he thought it as a challenge to his autocratic nature.

Globalization has brought new opportunities of career development to the young boys and girls in India. Boys and girls from rural India obtained degrees in Engineering, medicine and management. They have acquired lucrative jobs in national and international establishments. But unfortunately newly acquired riches tore them away from their own people. Particular boys, become arrogant with their own wives. The erstwhile close relations broke into pieces. Money, instead of bringing the people together caused their separation. Sudha Murty wanted to show the eroding effects of money on the close relations in *Gently Falls the Bakula*.

In this novel she has shown the dark side of globalization in India. Indian culture for a long time believed in mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence. The agrarian nature of the Indian economy created and maintained the community life. Their life blossomed along with the blooming of crops in fields. The surrounding goats, dogs, cows, bullocks and buffalos were the part and parcel of their existence. They breathed together. Though these people did not voice their concerns for their wives, they had deep seated sense of belonging to each other, particularly to the women section of the family. Honour of the family was closely linked with the honour of the girls and women of the family.

All this was blasted and torn off into pieces by the advent of air- conditioned wooden offices and lifeless gadgets there. People lost direct contacts with each other and



preferred to establish virtual world around them. As a result they have online followers but not close blood relations. Sudha Murthy's men protagonists refrained from personal and public talk with others. Two lovers wrote to each other before marriage. Shrikant wrote emotionally charged love letters from Bangalore to Shrimati in Bhandiwad.

Her female protagonists are rare combination of tradition and modernity. Though they fall in love, they get married only after they are permitted. They take care of their mother-in-law after marriage. Secondly, though they suffer a loss of their personality they do not react disastrously. As long as possible they compromise with the situation. Even after they leave their houses they do not malign their image in the public. Female writers generally put the blame on the men for women's sufferings. Sudha Murthy also showed this conflict but did not squarely blame the men for it. She blamed the other women of the family in equal proportion. She showed the tug of war between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

Sudha Murthy presents the bold, intelligent Shrimati, who faces her life alone. Without any complaints, she accepts her fate, tried to do all her best to the happiness of others, her husband, the greedy in-laws and the guests. She even forgets her own life, her dreams and the right to become a mother. In her every sphere of life, she was perfect, a perfect daughter-in-law, sister-in-law and wife. Shrimati was never excited on her luck and the luxurious life. She was the same Shrimati, the village girl, who always liked the Bakula flowers and her mother country, India. She showed Collins the past glory, the monuments, and the rich heritage of India. While Shrikant who was the follower of European culture, the victim of Industrial revolution, and the technocrat could not understand her. Sudha Murthy teaches that money is not the ultimate world of life. There

are so many things which one cannot buy with money like love, relationships, caring, sharing and so on.

Both Shrimati and Shrikant were born and brought up in Hubli. The changes that took place in their approach to the problems of life reflected the current changes that were taking place in the society where the culture of the corporate institutions was brought in. Everyone is subject to the social, political and cultural pressures when there is a cultural transition. Though the modern conditions are partly responsible for disharmony, one should not confuse self expression and self development with a life of instincts and passions. One should not justify one's conduct by setting up exaggerated claims on behalf of the individual will to protest against the discipline. However it is a difficult phase or period of transition where the disguised feelings are masquerading as advanced thoughts. The women who give up their family life for accomplishing power, or pleasure from material objects are being idealized and that weakens the very root of culture and heritage. The truth is that it is the culture and heritage that reminds us that man is much more than a custodian of its culture or protector of his country or producer of its wealth. Social efficiency is not a measure of optimal manhood. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul? If everyone understands this and act with total awareness of the inherent power of endurance, the culture and heritage of the society will prevail. As Prof.S.Radhakrishnan says in *The Hindu View of Life*,

The general character of the society is not always best expressed by the mass of its members. There exists in every community a natural elite, which better than all the rest represents the soul of the entire people, its great ideals, its strong emotions and its essential tendency. The whole



community looks to them as their example. When the wick is ablaze at its tip, the whole lamp is said to be burning. (65)

Sudha Murty creates a problem for her women characters and makes them strong enough to battle against it and carve a niche for themselves or create their own space. The ability to tolerate, accommodate and also absorb their own cultures being conscious of their Indianness marks her protagonists as special. Shrikant thought all his success was due to his own efforts. He thought Shrimati did not contribute to his achievement. However she always wished him progress, silently and constantly suffered her loneliness. Actually she deserved a major role in his achievements. But he never acknowledged it. The constant deliberate insult from her mother-in-law and her husband's devotion on duty made her to take this .

No one in this male dominated society would appreciate her step but Shrimati had taken her decision without bothering about what people would think. She had acted on what she felt was right. The husband should encourage his better-half to live her own life. He must not force his views on her. If a husband does not concern for his wife just because he is busy, it might lead to desertion. So, the family should support for her self-development too, which leads to equality and prosperity.

Here Sudha Murthy points out, that the marital relationship depends upon trust. In her novels, it is found that male characters are untrustworthy, selfish, dominating, and take women for granted. In all her three novels women protagonists are insulted, are the medium of dowry (money), and are humiliated.



A woman it is considered can accept anything but not ready to accept the disbelief and ignorance of her husband, It suggests that woman should be given equal rights and opportunity. Woman should not be dominated by patriarchal society. Women have their own dream and have freedom to live a happy life. Here, Shrimati leaves Shrikant to join PhD course to live free life due to subordinate treatment and ignorance. Sudha Murthy says that it is the right of every woman to live her own life. There should be no obligation for the woman to live with their dishonest husband and live a life as a puppet and suffer forever. There should be freedom for women on how to live their life. In Sudha Murthy's novels divorce does not occur because divorce is a medium of re- marriage. But in her novels marital relation remains fragile.

Thus the novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* shows the seriously damaging effects of money and madness in the relationship between husband and wife in modern India. "Shrimati, who had walked with him side by side for ten years had now left him all alone". (169) At last repentant Shrikant approached her with an apology to forgive his misdeeds and come back to his life. Shrimati did not tender any assurance.

By concluding this Sudha Murthy lively presents the character of Shrimati and Shrikant, reflecting the mood and temperament of present day couples after the advent of software industry. This novel ends with an eye-opening question to us What is more important: a successful career or a happy marriage?. At last Shrikant feels that she has taken his spirit away with her and thinks his loving flower Bakula, gently falls from his life. This novel makes readers to think that life after marriage is not to live individual lives but to live together with right understanding to lead a happy life.

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**Order and Chaos in Colonial Trinidad: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

**MERIN. N**

(REG. NO. 17APEN14)



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Order and Chaos in Colonial Trinidad: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

N. Merin

MERIN N.

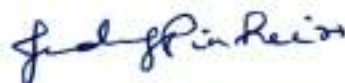
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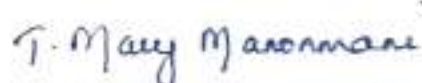
This is to certify that the project entitled **Order and Chaos in Colonial Trinidad: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Merin N. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project entitled as **Order and Chaos in colonial Trinidad: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*** deals with the study of Mohun Biswas, the male protagonist as a "Unlucky Man".

The first chapter deals with the bibliographical details, contemporaries of V. S. Naipaul and the summary of the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

The second chapter, Exploration of Self highlights the crisis of identity of the protagonist Mohun Biswas.

The third chapter, Location of Culture discusses the gendered identities of the characters both man and woman in the novel.

The fourth chapter, Magnitude of Domicile presents the significance of home which was the long time desire for the protagonist.

The fifth chapter, Summation summaries all the important perspectives dealt with the preceding chapters and justifies the title, **Order and Chaos in colonial Trinidad: V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas***.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Indian English Literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. It has attained an independent status in the realm of world literature. Wide ranges of themes are dealt within Indian Writing in English. While this literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living elsewhere.

Indian writing in English was greatly influenced by writing in English by Victorians, Romantics, Georgian and Modernists. But in its own way, the Indian writing in English literature has contributed to English literature. Indian writing in English has attracted a widespread interest recently, both in India and abroad. It is now realized Indian English Literature and Commonwealth Literature are in no way inferior to English Literature. The earliest contributors of Indian English Literature were mostly British educated Indian social activists like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Krishna Mohan Bannerji, Ram Gopal Gosh, Rajendra Lal Mitra and Harish Chander Mukerjee. All these Bengali writers had their education in Britain in Europe. They were staunch social activists who worked to abolish social evils like Sati, untouchability and religious superstitions.

Postcolonial literature is the literature of countries that were Colonized, mainly by European countries. It exists on all continent except Antractia. Postcolonial literature of on addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country,

especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and theme such as a racialism and colonialism. A range of literary theory has evolved around the subject.

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling; the novel as we know today was an importation from the west. (99)

Indian fiction in English, since its inception, has been largely engrossed with issues like partition, nationalism and the social dislocation of the masses following the partition of the country.

Indian writing in English and more particularly, Indian fiction in English, has carved a niche for itself in world literature. What is remarkable is that even while writing in an alien tradition, alien largely due to its medium and narrative style, it is still able to create an 'Indian' ambience which has engrossed a vast body of readers for long. Indian English Literature refers to the body of works by authors in India, who write in English and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India.



The rise of Indian Writing in English is, at the onset to be located historically. The first Indian novel in English was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *RajMohan's wife* appeared in 1864. The early history of Indian English Literature began with the works of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, who contributed to Indian fiction in the 1930s. It is also associated with the works of members of Indian Diaspora, such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Agh Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie, Himani Bannarji, Chithra Bannarji etc. In their writings Diaspora achieves the unintended purpose of celebrating marginality and embracing virtually multiculturalism and diversity. The celebrated contemporary authors are Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Aravind Adiga who won The Booker Prize. Chetan Bagat and Jeet Thavvil are the new comers who became well known in a very short time.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, published in 1981, is an allegorical work of great depth and complexity. This book is about the story of India's journey to independence and its subsequent bloody partition. The children of the title are those born at midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the exact time that India was declared free from British rule.

*A Fine Balance*, published in 1975, by Rohinton Mistry is set in Mumbai, India, between 1975 and 1984; the story takes place amid the backdrop of the Indian emergency, which suspended civil liberties for the population for a period of almost two years. The cruel complexities of the caste system, the politics of the nation and of everyday life are addressed with an unflinching cynicism that rings devastatingly true.

*River of Smoke*, published in 2011, by Amitav Ghosh is an addictive story about the burgeoning British empire's opium trade with china during the period immediately



preceding the Opium wars. This novel plays with fascinating reference to ancient interconnectedness, fabricating the origins of familiar phrases and places.

The most dominant and pervasive theme used by the writers of Indo-English novel has been the focus on the burning problems of cotemporary Indian life. No one of the stalwarts is free from this contagious theme, as the literature reflects the life of its time.

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is one of the prolific authors of the twentieth century and now of the twenty -first. He has been successful not merely by being a good author but also by producing a diatribe against "third world countries". "Naipaul has fed off controversy all his life. He is an 'agent provocateur' and a brilliant one at that." His willingness to disparage, all that he encounters, has not won him many friends but the simplistic and near-universal assertions of an unswerving heart-felt racism and Orientalist chauvinism seldom undergo close scrutiny. Most of the criticism of his works is trivial, hopelessly ignorant to the complexity of his tortured negotiations with his own post-coloniality. Naipaul's permanent, different and amazingly defective narrators are laced in an astonishingly similar succession of chronotopes.

V. S. Naipaul's corpus of fiction manoeuvres his autobiographical information that recounts his historical, socio-cultural and political affairs. He coalesces biography and history in his writing to make his subject matter tangible and substantial. Fawzia Mustafa may appropriately be quoted,

Naipaul's use of biographical information in his writing constructs an over-determined relation between notions of the Author and the multiple usage of what is called the colonial subject. (13)

V. S. Naipaul was born in the country town of Chaguanas in Trinidad in 1932 in a large Brahmin family of Indian origin in the state of Uttar Pradesh, had his early education at the Port of Spain, and then went on scholarship to Oxford with "a feeling of privilege." From his very childhood, Naipaul had found his father to be a victim of limited, poverty-ridden, backward Hindu world for his career in journalism and story writing in his diaspora identity. He had also realized the factors that denied his father to be a potential writer. His development, achievement and success rest mainly on his four novels, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, published in 1961, *The Mimic Men*, published in 1967, *In a Free State*, published in 1971, and *Guerrillas* published in 1975. His earliest books are ironic and satirical accounts of life in the Caribbean.

V. S. Naipaul awarded the Booker prize in the year 1971 for *In a Free State*, the Knighthood in the year 1990 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 2001 for his corpus of literary works. He has also received literary awards like the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in the year 1958, the Somerset Maugham Award in the year 1960, Phoenix Trust Award in the year 1962, the Bennet Award in the year 1980, the Jerusalem Prize in the year 1983, the T. S. Eliot Award in the year 1986 for creative writing, the David Cohen Prize (the first recipient) given for his 'lifetime' achievement in British Literature in the year 1993. He was shortlisted along with Mahasweta Devi from India and Alice Munro from Canada for the Man Booker International Prize in the year 2009, which is awarded every two years and given to the living author whose works are available in almost every language of the world. Naipaul, as is well known, was often given grants to travel and document his experiences.

One of his notable work *A Bend in the River* was about the chronicles both an internal journey and a physical trek into the heart of Africa as it explores the themes of



personal exile and political and individual corruption. It expresses Naipaul's scepticism about the ability of newly decolonized nations to forge independent and politically viable identities.

V. S. Naipaul's novel *Half a Life* was about the stories of alienation. In this case, however, the central character is not merely frustrated in his efforts to attain a particular goal; when the book ends, he has reached middle age without finding a purpose for his life. His Booker Prize winning novel was *In a Free State* published in 1971 and the work is symphonic, with different movements working towards an overriding theme. His work *Guerrillas* recasts the story of post colonialism in terms of the relationship between four people on disturbed West Indian island.

*The Mimic Men* was a profound novel of cultural displacement. *The Mimic Men* masterfully evokes a colonial man's experience in a postcolonial world.

Naipaul's writings present the image of an author who does not receive any sense of belongings to any terrestrial locale but the wide array of his intellect has resulted in many books. Although he has a vast repertoire in literary output at his disposal, he is not only a natural writer but also a natural novelist. His vision is his own, unaffected by contemporary political bonanza. His archaeology of knowledge, which has the exceptional flair to intermingle murky places and peoples, makes him an impregnable author in the post-modern world. Younger minds, therefore, differently explore Naipaul's intellectual world which vie with the crusading zeal for the first Nobel Laureate for Literature in the twenty-first century.

The early masterpiece of V. S. Naipaul's brilliant career, *A House for Mr. Biswas* is an unforgettable story inspired by his father that has been hailed as one of the twentieth century's finest novels.



In his forty-six years, Mr. Mohun Biswas has been fighting against destiny to achieve some semblance of independence, only to face a lifetime of calamity. Shuttled from one residence to another after the drowning death of his father, for which he is inadvertently responsible, Mr. Biswas yearns for a place he can call home. But when he marries into the domineering Tulsi family on whom he indignantly becomes dependent, Mr. Biswas embarks on an arduous-and-endless-struggle to weaken their hold over him and purchase a house of his own. A heartrending, dark comedy of manners, *A House for Mr. Biswas* masterfully evokes a man's quest for autonomy against an emblematic post-colonial canvas.

In case of *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the knowledge that the central figure is derived from Naipaul's father, a journalist and short story writer. Naipaul's autobiographical narration in *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a 'private epic' and is to be taken as a literal version of his life. The hero of the novel, Mr. Biswas, is not a passive participant in his own colonization but a victim of manipulation and machinations of others who seek to keep violence away.

*A House for Mr. Biswas*, the best literary project he has ever produced. The novel not only discusses Naipaul's concupiscence for 'home' in urban space where a person, ultimately, realizes that it is not his 'home' which he carved for but merely a 'house'. It has been widely read, critically anthologised and the most debated novel in academia. *Critical Essays on V. S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas* has been exclusively devoted to this tour de force by Madhu Shama, Vineet Kashyap, Deepak Kumar, Shagufta Naj, Mujeeb Ali Murshed Qasim.

Madhu Sharma's paper "*V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas: An incessant Quest for Identity and Independence*" tries to illustrate the significance of owning a

house of one's own to establish a sense of belonging, self-esteem and a sense of freedom in the post-colonial society. She argues that the search and endeavours of Mr. Biswas to own a house for him prove to be an absolutely trying journey during which he refuses to accept the ready-made orthodox household imposed on him; rather he aspires more on possessing his own house, his own portion of earth in spite of all trouble and tribulations in the way.

Vineet Kashyap's exposition of Naipaul's diasporic sensibility has been well-described in her discourse titled *Significance of 'Home' in V. S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas* which harmonizes the disquisition. It is an attempt to connect V. S. Naipaul's autobiographical feeling of 'home' to the Caribbean island, particularly Trinidad through his character Mohun Biswas in *A House for Mr. Biswas*. She observes that Naipaul's postcolonial novels expose the formation of imperialist myths of places, challenge them and deconstruct them. The quest continues but not for 'home' only; it also looks for identity and liberation.

The same agony has been adroitly depicted in Deepak Kumar and Shagufta Naj's research paper *Anguish and Defeat of Unhoused and Unnecessary: A Critical Study of V. S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas*. They analyse the psychological forces viz. disgust and anguish which create the feeling of alienation and fragmentation within a person in the colonial world. The critics attempted to reveal the hardships of post-colonial people, their endurance and search for self-identity and self-esteem in Caribbean society. It also touches upon the socio-cultural issues by which the individuality of a particular person is affected decayed and disordered.

Home is the place where two souls meet and enjoy the emancipation of their lives. Hence, Mujeeb Ali Qasim's research article *The Theme of Marriage in V. S.*



*Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas* aims to spell out the ambiguities of the union of two souls, customs and traditions, which are still adhered to by Hindu migrants in the Caribbean isles. He foregrounds that Naipaul's vast knowledge in the socio-cultural life of the Hindu migrant community in the Caribbean along with his childhood memories that have been searched in detail in this novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

Naipaul's work appeals to those who have felt the effort of rapid secularization, nobility and social change; the resulting world is large, overcrowded and yet an empty space. Mr. Biswas is taken to representing a 'universalist' and transcultural vision of man's rootlessness and a search for identity and place. Naipaul

is like Biswas, who having no tradition to turn to must create his own, and this tradition has its roots in the rootlessness of West-Indian society rather than in well-established European and Indian societies. Unlike Naipaul, Mr. Biswas' lifelong ambition is the ownership of a house to provide security and comfort.

In this novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the house becomes a kind of inverted fictional embodiment of Naipaul's own personal need for change and escape. While his father's experience becomes the story of any postcolonial man displaced from his origin by chance or choice, his Mr. Biswas' 'unhoused' condition and alienation are the problems of every contemporary diaspora which is presented in his autobiographical design of the novel. The novel succeeds in transcending the individual self by universalizing the issue of alienation with Naipaulean cry for identity in the postcolonial world.

This novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, reveals how the life history of Seepersad and his son, V. S. Naipaul, is similar to that of Mr. Biswas and his son Anand who fails to absorb the Caribbean climate. Yet the novel is a tragic epic, densely populated, rich



in variety and felt life, full of humor and beaming with vitality. It becomes visibly clear in *A House for Mr. Biswas* that fictional embodiment of Naipaul's own personal life is assimilates and absorbed into art.

## Chapter Two

### Exploration of Self

*A House for Mr. Biswas* depicts communities being moulded and transferred by larger socio-cultural forces. From East Indian villages to an urban ambience of the port of Spain, it documents the transitions of a colony from a rural to an urban, industrialised society. The life of its protagonist Mohun Biswas, is the story of the Indian immigrant's dilemma. It is the tale of an exile's desire to strike roots and attain an authentic selfhood. Mr. Biswas' life is a perpetual struggle between desires and obligations, inner motivations and circumstantial necessities. Besides focusing on the personal life of the protagonist, the novel also tells the ethnic and social history of a community, its acculturation to an alien society and acquisition of a social identity.

The novel maintains a subtle balance between the sympathetic inner views and the disinterested outer perspective of the narrator protagonist. The life of Mr. Biswas is the life of Naipaul himself. The experience of exile works to devalue the society that the author has deserted. In a way, the novel is about the author's apprehensions of his Trinidadian life. Mr. Biswas emerges out of the author's alienational experience within exile. Like Naipaul he is an outsider eager to strike roots, to belong. Living in 'exile' from the society, his ambitions go unrealised. Alienated, he falls into the arduous process of acculturation and socialisation. *A House for Mr. Biswas* delineates the formation of an individual's socio-cultural identity.

In the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Mohun Biswas is born to a poor but high caste family with an agricultural background. Unfortunately, he is considered as a stranger even in his own family since he was born at midnight, an inauspicious hour, with six fingers and feet first, signs for bad luck. Being treated as an unlucky baby, he stays as an outsider, a lonely individual in his own family *House for Mr. Biswas*,

one can easily observe that the sense of alienation in his fictional life is the very sense that Naipaul has experienced in his real life. The struggle for the people's individuality brings them a bitter realization that the entanglements they have stuck into stem from the immature structure of their own community. For Mohun Biswas, the rigid Hindu folk of the Hanuman House represent this structure, as for Naipaul it is all communities that constitute the West Indies and the Third World. Having been alienated in the form of normlessness, both Mr. Biswas and Naipaul react quite strongly relying on their creativity. They do not remain inactive in the face of their encounter with familial norms rather display their unflinching sense of self-actualization.

The family suffers an unexpected reversal when Mohun is around seven years old leaving all of them fully dependent on the generosity of their well-off acquaintances and relatives. He grows up as a mediocre type of person who is in no way a hero in the traditional sense of the world; still he displays a keen sense of self-respect and an uncompromising attitude to surrender his independence at any stage in the course of his whole life. He tries his hand at a number of jobs and experiences a series of setbacks too. There is much that is absurd and ridiculous about him. Nevertheless, he is also a rebellious man completely obsessed with his desire to understand life in all its hues and colours and to make complete sense of his social surroundings.

He simultaneously embodies the alienated modern man and the sensitive though ineffectual reformer. His desperate bid for improvement seems against a harsh social system makes his rebellion a true confirmation of universal belief and values. Subsequently, his struggle becomes universal which seems to have been irritated on



the behalf of the whole fraternity. Indeed, it is the rebellion of a weak, mediocre man which originates from the man's strong desire for independence and self esteem.

In his 46 short years, Mr. Mohun Biswas has been shown fighting against destiny to achieve some sign of independence only to face a lifetime of disasters. Moving from one residence to another after the drowning death of his father, for which he is unintentionally responsible, Mr. Biswas yearns for a place he can call home. When he marries into Tulsi family on whom he indignantly becomes dependent, he realizes that the Tulsi family has an orthodox communal lifestyle at Hanuman House which is quite domineering and suffocating. The household includes many of the family's fourteen daughters, their husbands and children. Life centers on the two young Tulsi sons, who are pampered by their mother, Tulsi.

During the whole course of the novel, he has lived at various lodging places with all their shortcomings and drawbacks. Hanuman House is authoritarian and oppressive in its organization; the house at the Chase and Green Vale are unbearable burdens because of the uncertainties surrounding their construction; the Short Hills and Port of Spain buildings are dispiriting because of their rapid deterioration under the hands of the exploitative Tulsi family. Determined to make his own way in life, Mr. Biswas embarks on an arduous and endless struggle to weaken their hold over him and purchase a house of his own. Thus, these lodging places form a backdrop and at the same time they motivate Mr. Biswas towards his goal.

A heartrending, dark comedy of manners, *A House for Mr. Biswas* skilfully evokes a man's quest for autonomy against an emblematic post-colonial canvas. It truly symbolizes the colonial world wherein Mr. Biswas personal battle with the

stronghold of the Tulsi household (the symbol of the colonial world) represents a quest for existential freedom and the struggle for self identity.

At Hanuman House, on being suggested to give up the profession of sign-painting to take up a job on Tulsi estate, Mr. Biswas replies to Govind that by giving up his sign – painting he would be staking his independence which he is not at all prepared for. He believes in acting independently and deciding his own fate. According to him, the Tulsis are 'bloodsuckers' and that he would rather catch crabs or sell coconuts than work for the pack of Tulsis. But the Tulsi remind Mr. Biswas' time and again that he had come to them with no material possessions and that all the garments he owned at the time of his coming to them could be hung on a single nail. Tulsidom depends for its existence on the psychological undermining of the men and on the maintenance of their sense of inferiority. Every effort is made by the Tulsis to force him to recognize his littleness and admit a sense of subordination to them.

At first glance, Mr. Biswas rebellion may seem meaningless and unfair as the Tulsi family without fail provides shelter and job for Mr. Biswas whenever he is in dire need, but nevertheless, he ungratefully rejects their help and support proposing the idea that the Hanuman House is no less than a prison and under its rigid structure of organization, one can see that the Hanuman House is not a coherent or benevolent entity of the traditional Hindu joint family. It is more like a slave society where the matriarch head of the family Mrs. Tulsi and her brother-in-law Seth requires workers to boost their deteriorating power and economy. They entrap and then exploit the homelessness and poverty of needy men like Biswas and others for their own vested interests and motives. Hence, the acceptance of Hanuman House with its doubtful claims is the submission of subservience and slavery.



By drawing such a picture of Hanuman House and Tulsidom, Naipaul realistically portrays that subjugation is not something associated with the West, or to the whites only. He satirizes the Indian's orthodox attitude of following their older caste system within themselves while they detest white colonialism. Naipaul's protagonist does not enjoy mingling with the Hindu community in Trinidad and fights out a personal battle for freedom and recognition against this hostile society. For him, to build a house of his own means freedom and recognition and fortunately by the end of the novel, in spite of all its defects and shortcoming, he manages to buy this house which eventually wins him his wife's respect and saves him from his sense of being rootless and alienated amongst his own people. He spares himself from the Tulsi's tyrant way of life which was consisted of the outworn traditions of the East India. Thus, Naipaul personally felt that the feelings of deracination, displacement and lack of a national community in Trinidad are the real concerns in *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

In this novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Naipaul carves out the position of the colonial man in a stagnant society; the protagonist finds himself as a stranger without any roots in his own land. He is depicted as a marginalized individual who is constantly mobile in order to find his place in the limited world of Trinidad. In the course of the events, the protagonist assumes, almost, the stature of an 'Everyman' who journeys through the slush of life and faces the knocks of fate to attain a portion of the earth before he dies. Moreover, he is a man possessing plenty of self-respect and an unquenchable thirst for independence. He can be called a hero by virtues of these qualities. He does not want to merge his individuality with the Tulsi household. When, after getting married to Shama, he discovers that as a Tulsi son-in-law he would have to lead a life of servility to his mother-in-law and uncle-in-law, he rebels against the system prevailing at Hanuman House. The Tulsi family believes in



suppressing the budding individualities of the residents of Hanuman House, but Mr. Biswas cannot tolerate the extinction or even the suppression of his individuality. It is this instinct for self-assertion and self-development which imparts him a heroic quality.

Moreover, Naipaul's hero Mr. Biswas is infused with the ardent desire to finally belong to, possess, settle down and leave a mark on this foreign land of his birth with which he thoroughly enjoys a love-hate relationship. This is a strong urge which is quite integral to all individuals of diaspora. Mr. Biswas also therefore is no different. His journey from one place to another ultimately culminates in his attaining a space, a vocation or a work place for himself in the nascent nation of Trinidad. His desire to belong and be associated with this place will fetch him an identity and selfhood is crystal clear. He was no longer content to walk about the city as he wanted to be a part of it, he wished to feel and understand it, to be one of those who stood at black and yellow bus-stops in the morning, one of those to whom the evenings and week-ends brought relaxation. In a sense, he wanted to enjoy the feeling of being free and self dependent without any outside authority or hostility.

The metaphor of the house here accumulates all the more significance as it gives the struggle of owning a house of one's own of an individual almost mythical heights. The image of a house bestows both value and purpose on the postcolonial subject in the search for dignity. Although at the end of the novel Mr. Biswas's achievement is not fully attained, it does not deprive him of the thorough efforts he makes in order to attain it. Throughout the novel in his struggles in strictly organized, ramshackle and lonely houses the vision of the 'house', his house sustains Mr. Biswas as to him it is not merely a materialistic thing that will provide shelter and security to his family but also a symbol of achievement. Family. A pleasant feeling of

having done something worthwhile, a sense of leaving a mark on history, a means to avoid annihilation and escaping the void.

Moreover, for Mr. Biswas, search for a house becomes a search for himself, a search for definite purpose and what he really wants out of his life, a quest for individuality and a search for a place in the flow of seamless history. The overpowering nature of his need explicitly emerges early in the narrative when the ancestral house has to be sold after his father's death, the narrator says: "For the next thirty-five years he [Mr. Biswas] was to be a wanderer with no place he could call his own, with no family except that which he was to create out of the engulfing world of Tulsis" (38).

Thus, he was placed with two options, either to make do with what came his way or to start afresh from scratch to create a world of his own out of nothingness, a kind of choice confronting the postcolonial subject. Mr. Biswas feels badly dominated and repressed in the face of the matriarchal rule of Mrs. Tulsi and his brother-in-law, Seth. His predicament in Hanuman House is the true example of a slave society in miniature. It has been suggested that:

Mrs. Tulsi needs workers to build her empire. She, therefore, exploits the homeless and deprived fellow Hindus. She has grasped the psychology of the slave system. Like the Caribbean society, Tulsidom is constructed of a vast number of the disparate families, gratuitously bought together by the economic need of the high caste minority. To accept Hanuman House is to acquiesce to slavery. Mrs. Tulsi, the cunning colonizer, justified her exploration with her foxy explanation that she is really doing her subjects well. Seth, in his big boots, is the slave master: a brutal and brutalizing symbol. (149)



Mr. Biswas's quest for identity in *A House for Mr. Biswas* actually brings out the predicaments of the anchorless existence, uncertainty and futile struggle for protection and identity in a postcolonial society. In this scenario, to be a colonized subject is to be safe and protected by the decisions of the rulers and to be thrown into freedom involves using one's own mind and capacities to take care of one. The story of the novel is interrupted with Mr. Biwas's recurring bouts of elation at being free and his breakdowns and backsliding into the refuge of Hanuman House.

However, Hanuman House is not an evolving society but a kind of temporary refuge for those who are unable to find a foothold in Trinidadian society which runs short of resources required for authentic independence. Mr. Biswas's rebellion against this security provided by Hanuman House is bound to fail again and again without money, power skills or available employment for his westernized sense of self and individuality. His search for his house is not a desire to discard community or do away with his family ties but the desire to create a new society whose nucleus will be he himself, never again having to take orders from others and work for the benefit of any agency other than his own. The ambition of not being associated with the pack of the Tulsi family is a negative ambition but his struggles nevertheless attain heroism in a background which lacks in heroes or heroic deeds. These lines of the prologue highlight the protagonist's desire for a tidy way of life and an anchorage in the world of flux. Here the house attains the stature of self-identity, self-worth and his unique foot print on the flow of human history. Mr. Biswas's appeal and universality lies in the fact that he emerges triumphant after his repeated failures to escape from the clutches of repression of selfhood, to finally achieve the possession of his own house, flawed though it is i material terms. The house thus becomes a much sought after legacy which Mr. Biswas can bequeath to his family. Just like that, through his



writing Naipaul too attempts to preserve his own family history and the history of Trinidadian Indian community.

It can be said that though Mr. Biswas's view of the world, as reflected in the way he has lived, is not up to the mark and short-sighted but his struggle is not without its touches of heroism. At times, he is petty, cowardly and contemptible too but Naipaul has been able to present a hero in all his littleness and absurdity; has thereby successfully preserved a sense of the man's inner dignity and integrity. His romantic, self-centered egotism has denied him the simple pleasure and sympathetic human companionship and understanding until almost it is too late; but then he is the one who has paid the price of loneliness that lies at the heart of human condition. His most commendable quality, which compensates for all that is despicable in him, is the unfailing presence of his faith in the value of attempt. It is this faith which keeps him going; it is this which makes him appear a rebel. He refuses to conform, to give up his identity, and to allow the sordidness of his life to crush him. His courageous struggle in the face of absurdity and the quality of faith which this struggle reveals makes him a hero. And he makes a final effort to create a new world out of nothingness, thereby leaving behind his footprint on his history and escaping annihilation and attaining fulfilment.

## Chapter Three

### Location of Culture

One's gender identity is not something fixed and given but constructed in accordance with the discourse of power. In an intensely patriarchal and repressive society, where maleness is the norm, women are liable to be constructed as deviant and Sub-normal. Her subjection to the "naturally superior" male is thus, justified. In a situation of colonization and enslavement, this equation of gender undergoes a significant shift. As Ashis Nandy notes in his now celebrated study *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (1983):

The homology between sexual and political dominance which Western colonialism invariably used was not an accidental byproduct of colonial history. Colonialism, too, the congruent with the existing western sexual stereo types and philosophy of life which they represented. It produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolised the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity.

The coloniser had to justify his action not simply to the world but to himself. Hence, the colonised would persistently be described as feminized, and by association deviant and sub-human. His bondage would, therefore, explained as the natural subservience of the male over the female, the normal over the deviant. In the Indian context, the British were so successful in propagating the discourse of the feminised, weak, native worthy to be ruled over the masculine, normal British colonial ruler, that it was internalised by practically all sections of Indians. It became an issue around which most of the anti-colonial struggle was predicated. In Naipaul's texts, where the question of



postcolonial identity formation assumes such centrality, the gendering of the subject assumes an importance that has been seldom recognised or addressed. In this context to examine *A House for Mr. Biswas* as a text where the narrator internalises the colonial rhetoric of hierarchised identities but expresses them in an extremely complex and nuanced manner.

At the Centre of the design is Mr. Biswas, who from the moment of his inauspicious birth, is constructed as a deviant, a lecher and a spendthrift, having cannibalistic proclivities. The name Mohun is significant because it refers to Lord Krishna's childhood avatar, a mischievous, woman – loving, flute playing prankster, an androgynous figure as opposed to the mature Krishna, the heroic warrior, a perfect combination of physical strength and philosophic wisdom, who leads Pandavas to victory. It is interesting to note that from childhood, because of poverty and parental neglect, Mohun is blessed with emaciated limbs, shallow chest and a soft rising belly. He is to carry these visual signifiers of emasculation throughout his life along with the imputation that it is his subconscious cannibalistic desires that killed his father Raghu. It is significant to note that from childhood he is placed somewhere inbetween a man and woman, a normal human being and a father- eating monster. While his brothers Pratap and Prasad are assigned duties of a responsible male he plays at home with Dehuti his sister. The only responsibility entrusted on him, that is minding Dhari's calf, ends in a disaster, killing both the calf and Raghu.

Mohun's sense of impotence and emasculation must be seen in the context of the world he inhabits. It is Naipaul's firm belief that to be colonised is to submit to symbolic castration. He is the descendant of indentured labourers, people little better than slaves,



subjected to centuries of dispossession, grinding poverty and the trauma of uprooting. If manliness is about power and affirmative action then the world that he inhabits is a castrated one, peopled by futile, unnecessary, unaccommodated beings. It is a world that moves between the poles of futile emasculation, and vicious, brute, aggression that is only a parody of true and heroic manliness. On the one end of the pole there are people like Bipti father "futile with asthma" whom "fate had brought from India to the sugar-estate, aged him quickly and left him to die in a crumbling mud hut in the swamplands" (15), and on the other like Seth, Mrs. Tulsi's brother-in-law, pompous and oppressive in blucher boots, mimicking the overseer on the sugar plantation.

Seth is introduced as "large moustached, overpowering man" who beats down Mr. Biswas's price for sign painting, on the grounds that he is Indian, Hindu and a Brahmin (81-82). He remains a lasting symbol of exploitative, brute power, which can only be a caricature of the European ideal of just and heroic masculinity. The targets of the Seth's of this world are always weak, powerless people like Mohun, but never their equals or betters. He has his counterpart in Ajodha, with his thin face and whining voice. Perpetually obsessed with the body and how one could build up a masculine heroic figure he continues to get a weekly column entitled, *That Body of Yours*, read out to him for as long as Mr. Biswas knows him. He recommends Santogen and warm milk, as a means building a masculine body. The fact that he has no children also questions his pertence to masculinity. In spite of his wealth and powers of negotiation he appears as a caricature of heroic masculinity, devious and exploitative, subtracting even the price of a cup of tea from a labourer's pay, which in any case has been whittled down to the minimum. Bhandat, his brother with a thinner face and more whining voice is a debauched form of

Ajodha, whipping powerless boys like Mohun to prove his masculinity and abandoning all responsibilities as a father, husband and provider. All around him Mohun witnesses men who abandon their responsibilities and become less than human beings. There is Raghu, Mohun's father who deprives his family of all comforts. In his desperation to save money, he abandons his wife when she is pregnant but comes to claim the father's rights when his son is born. As Bissoondaye, Bipti's mother notes, "What sort of father do you call yourself, when you drive your wife away every time she gets heavy footed?" (19). All around him Mohun witnesses a society where men have abandoned their social role of affirmative action, and lapsed into apathy, indifference or vicious brutality. That Mohun feels this as deviant behavior is apparent in his description of the lives of Negroes, another important component of Trinidad society. It is described as a chaotic and banal community where "women ruled men" and "children were disregarded and fed, it seemed, at random" (311).

In this world of abandoned responsibilities and unfinished houses, women appear to be more positive, and in that sense, more masculine. The phrase "armoured hands" (89), describing the limbs of women decorated with golden / silver bangles, is particularly significant in the construction of gendered identity. Traditionally, bangles have denoted powerlessness and femininity. In *A House for Mr. Biswas* however, armoured hands are a symbol of empowerment. As Tara notes of Bipti, "They are not very pretty, but one clout from this arm will settle any attacker" (32). Besides the bangles are a sign of financial empowerment, an insurance against bad times. It is significant that in spite of all the jewelery on her body, Tara, is efficient, calm and in control. In situations of crisis like the death of Raghu, she takes charge of the entire family,



arranging for the funeral, the photographs and the future of Bipti and her children. She can control men and make them work efficiently under her.

It is significant that at the very first sight, Mohun identifies Mrs. Tulsi with Tara, another independent and capable woman and notes that they both have "armoured hands" (84). She too appears first on the scene displaying remarkable powers of organisation and damage control, calming an enraged and insulted customer and chastising her daughter, who had been the cause of trouble. Like Tara, she can control men like Govind, Seth and her sons Shekhar and Owad efficiently to run a business empire. It is equally significant that most of the inmates of Tulsi house are not simply financially but emotionally dependent on her. There is similar grudging admiration for Bissoondaye, Bipti's mother who is capable, hardworking and positive, painstakingly preparing coconut oil according to the prescriptions of the pundit. The relative importance of women in the world of Trinidad, as portrayed by Naipaul, must, however, be firmly historicized. It did not imply any implicit privileging of women. The relative importance of women may be ascribed to the colonial experience of disjunction and rupture, a distancing from the original Brahmin. Hindu customs of Northern India and material necessities are in a diasporic situation. Pundit Tulsi's untimely death forces Mrs. Tulsi to come to take charge of family affairs. She is definitely assisted in her enterprise by the relative relaxation of rigid, misogynistic rules applicable to upper-class. Hindu widows are in a diasporic situation. Mr. Biswas is himself a firm believer of patriarchal structure of a family and continues to look upon the women-run Tulsi house as a deviance from norm. His reference to Negroes as deviant because their men are ruled by women, is a case in the point (311). Mrs. Tulsi herself has internalised the ideal of a patriarchal household



and continuously refers to the photograph of the dead Pundit Tulsi for legitimacy. She operates with the assistance of her two sons and Seth her brother-in-law, thereby maintaining the respectable facade of a household ruled by men for men. The two boys, Shekhar and Owad, are given precedence in all matters over their sisters though the sisters bear the physical brunt of running the large house. Tara's power stems from Ajodha's prosperity. In the final analysis, both figures control and exercise power like men, exploiting the weak and pampering the strong.

Mohun's internalisation of the colonial rhetoric of masculinity and his paradoxical struggle to construct a heroic persona, constitutes the crux of the novel. One image that appears particularly significant is that of "a boy leaning against an earth house that had no reason for being there, under the dark falling sky, a boy didn't know where the road, and that bus went" (190). Mr. Biswas obviously equates himself with the bewildered boy who desperately wants to become a man. Repeatedly he notes he wants to become a whole and self-satisfied man like Ajodha or pundit Jairman. After an altercation with Mrs. Tulsi at the chase he goes back to his room to feel that "the clothes which hung so despairingly from the nails of a mud wall were definitely the clothes of a small man, comic, make-believe clothes" (157). His attempts to construct a stable heroic personality are constantly thwarted, by a wretched sense of inadequacy that comes from internalising the imperial discourse; a discourse that insists that all colonised subjects are mimic men. In his novel entitled *The Mimic men* (1967) Naipaul notes the difference between the 'real' world of Europe where real men reside and the counterfeit mimic world of the periphery where ridiculous copies of masculinity prevail:

There in Lie'ge, in a traffic jam, on the snow slopes of Laurentians, was a true, pure world. We, here on our Island, handling books printed in this world, and using goods, had been abandoned and forgotten. We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World. (175)

In his essay entitled "Of Mimicry and Man" Homi Bhaba's admits that marginalisation is a form of castration and goes on to note that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite" (86). The colonised subject who has internalised the rhetoric of colonial masculinity and heroism is condemned to a life of inadequate mimicry, forced to adopt the identity of a clown, a parodist who is almost the same but not quite.

It is interesting to note how often Mr. Biswas evokes the image of the clown to construct his identity. The clown is a potent symbol of inbetweenness, neither man nor boy, railing at authority and yet impotent and marginalised, inadequately mimicking normal manliness and in the process not only rendering himself but the norm ridiculous. The most important strategy that Naipaul adopts to render Mr. Biswas absurd is to refer continuously to his unimpressive physique, his swinging calf muscles, his hairless hands, the ridiculous knob on his nose, and his rising belly. Mr. Biswas uses the word 'tough' to insult the Tulsi's and especially Seth and makes a virtue out of hairless hands as a sign of intellectual superiority. Here again Mohun Biswas is simply replicating the colonial discourse of constructing the colonised subject as either emasculated or brutish and hyper-sexual. The ideal of European masculinity is neither the ape – like Seth, tough and brutal, nor the emasculated Raghu. The ideal of the intellectual, in – control and heroic



man is something Biswas would try to emulate throughout his life, but something that will continue to elude him. Equally ridiculous is the naming of the puppy Tarzan as a kind of an alter ego in the Green Vale. Tarzan is the heroic ideal of controlled masculinity, a white man, ruling over beasts and savages of Africa, but reverting to his original persona as the suave aristocrat, Lord Greystoke when he comes to civilization. Tarzan, however, turns out to be as much of a coward as Mr. Biswas and simply rules over chickens. In his endeavor to build a masculine identity, Mr. Biswas inevitably turns to a British writer of conduct books and novels, Samuel Smiles and the European tradition of the 'bildungsroman' or the developmental novel. Samuel Smiles is one in the long line of English novelists from Defoe to Dickens who traces the development of the hero from boyhood to manliness, from poverty and anonymity to prosperity and recognition, from impotence and dependence to heroic independence. Mr. Biswas' mimicking of Smiles heroes and the very European tradition of the 'bildungsroman' is doomed to failure from the very beginning. The very historical circumstances, which have pushed the Smiles heroes to the centre, have propelled Biswas to periphery. Biswas is acutely aware of the futility of constructing a postcolonial 'bildungsroman':

Mr. Biswas saw himself in many Samuel Smiles heroes:

He was young, he was poor, and he fancied he was struggling. But there always came a point where resemblance ceased. The heroes had rigid ambitions and lived in countries where ambitions could be pursued and had meaning. He had no ambition, and in this hot land, apart from opening a shop or buying a motorbus, what could he do? What could he invent? (78 - 79)



The very historical forces of imperial aggrandizement which have given Crusoe like figures of developmental novels the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions and construct their manliness have condemned the Mr. Biswas's of this world to a life of peripheral mimicking, and hopeless inadequacy. By constantly parodying the teleological trajectory of the 'bildungsroman', and the implicit discourse of European masculinity, Naipaul creates a distinct genre, the postcolonial 'bildungsroman' – where hopes of an identifiable telos or goal are constantly thwarted and discourse of heroic masculinity, repeatedly subverted.

It is more than apparent that the central issue of building the house is inextricably tied up with the idea of heroic masculinity. Mr. Biswas has internalized the Victorian, patriarchal rhetoric of companionate marriage and responsible parenting, two very important components of the colonial civilising discourse. By the second half of the nineteenth century the idea of emasculation of the colonised came to be identified with lack of control and discipline in the domestic sphere, so that private space became a mirror of public state. It is interesting to note that in colonial Bengal of late nineteenth century, the texts of Samuel Smiles were equally revered for establishing a model of personal and domestic discipline. The internal discipline of the European home as an ideal of discipline, order and hierarchy, with the father as the master, the mother as the willing help-meet and children and servants as happy and contented subjects, was the key to European progress. Hanuman House in contrast, becomes the epitome of the colonized house, dirty, smelly, unclean, disorderly, unhealthy and most important of all ruled by a woman instead of a man. The Victorian fetishes of 'discipline', 'routine' and 'order' become some of the most privileged elements in construction of manly

personality. However, once again the hopes of building an orderly home are thwarted, as Mr. Biswas is condemned to a life of economic dependence, and poverty. His final house, where he does establish some sort of control and order, is mortgaged even when he dies and the loan remains unpaid. Construction of postcolonial masculinity remains provisional, temporary and contested.

## Chapter Four

### Magnitude of Domicile

The significance of home in Naipaul's novels is both personal and collective. His autobiographical accounts reflect that he has always been involved with searching for his roots and his place of belonging and his anxiety over homelessness also reflects the collective sense of displacement of the Caribbean nationals over their detachment from their ancestral homes in Africa and India and the difficulty of establishing nationhood due to the diversity of cultures. In an intertextual reading of Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Naipaul initially viewed colonial societies metaphorically in the form of shaky and unstable houses against grand house of historically grounded nations, like England. He acknowledges that the unhomeliness of the postcolonial world is a reality that renders the desire for an ideal place or a table home untenable.

While *A House for Mr. Biswas* shows Naipaul's vision that colonial social context in which they cannot feel independent or secure at home, the enigma of arrival shows that unhomeliness is not just the attribute of the colonial societies, but it is also an attribute of the metropolitan centre. The novel suggested that, while the very essence of homeliness is lost in the era of postcolonialism and capitalism, the postcolonial migrant can consider new ways of belonging to their habitats.

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is discussed in this chapter as manifesting the unhomeliness of the Caribbean nations because they appear to Naipaul lacking historical grounding, strength and stability that is necessary to establish a sense of homeliness. The homeless anti-hero of the novel, Mr. Biswas, attempts to establish and ground his identity



through the quest for home. His quest is contextualized in Trinidad, whose socio-cultural constraints hinder Mr. Biswas's achievement of the security and independence he desires.

This chapter explores how the formation of the colonial identity of Mr. Biswas is shown through allusion to the story of Oedipus, in order to show that Biswas is suffering from the sense of displacement and insecurity which is the main reason for his identity crisis and psychological distress and the manner in which Mr. Biswas's search for home embodies his need for security and grounding.

Mohun Biswas is West Indian born to a poor Indian family on plantation estate located in the suburbs of Port of Spain. As a child he loses his father and is brought up by his mother. She sells the family house under its market value and is forced to send her children to stay with her relatives. Biswas stays with the family of his Aunt Tara and starts working as a sign-writer to pay for his living. One day while at work as a sign writer in the Tulsi shop, he falls in love with one of the daughters of the extended Tulsi family, Shama, and soon he finds himself pressed in to marrying her and moving to the Tulsi's large household, Hanuman House. He takes up several jobs as a shopkeeper and as a sign writer but fail to secure him independence from the Tulsi family. Finally, he is employed as a journalist and moves his four children and his wife to Port of Spain where they can live in relative comfort. Following his ambition, Mr. Biswas buys the modern looking house he longed for a few months before his death, but the house turns out to be ill-designed and unstable.

There are two sides to Biswas's character: he is ambitious and rebellious but he repeatedly fails to put into action his ambition. His limited agency in acting on his desire

comes to light in the course of his quest for buying or building his own house. Mr. Biswas's achievement in finally buying a house should not be overestimated. Indeed, his several failures, his psychological distress, and the poor condition of his final house renders his achievement ambivalent, in the sense that his final purchase embodies simultaneously failure and his success.

According to Warner-Lewis, the conflict between Biswas and Tulsis is a cultural clash between the traditional versus the Creole, the rural versus the urban and the traditionalism versus individualism. Warner-Lewis argues that Tulsidom, which might be defined as 'encapsulating an idea of India-in-the-Caribbean has come to terms with change which is reflected in the behavior and attitude of the younger generations who do not speak Hindi and aspire to go abroad. This change, as Warner-Lewis argues, was initiated by Biswas who fought for his independence despite the financial security and emotional support of the traditional culture of Tulsidom, a trajectory that would be followed by the next generation who experience the Western-oriented Creole culture of Trinidad. By focusing on the quest for home rather than Biswas's lack of cultural and psychological capacity to act on his will comes to light. Mr. Biswas is not looking for any house but he is looking a homely one.

Mr. Biswas's birth and childhood resonates with the life of the classic character of Oedipus the king. He was born with "six fingers" and in "a wrong way", Biswas is different and distinguished from other children (14). He was unwanted, unloved and viewed as the bearer of bad luck to his family, just as Oedipus was as a baby. Like Oedipus, quite accidentally and unintentionally Biswas causes his father's death when the father dives into a pond to save him from drowning. The incident vilifies Mr. Biswas and



becomes a turning point as it starts the process of 'homelessness' that characterizes his life thereafter. He is sent to stay with his relatives and "for the next thirty-five years he is to be a wanderer with no place to call his own" (38). Biswas is destined to share Oedipus's misery; the latter is blinded and banished and the former is left displaced and homeless.

In the case of Biswas, the absence of a father leaves Biswas with no role model to identify with and in effect the process of identity formation is left unaccomplished for him. Another possible reading is that Biswas as a child refuses to adopt his father's colonial identity. The child's symbolic unintentional father-killing can be interpreted as a positive gesture to dispense with the legacy of dependency and colonial identity. Naipaul uses this as an opportunity for the young Biswas to acquire a new independent and decolonized identity for himself and his descendants.

Thus, Biswas sets on self-education to develop his own identity and to find his selfhood. The first step for him is to start looking in foreign magazines and books for a model of an ideal life: "He read the novels of Hall Cain and Marie Corelli. They introduced him to intoxicating world. - They made him despair of finding romance in his own dull green land" (77). There is a gap between what these books and pictures offers as the ideal life and that of life in the small Indian community of Trinidad. Biswas is aware of the cultural distinctions between the two distinctive geographies, the west and his own small island, and continues to look for a lifestyle compatible with his milieu. The second step would be to look around himself, and his own community to find the meaning of life on the island. In Aunt Tara's house, he develops his sense of need for a stable family life and the home he has been deprived of. Mr. Biswas thinks he has to have this stability if



he is to have his own family. Discovering his talent for drawing and his love of writing, he chooses sign writing for shops as his profession, but the job turns out to be unstable, as he is out of work for several weeks. Similarly, his marriage to Shama Tulsi, and his move to the Tulsi household, Hanuman House, does not bring him the homeliness he expects. Living in the authoritative organism of Hanuman House requires the individuals to give up their individual identity and adopt the collective identity of the Tulsi family. The members were expected to respect the already established power relations in order to maintain the authoritarian system. Despite the fact that Biswas needs the financial support of the Tulsi, due to his own career being unstable, he refuses to exchange his individuality for the security of living with the Tulsi.

Biswas's derelict life before marriage and his loss of individuality amongst the Tulsis are the environmental factors imposed on him by the small society in which he lives. All these factors deprived him of what Bhabha calls 'individual freedom' and elevate his need for independence. Thus, a concrete identity like a house takes on an inflated significance in embodying an area of independence. Yet, the house he attempts to build or buy fail to fulfil such a need for independence and homeliness. Mr. Biswas's idea of home is that of the traditional definition of home which regards home as the embodiment of a grounded (masculine) self-identity. But the satirical narrative of Naipaul attempts to show how elusive the promise for territorial satisfaction of home is for a colonized individual. A strong white concrete house is the ideal structure that preoccupies Mr. Biswas's mindset, but the houses of Mr. Biswas are in one way or another far from this ideal home. There are houses which become a source, of inspiration like Hanuman house or the Doll's house, and those which Biswas builds or buys, like the

half-built building in the Chase and Mr. Biswas's final house. But the fact that none of these houses provide him with the territorial satisfaction he looks for, is indicative of a deeper cultural displacement that cannot be homed. In fact, the major houses and buildings that Biswas is closely involved with fail to provide him with identity, security, and stimulation in one way or another. The idea to own a house as a way of asserting his individuality comes to Biswas in Hanuman House, where he moves after marrying Shama.

Hanuman House is a grand family house which is known in the area as a traditional and religious household. The Tulsis, a traditional Hindu landowning family have preserved their traditional customs as well as traditional family structure by cutting themselves off from outsiders and running the household as a self-sufficient enclosed state within the Indian community. To Biswas, "Hanuman House was a world everything beyond its gate was foreign and unimportant" (195) the appearance of the house from outside is like an 'alien, white fortress' which is suggestive of power and authority. The internal structure of the house, though, corresponds with the power relations established within the household. Hanuman House consists of two buildings, the main building is in concrete and it consist of the visitor's room, a large hall and the residence of those in authority in the family, Mrs. Tulsi, her two sons and Seth. The rest of the family, that is the girls and their husbands who come second on the scale of power, live in an old wooden building called 'the old barracks' (196), a term which Naipaul knowingly deploys because of its association with the barrack-like structures in which indentured Indians were housed during the colonial era.



Mr. Biswas is impressed by the grandeur of the house at the beginning, but he soon becomes aware that he cannot enjoy the authority of the heads of the family and that his place is a small room in the worst part of the building. Mr. Biswas upset by the unequal power relations in the house and the privileged position of Seth, Mrs. Tulsi and her sons, rebels against them. He fights with some men of the family but he understands that the structure of Hanuman House would not be dismantled with such trivial gestures.

Biswas cannot stand being nobody any longer. He expected Hanuman House to be more than a family house, to be a home where he could feel he belonged, but it failed to bring him the sense of homeliness. Thus, Mr. Biswas aspires to own a house which along with independence would give him the sense of homeliness which he craves. The traditional Tulsis observe such assertions of individualism with contempt, mocking Biswas for wanting "to paddle his own canoe" (139). Aspiring to buy his own house, Mr. Biswas looks for a model and he finds it in the image of a doll's house as a western model of an ideal house. He watches other people's houses and compares his desired house to the ones that he sees in different places. His mental engagement with doll's house imagery goes to the extent that he projects the fantasy image onto the real buildings around him: "he fixed his eyes on a house, as small and as neat as a doll's house" (324). Mr. Biswas's obsession with the doll's house shows that his criterion for an ideal house is limited to the outside appearance rather than the internal foundation of the building. He even decides to share his fantasy world with his family. At Christmas, Shama and the children stay in Hanuman House and Mr. Biswas, on his way to pay a visit to them, buys his daughter, Savi, a doll's house as a Christmas present, for which he pays more than a month's wages. Mr. Biswas's choice of present for Savi reveals first,



his unconscious desire to buy a perfect neat – looking house for himself and his family, and second, to assert the child's individuality in a household where her presence is rarely recognised and make her distinguished from the other children.

He had thought deeply about his house, and knew exactly what he wanted.

He wanted in the first place, a real house, made with real materials. He didn't want mud for the walls, earth for the floor, tea branches for rafters and grass for roof. He wanted wooden walls, all tongue- and groove. (219)

But it turns out to be the embodiment of his incapacity to manage the construction project of a good and stable house. Given that he is inexperienced in house- building, he hires a builder. The black builder Maclean realizes within minutes of speaking with Biswas, that he is inexperienced and naïve, and plans to exploit him. Mr. Biswas is so inexperienced that when asked what he wants to build, he has no idea other than "small thing. But neat" (249). Mr. Biswas's lack of a clear perspective on the project hints at a dramatic failure to come. Mr. Biswas and Maclean have different ethnic origins. The troubled relationship and the lack of trust between them imply the lack of trusting communication between the Trinidadians of different origins. Such a lack of trust appears to be one of the many factors that contribute to the failing of the project of building a homely house for the Trinidadian nationals. Mr. Biswas's vulnerability lies in his inexperience in handling such a project, and Maclean who doubts Mr. Biswas's ability to manage the project, takes advantage of him. As the construction progresses the problems appear: "asphalt hanging from the roof, the smell of rust filing the room, and so on" (276). Mr. Biswas's at this stage senses the problem. But he does not dare to face it.

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Instead of confronting the builder and handling the problem, Mr. Biswas's becomes distressed:

And every day the rain fell, the sun blazed, the house became greyer, the sawdust once fresh and aromatic became part of the earth and Mr. Biswas worked more and more elaborate messages of comfort his walls with a steady, unthinking hand and a mind a turmoil. (276)

Biswas's anxiety heightens as the constant rainfall causes the deterioration of the unfinished house. He starts biting his nails, having nightmares and becoming paranoid. The deterioration of Mr. Biswas's state of mind can be explained in relation to his lack of agency to act upon his will. Mr. Biswas's mental order collapses when the procedure of the house – building goes dramatically wrong. Mr. Biswas's assertion of his individuality depends on building a house of his own and his determination and willingness to act on his will. But Mr. Biswas's lack of experience in house – building, his financial strains and his lack of trust in the builder puts him in a vulnerable position. He senses that things are not as they are supposed to be, but he is incapable of setting things right. Mr. Biswas knows what he wants and carefully plans his house in his imagination, but when put into action, his limited agency and his limited capacity to act on his will is revealed. Mr. Biswas has a nervous breakdown when he happens to watch the unfinished building collapse before he is able to own it. In fact, as the ordering of the space goes wrong, Mr. Biswas's mental order collapses. Such a stressful experience makes him give up his ambition for quite some time. He is resigned to failure for a while before saving and borrowing to buy his long awaited house, though as it transpires even the final house is ill– designed, poorly constructed and far from his imaginary ideal



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home. The house is as much a failure as an achievement. The beautiful facade of the house indeed covers up its lack of solid foundation and a good design, but Mr. Biswas takes comfort in the idea that he is finally independent and a house owner regardless of the shortcomings or even dangers that might await the family within the house.

The modern concrete house of Mr. Biswas can be interpreted as embodying the ungrounded and unstable independence of Trinidad, as seen by Naipaul. There is a prevalent view of the Caribbean being a Creole society, rather than colonial. The problem to Naipaul is inherent in the 'place' itself as it is fashioned by the colonial forces. As he says:

"Black Power in these black islands is protest. But there is no enemy. The enemy is the past, of slavery and colonial neglect and a society uneducated from top to bottom; the enemy is the smallness of the islands and the absence of resources" (250).

Naipaul envisages the power of individual and collective forces and the future of the Caribbean. *A House for Mr. Biswas* belongs to the transitional era the transition of Trinidad from a colonial state to an independent state. The novel reveals Naipaul's idea that an individual's growth is embedded in social and cultural anatomy, while any development in the social sphere requires co-operation of self-decolonized and grounded subjects, a vicious cycle that seems to be unbreakable in the Caribbean. The lack of resources for growth and the possibility of rebellion against the status - quo are projected when Mr. Biswas considers breaking away from the restraint of the Tulsi family to follow



his ambitions: "But go where? And do what? What could he do? Apart from being a bus conductor, working as a labourer on the sugar – estates or on the roads, owning a shop" (162). All the enthusiasm and motivation for progress dissipates because it has no clear focus. To Naipaul, Mr. Biswas, as a colonial subject cannot be 'unhomed', in the sense that he may live in the borderlines of the home and the world and turn 'unhomeliness' into an opportunity for creative initiations.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Indian English literature has attained an independent status in the realm of world literature. Wide range of themes are dealt within Indian writing in English. Literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values, and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living elsewhere, recent Indian English fiction has been trying to give expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicaments. It is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the ever rare gems of Indian writing in English. From being a singular and exceptional, rather gradual native flare – up of geniuses, Indian writing has turned out to be a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India converses regularly.

Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2001, V. S. Naipaul's cosmopolitan lifestyle, prolific publishing, and distinguished style made him an important figure in the literary and critical movements of post colonialism in the second half of the twentieth century. Naipaul is uniquely equipped to reflect upon bereavement. Indian by blood, Trinidadian by birth, Briton through his choice of home, and an exile through his experience and spirit, Naipaul is concerned with the loss of old dreams and old definitions, the loss of what formerly seemed to be guiding verities. A man of no single nation, his allegiances held in abeyance, he casts a dark and perceptively ironic eye on his varied worlds. He sees with awful clarity the doddering old and the brutally new. For him, the old world is a dream only vaguely, though poignantly recalled. Through his vision, the contemporary world, though irresistibly real, emerges as either dusty and stupidly dull, filled with the failure of old European concepts, or horrifyingly cruel and confused, lacking any consistent, workable ideals. His development, achievement, and success rest mainly on his four

novels. *A House for Mr. Biswas* published in 1961, *The Mimic Men* published in 1967, *In a Free State* published in 1971, and *Guerrillas* published in 1975.

*A House for Mr. Biswas*, V. S. Naipaul's classic novel and it follows the life of Mr. Mohun Biswas, a protagonist inspired by Naipaul's father, as he struggles to find his freedom and a house of his own. The son of a poor labourer in Trinidad, Mr. Biswas is forced to live as a guest in one crowded, inhospitable house after another. After his father dies, his family moves in with his mother's sister, Tara,, and he is humiliated and beaten by Tara's brother- in- law Bhandat. He goes to work as a sign-painter for Tulsi family, and there he begins a flirtation with Shama. After his love letter is discovered by Mrs. Tulsi, Mr. Biswas is bullied into marrying Shama, thus beginning a long and unhappy marriage that produces four children, a countless bitter quarrels. After a brief and failed attempt to run a dry goods store in the case, Mr. Biswas and his family return to live with the Tulsi family, a pattern that recurs throughout the novel. It is in Port of Spain that Mr. Biswas comes closest to happiness, working as a journalist for the tabloid sentinel, writing outlandish stoeies, and achieving a degree of local fame. Here, too, his son Anand excels in school and shows signs of talent as a writer. But Mr. Biswas's fortunes suffer several reversals, and it is not until the very end of his life that he is finally able to buy a house.

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is the odyssey of a man who wants to overcome his condition of exile and homelessness. Its central character Mr. Biswas sets out to carve a place for himself. His need and search for a house is symbolic of the search for a centre of identity. One of the most gifted novelists of modern times. Naipaul seeks to capture the epiphanies of life, and explores the depth and complexities of the experience of a common man who is involved in the struggle against his limitations and failure. Like Joseph Conrad, Naipaul shows man's nature, as it is revealed in the



desperate situations. Conrad's heart of darkness describes Marlow's voyage both into the darkness of Africa and into the darkness of his thoughts. Similarly Naipaul concentrates on exploring the sensibility and motives of his hero Biswas in this novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, setting him against the narrow background of Trinidad. Though Naipaul has certain disadvantages and difficulties arising out of his cultural backwater, such a condition also becomes a stimulus to his creative fulfilment.

In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the metaphor of house focuses on Biswas. The novel marks a climax of the first phase of Naipaul's career. It is the story of any unexceptional man who is set apart. The author imparts a certain identity to his hero right at the time of his birth by calling him Mr. Biswas. He is born 'unnecessary and unaccommodated' in a dark room. There are various references to the darkness signifying the inescapable stifling conditions of life. The world of Mr. Biswas contemptuously denies all his attempts to assert his dignity. Mr. Biswas, rebellion against social and personal slavery provides the motivating thrust of the book. It gives a wider perspective to the colonial experience of a historically displaced person who lives in a destitute society in a derelict land.

A major theme of Naipaul's fiction is homelessness, the sense of loss and inauthenticity. The modern age is marked by uncertainty, confusion and sense of rejection. It has contributed towards the creation of an alienated sensibility. The changes during the past few decades in the intellectual world of ideas and in the physical world of man's environment have affected the emotional personality of man. Writers like T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Graham Greene and others communicate the spiritual miasma of modern life and a sense of imprisonment in an empty, ugly and alien society. At the same time they make an attempt to gather up all the doubts and uncertainties of life in order to assert an

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affirming faith in the face of identity crisis. Naipaul, like them, presents this dilemma of man. Writing in exile, his sensibility is sharpened by a sense of loss of sustaining ethos.

Mr. Biswas's quest for identity in *A House for Mr. Biswas* actually brings out the predicaments of the anchorless existence, uncertainty and futile struggle for protection and identity in a postcolonial society. In this scenario, to be a colonized subject is to be safe and protected by the decisions of the rulers and to be thrown into freedom involves using one's own mind and capacities to take care of one. The story of the novel is interrupted with Mr. Biswas's recurring bouts of elation at being free and his breakdowns and backsliding into the refuge of Hanuman House.

However, Hanuman House is not an evolving society but a kind of temporary refuge for those who are unable to find a foothold in Trinidadian society which runs short of resources required for authentic independence. Mr. Biswas's rebellion against this security provided by Hanuman House is bound to fail again and again without money, power skills or available employment for his westernized sense of self and individuality. His search for his house is not a desire to discard community or do away with his family ties but the desire to create a new society whose nucleus will be he himself, never again having to take orders from others and work for the benefit of any agency other than his own. The ambition of not being associated with the pack of the Tulsi family is a negative ambition but Biswas struggles nevertheless attain heroism in a background which lacks in heroes or heroic deeds. These lines of the prologue highlight the protagonist's desire for a tidy way of life and an anchorage in the world of flux. Here the house attains the stature of self-identity, self-worth and his unique foot print on the flow of fact that he emerges triumphant after his repeated failures to achieve the possession of his own house, flawed though it is in legacy



which Mr. Biswas can bequeath to his family. Just like that, through his writing Naipaul too attempts to preserve his own family history and the history of Trinidadian Indian community

It is significant that at the very first sight, Mohun identifies Mrs. Tulsi with Tara, another independent and capable woman and notes that they both have "armoured hands" (84). She too appears first on the scene displaying remarkable powers of organisation and damage control, calming an enraged and insulted customer and chastising her daughter, who had been the cause of trouble. Like Tara, she can control men like Govind, Seth and her sons Shekhar and Owad efficiently to run a business empire. It is equally significant that most of the inmates of Tulsi house are not simply financially but emotionally dependent on her. There is similar grudging admiration for Bissoondaye, Bipti's mother who is capable, hardworking and positive, painstakingly preparing coconut oil according to the prescriptions of the pundit. The relative importance of women in the world of Trinidad, as portrayed by Naipaul, must, however, be firmly historicized. It did not imply any implicit privileging of women. The relative importance of women may be ascribed to the colonial experience of disjunction and rupture, a distancing from the original Brahmin. Hindu customs of Northern India and material necessities in a diasporic situation. Pundit Tulsi's untimely death forces Mrs. Tulsi to come to take charge of family affairs. She is definitely assisted in her enterprise by the relative relaxation of rigid, misogynistic rules applicable to upper-class Hindu widows in a diasporic situation. Mr. Biswas is himself a firm believer of patriarchal structure of a family and continues to look upon the women-run Tulsi house as a deviance from norm. His reference to Negroes as deviant because their men are ruled by women, is a case in the point. Mrs. Tulsi herself has internalised the ideal of a patriarchal household and



continuously refers to the photograph of the dead Pundit Tulsi for legitimacy. She operates with the assistance of her two sons and Seth her brother-in-law, thereby maintaining the respectable fact of a household ruled by men for men. The two boys, Shekhar and Owad, are given precedence in all matters over their sisters though the sisters bear the physical brunt of running the large house. Tara's power stems from Ajodha's prosperity. In the final analysis, both figures control and exercise power like men, exploiting the weak and pampering the strong.

It is more than apparent that the central issue of building the house is inextricably tied up with the idea of heroic masculinity. Mr. Biswas has internalized the Victorian, patriarchal rhetoric of companionate marriage and responsible parenting, two very important components of the colonial civilising discourse. By the second half of the nineteenth century the idea of emasculation of the colonised came to be identified with lack of control and discipline in the domestic sphere, so that private space became a mirror of public state. It is interesting to note that in colonial Bengal of late nineteenth century, the texts of Samuel Smiles were equally revered for establishing a model of personal and domestic discipline. The internal discipline of the European home as an ideal of discipline, order and hierarchy, with the father as the master, the mother as the willing help-meet and children and servants as happy and contented subjects, was the key to European progress. Hanuman House in contrast, becomes the epitome of the colonized house, dirty, smelly, unclean, disorderly, unhealthy and most important of all ruled by a woman instead of a man. The Victorian fetishes of 'discipline' 'routine' and 'order' become some of the most privileged elements in construction of manly personality. However, once again the hopes of building an orderly home are thwarted, as Mr. Biswas is condemned to a life of economic dependence, and poverty. His final house, where he does establish some

sort of control and order, is mortgaged even when he dies and the loan remains unpaid. Construction of postcolonial masculinity remains provisional, temporary and contested.

While making effective use of narrative techniques, like shifts in perspective, shift in time, correlation of setting with situation and mind, etc., in *A House for Mr. Biswas* Naipaul employs surprise as a special source of rich humour as well as pathos, sometimes separately, sometimes simultaneously. Although in most instances it is applied to Mr. Biswas, at times it is used to telling effect on other character as well.

For instance, Mr. Biswas labels Shekhar and Owad as the elder and the younger gods. Once Mr. Biswas gargles and spits out of his window at the Hanuman House, on to Owad standing directly below.

'O God'! the god exclaimed. (133)

The sequence of the word 'God' comes unexpectedly and with much surprise packed into it. Had Naipaul used the name, Owad, instead of "the god," the comic potential of the situation would have remained unexploited.

This can be reversal of roles or ideas, and the emphasis on the negative aspects of aspirations, activity, etc. In the last phase of his life at Sikhim Street, Mr. Biswas is struck by wonder at owning a house, "the audacity of it . . . to bar entry to whoever he wished". (8)

This is a fronting of the negative aspect of the pleasure of owning a house. It is comic that a person should lay such stress on the negative side, while owning a house.



In the novel, the house becomes a kind of inverted fictional embodiment of Naipaul's own personal need for change and escape. While his father's experience becomes the story of any postcolonial man displaced from his origin by chance or choice, Mr. Biswas's 'unhoused' condition and alienation are the problems of every coteremporary diaspora which is presented in the autobiographical design of the novel. The novel succeeds in transcending the individual self by universalizing the issue of alienation with a Naipaulean cry for identity in the postcolonial world. An autobiographical study of the novel reveals how the life history of his son, V. S. Naipaul, is similar to that of Mr Biswas and his son Anand who fails to absorb the Caribbean climate. Yet the novel is a tragic epic, densely populated, rich in variety. It becomes visibly clear in *A House for Mr. Biswas* that the fictional embodiment of Naipaul's own personal life is assimilated absorbed into art.

V. S. Naipaul's novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the quest for the place of his own is symbolic of his native Trinidad's struggle for independence. As with all anti-colonial struggles, Mr. Biswas encounters a number of setbacks in his attempts to lead an independent life. And even when he finally does obtain a place of his own, it's quite a unbalanced old structure, requiring a lot of hard work to make it tolerably habitable. So it was the independence of Trinidad. Once freedom had finally been achieved, then the hard work really started.



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**Nature's Magic in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the reward of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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CERTIFICATE

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project **Nature's Magic in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

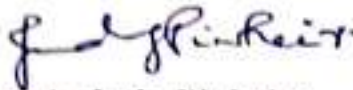
OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

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## CERTIFICATE

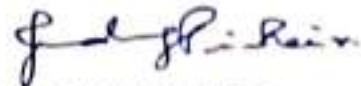
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## PREFACE

The project entitled **Nature's Magic in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*** reveals the mystic qualities of nature which elevates human spirit. Here Burnett shows how nature as a healer, provides mental restoration as well as physical upliftment.

The first chapter **Introduction** gives a short biography of Frances Hodgson Burnett and his works in American literature and short summary of the novel.

The second chapter **Life with Nature** deals with the relationship between nature and human life.

The third chapter **Magic Realism** reflects that spiritual growth and healing power in the garden. It also deals with the magical transformation of nature.

The fourth chapter **Modus Operandi** explains the objects used in narrative by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

The fifth chapter is a **Summation** of all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

American literature begins with the age of colonialism, produced in the area of the United States and its preceding colonies. During its early history, America was a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present-day United States. Therefore, its literary tradition begins as linked to the broader tradition of English literature. However, unique American characteristics and the breadth of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition. The New England colonies were the centre of early American literature.

The character of early American literature is strongly influenced by several factors: it was the era of colonising the continent. Since not only the English explored and claimed the territories, the beginnings of American literature are more or less connected also with French, Spanish or Dutch literatures as well. The first writers brought mainly English ideas and ways of writing, which means early American literature is based on the literature of England. Religion played an important part in the writers' lives. Many writings of the period were sermons and theological books. The fact that the Pilgrims landed in the Massachusetts Bay in 1620 had an immense influence on the culture of the newly developing colonial system.

As dissatisfaction with the colonial system and the relations with Britain grew, the literature gradually changed its shape. The writers became more politically, anti-British and revolutionary oriented, rationalism and enlightenment prevailed. The period of romanticism represented a revolt against classicism and its values such as reason and form. The American variant of romanticism was different from the European one to a certain degree. There was a great interest in Indians and their

culture. The writings were less political and religious, the topics were mostly American, and the writers stressed imagination, nature and individualism.

Just as in Europe, the period of romanticism was followed by the period of realism. Writers left behind the styles and topics adopted by the previous generation and rather concentrated on describing life as it was with its negatives typical for the period. It was the era of industrialisation and migration, determinism was a major paradigm of the age. Naturalism was an intensified form of realism. Other American writers towards the close of the nineteenth century moved toward naturalism.

Since the dawn of the twentieth century, writers were looking for new ways of writing and new topics. Their writings expressed their feelings about living in the modern age, some of them wrote positively, some negatively. Their style became more complicated; experiments were quite common. Many movements appeared; together they might be called 'modernism'.

Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent from which a few hardy souls tentatively ventured westward. After a successful rebellion against the motherland, America became the United States, a nation. By the end of the nineteenth century this nation extended southward to the Gulf of Mexico, northward to the forty-ninth parallel, and westward to the Pacific. By the end of the nineteenth century, too, it had taken its place among the powers of the world, its fortunes so interrelated with those of other nations that inevitably it became involved in two world wars and, following these conflicts, with the problems of Europe and East Asia. Meanwhile, the rise of science and industry, as well as changes in ways of thinking and feeling, wrought many modifications in people's lives. All



these factors in the development of the United States moulded the literature of the country.

Many American writers were influenced by the transcendentalism movement, formed around Ralph Waldo Emerson after 1836, focused their message on the strength and inherent purity present within the individual. Individualism remains a prominent topic in later works of American literature. American writers expressed disillusionment following World War I. The stories and novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) capture the mood of the 1920s, and John Dos Passos wrote about the war. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) became notable for *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* in 1954. According to Hemingway in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* he says, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*" (773). William Faulkner (1897-1962) is notable for novels like *The Sound and the Fury*. American drama attained international status only in the 1920s and 1930s, with the works of Eugene O'Neill, who won four Pulitzer Prizes and the Nobel Prize. In the middle of the twentieth century, American drama was dominated by the work of playwrights Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, as well as by the maturation of the American musical.

Depression era writers included John Steinbeck (1902-1968), notable for his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Henry Miller assumed a unique place in American literature in the 1930s when his semi-autobiographical novels were banned from the United States. From the end of World War II up until, roughly, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the publication of some of the most popular works in American history such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. America's involvement in World War II influenced the creation of works such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's

*Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). John Updike was notable for his novel *Rabbit Run* (1960). Philip Roth explores Jewish identity in American society. From the early 1970s to the present day the most important literary movement has been postmodernism and the flowering of literature by ethnic minority writers.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Mencken's major enthusiasms included the fiction of Joseph Conrad and Theodore Dreiser, but he also promoted minor writers for their attacks on gentility, such as James Branch Cabell, or for their revolt against the narrow, frustrated quality of life in rural communities, including Zona Gale and Ruth Suckow. The most distinguished of these writers was Sherwood Anderson. His *Winesburg Ohio* (1919) and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) were collections of short stories that showed villagers suffering from all sorts of phobias and suppressions. Anderson in time wrote several novels, the best being *Poor White* (1920).

In 1920 critics noticed that a new school of fiction had risen to prominence with the success of books such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, fictions that tended to be frankly psychological or modern in their unsparing portrayals of contemporary life. Novels of the 1920s were often not only lyrical and personal but also, in the despairing mood that followed World War I, apt to express the pervasive disillusionment of the post-war, generation. Novels of the 1930s inclined toward radical social criticism in response to the miseries of the Great Depression, though some of the best, by writers such as Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Henry Roth, and Nathanael West, continued to explore the Modernist vein of the previous decade.

Frances Eliza Hodgson was born to Eliza Boond and Edwin Hodgson on November 24, 1849, in Manchester, England. Her father was a successful ironmonger



originally from Doncaster, and his income was sufficient to enable the family to live a comfortable life. The third of five children, Frances had two older brother and two younger sisters. Due to the success of his business, Edwin was able to move his family into a larger house in 1852.

Edwin died of a stroke just over a year after the relocation, his wife pregnant with a fifth child and now bereft of an income. Eliza was forced to take over the family business, and Frances was left in the care of her grandmother, who introduced her to the joys of reading. Due to their impecunious situation, Frances's mother was forced to move the family to Seedley Grove, near Pendleton, where they resided with relatives.

During this time Frances attended a local school run by two women, and it was here that she first encountered a book concerning fairies. The family moved again, but Frances would come to despise her new home in Islington Square, Salford, which was devoid of gardens and severely overcrowded. Her fertile imagination led to a propensity for storytelling, often creating tales and stories that she would commit to her notebooks. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe came to be her favourite novel, and she wiled away a great number of hours rehearsing its scenes. She and her siblings attended The Select Seminary for Young Ladies and Gentlemen, where she remained until the age of fifteen.

After the American Civil War ruined the cotton industry that Manchester depended on, the family was thrust into poverty. Eliza decided to sell the business and relocate once more to a smaller residence. Frances's uncle was doing well in America, and invited the family to live with him in Knoxville, Tennessee; an offer which was accepted within a year. In preparation for the move, her mother instructed Frances to destroy her early writings, and in 1865 the family moved to the United States.



Unfortunately, the economy of Knoxville was badly affected when the war ended, and Frances's uncle was unable to support the family. They consequently moved into a log cabin not far away in New Market, where Frances was to meet her future husband Swan Burnett. Soon after making his acquaintance, however, Swan left to attend college in Ohio. To help support her family, Frances began writing, publishing her first story in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1868, shortly followed by regular contributions to in *Scribner's Monthly*, *Peterson's Magazine*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. By 1869 she had accrued enough money through her writing to relocate the family to a more spacious home in Knoxville.

In 1870 Frances's mother died, and soon afterwards most of her siblings married. In 1872, Burnett visited England. In September of the following year, she married Swan Burnett, and in under a year had given birth to her first child, Lionel. It was in 1874 that she embarked on her first novel, *That Lass o' Lawrie's*, her first full-length novel. The money that she had earned from her writing enabled her and Swan to travel to Paris, where Swan endeavoured to further his medical training. Their stint in Paris was short-lived, however, as the birth of her second child, Vivian, forced them to return to the United States.

In 1877 *That Lass o' Lowrie's* published; when it was, it received critical acclaim, and Frances soon became well-known as an up-and-coming novelist. She continued to write prolifically, publishing *Haworth's* in 1879 and beginning work on a dramatic version of *That Lass o' Lowrie's* after an unauthorised version was performed in London. In the same year Frances met Louisa May Alcott and Mary Mapes Dodge during a trip to Boston, who inspired her to start writing children's fiction. She also wrote and published adult fiction.

Frances's writing showed no sign of slowing down, publishing *Louisiana* in 1880, *A Fair Barbarian* in 1881, and *Through One Administration* in 1883. Her play *Esmerelda* (1881) was nineteenth century's longest running play on Broadway. However, producing such a prodigious amount of work took its toll and resulted in Frances's falling into a deep depression. It was around this time that she became interested in Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Christian Science ideas that would have a profound influence on her later life and work.

Burnett's work continued to be very popular, and the publication of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in 1886 saw the book become a best-seller in both England and the United States. It was Burnett's first children's novel. It was translated into twelve languages, and solidified her reputation as a successful writer. Burnett also wrote a play titled *The Real Little Lord Fauntleroy* which was staged on Broadway and was as successful as the book. In the winter of 1887, she wrote *The Fortunes of Philippa Fairfax* in Florence, and published *Sara Crew or What Happened at Miss Minchin's* in the United States.

*A Little Princess*, an expanded version of *Sara Crew or What Happened at Miss Minchin's* was published in book form in September 1905. A huge success, it is still considered among children's all-time favourite novels. Burnett's oldest son, Lionel, passed away as a result of consumption in 1890, which had a serious impact on both her life and work. Shortly after this Burnett renounced her faith in the Church of England and turned to Christian Science.

Three years later she published her autobiography, *The One I Knew Best of All*, which was dedicated to Lionel. Her youngest son, Vivian, finished his studies at Harvard in 1898, and shortly afterwards Burnett divorced Swan on grounds of desertion—although in reality the breakup had been planned years in advance. She



was living at Great Maytham Hall in England at this point, where she would remain for the next ten years. In 1896, she published *A Lady of Quality*. The first in a series of successful adult historical novels, it was that year's second highest bestselling book in the United States. It was followed by *In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim* in 1899 and *The Making of a Marchioness* and *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst* in 1901.

Burnett married Stephen Townsend in 1900, and the two of them travelled to Pegli for a honeymoon. Within months her sister received a letter explaining that the relationship was already becoming problematic. Burnett claimed that she had been blackmailed into marriage by Townsend, that he was only after money, and that he was 'scarcely sane and hysterical'. Not wanting to cohabit with her new husband, she moved to London.

Burnett experienced a physical deterioration in 1902 and, after returning to America, spent some time in a sanatorium. She expressed to Townsend that she no longer wanted to be with him and ended the marriage. Two years later she went back to Maytham, and it was there amongst its beautiful, walled gardens that she conceived *The Secret Garden*.

In 1906, Burnett published *Queen Silver-Bell* and *Racketty-Packetty House*, and in the following year *The Shuttle* was published. She relocated to the United States for one final time in 1907, and had numerous minor works published in *Children's Magazine*. *The Secret Garden* was published in 1911, the inspiration for which she had got from the walled gardens in Maytham Hall, and it was originally illustrated by M. L. Kirk and then by Charles Robinson in 1914.

*The Secret Garden* narrates the story of Mary Lennox, a contrary, aggressive, and unloved ten-year-old who goes to live with her uncle after her parent's death. A



classic of children's literature, it became one of her most popular novels. Burnett's other noteworthy works include *The Lost Prince* (1915), *The White People* (1917), *The Head of the House of Coombe* (1922) and its sequel, *Robin* (1922). The final 17 years of her life were spent in Plandome Manor. Burnett died on the 29th October, 1924, at the age of 74. She is buried next to her son Vivian in Roslyn Cemetery. She continues to remain popular for her children's novel.

*The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett is a story of rebirth as a result of the power of love. It opens with Mary Lennox, a 10-year-old girl who lives in India with her English parents. She is terribly neglected by them, causing her to be sickly, unpleasant, and demanding. When her parents die in a cholera epidemic, Mary is sent to live with her uncle, Archibald Craven, in Yorkshire, England. Mr. Craven lives in a huge manor house with nearly hundred rooms, most of which are unused since the death of his wife ten years earlier, an event that has left him bereft. When she arrives at the Misselthwaite estate, the servants let her know that her uncle will pay no attention to her and that she is expected to get by on her own.

Soon after her arrival, Mary learns about a secret garden on the estate that has been locked away for ten years. She becomes enchanted with the idea of the garden and determined to find it, and eventually she locates it and goes inside. It appears to be abandoned, but she finds a few sprigs of new growth and begins tending to them even though she knows nothing about gardening. Mary befriends Ben Weatherstaff, a gardener on the estate, and questions him about the garden, but he makes it clear that it is not to be discussed. She learns that the garden belonged to the late Mrs. Craven and her husband ordered that it be locked away after her death because it caused him too much pain. Mary also befriends Dickon Sowerby, the brother of her housemaid

Martha, who is a great lover of nature and is beloved by every living thing, including every animal he meets, and he begins to help Mary tend to the garden.

After hearing the soft sound of crying from time to time in the house, Mary eventually discovers Colin, the sickly, demanding son of Mr. Craven, who remains secluded in his room and is not expected to live long. Mary and Colin are kindred spirits and when she tells him about the secret garden, he becomes determined to see it for himself. She brings Dickon to meet him and they conspire to take Colin to the garden in his wheelchair, but to keep it a secret from the adults in the house. Just as Mary has grown physically and mentally healthier by spending time in the garden, Colin immediately begins to transform when he enters it and declares that he will now live forever.

As spring comes, the garden begins to thrive along with the health of Colin and Mary. Soon Colin is able to stand and walk, but the children keep this a secret because he wants to surprise his father when he returns from his travels, hoping that his improved health will enable his father to love him. Unbeknownst to the residents of the manor, Mr. Craven has begun a simultaneous transformation as a result of the garden's spiritual power. When he returns to Misselthwaite, he is surprised to find that the garden has been discovered and is now thriving again and thrilled that his son, whom he has come to regret neglecting all these years, has now been made strong and healthy through his connection with nature and the power of love that comes from the secret garden.

*The Secret Garden* is a wonderful reminder of the healing power of nature, laughter, and love. It is an affirmation of the existence of magic as well as simply a beautiful story. This unusual story has proved to be the most lasting element of Burnett's literary legacy. In *The Secret Garden*, the orphan Mary's rightful



## Chapter Two

### Life with Nature

Life with nature is a major theme in the novel, *The Secret Garden*. It takes the shape of a curious bird and a secret garden that comes alive in the midst of springtime. Burnett has chosen a wild bird instead of a captive animal and a wild garden rather than a kitchen garden, as these better reflect the wild and untamed nature. The purpose of this chapter, is threefold: firstly, it will give a brief background to Mary as a character before she arrives at Misselthwaite Manor; secondly, it will look at how the encounter with the robin opens the door to the garden and to the world of relation; and thirdly, it will examine the encounter with the garden, as the most significant encounter in the novel.

The first part of *The Secret Garden* is devoted to establishing an understanding of Mary as a character before she arrives at Misselthwaite Manor. Mary has grown up in a well situated but unloving family in Colonial India, until the day her parents die in a cholera epidemic and she is sent to her uncle in England. Mary is not a likeable child, she is left alone without so much as a loving memory of the past. Indeed, Mary has lived disconnected from everything around her. The relationship between Mary and her Indian nurse, is the typical relationship. To Mary, the Ayah is defined by her race and her class and she is only aware of the woman as a part of herself. Hence, when the Ayah dies Mary is only concerned with how the event will impact on her. Yet, although this relationship is experiential and mainly defined by emotions such as amusement or anger, it is a relationship.

To her parents, on the other hand, Mary has no relationship. Mary only watches her parents from a distance and she does not grieve when they pass away. The lack of relation also becomes apparent in the way Mary plays: "She pretended



that she was making a flower-bed, and she stuck big scarlet hibiscus blossoms into little heaps of earth, all the time growing more and more angry" (*The Secret Garden* 8). In this instance, the lack of relation is characterised not only by the fact that it is not a real garden, but that Mary does not seem to connect with it. However, the pretence might also express a buried power and a longing to relate. When Mary arrives at Misselthwaite Manor she is selfish, uncaring, disinterested and angry.

At first, she finds the Yorkshire landscape strange and unfamiliar: "the wide, bleak moor was a wide expanse of black ocean through which she was passing on a strip of dry land" (27-28). However, left to herself, Mary grows restless and decides to go outside: "There would be birds outside and they would be different from the birds in India and it might amuse her to look at them" (38). So far, it is obvious that Mary still relates to her surroundings as it, the moor frightens her and the birds appeal to her because they are exotic that if Mary is to encounter nature, she must venture out to meet it.

In the novel takes the shape of a small red breasted bird – a robin. The robin is one of the central characters in *The Secret Garden* and occurs frequently throughout the novel. Burnett herself had a very special bond with these birds and, in the short story *My Robin* (1912), she writes about her relationship to the original robin. Burnett continues, that she knew what Mary felt the first time she saw the robin (10). "An intimacy with a robin", she states, "is a liberal education" (3). In *The Secret Garden* the robin is also known as "the robin who showed me the way" (213), as he is the one that helps Mary get into the secret garden, which has been locked up for ten years. This adds an element of magic realism to the story.

In a very real sense, however, it could be argued that the robin also opens the door to the world of relation. In this glance Mary is drawn into relation with the robin. Mary first sees the robin in one of the gardens at Misselthwaite Manor:

She could see the tops of trees above the wall, and when she stood still she saw a bird with a bright red breast sitting on the topmost branch of one of them, and suddenly he burst into his winter song – almost as if he had caught sight of her and was calling to her. She stopped and listened to him and somehow his cheerful, friendly little whistle gave her a pleased feeling – even a disagreeable little girl may be lonely, and the big closed house and big bare moor and big bare gardens had made this one feel as if there was no one left in the world but herself.  
(40)

Burnett writes: "It actually gave Mary a queer feeling in her heart, because he was so pretty and cheerful and seemed so like a person" (42). Yet, Mary does not only become aware of the robin, but of herself: "'I'm lonely,' she said. She had not known it before that this was one of the things which made her feel sour and cross. She seemed to find it out when the robin looked at her and she looked at the robin" (43). Moreover, these realisations alter the way in which Mary behaves towards others: "nothing in the world would make her put out her hand toward him or startle him in the least tiniest way" (68). This also shows how encounter is a part of a process of becoming. Thus, as Mary enters into relation with the robin, she truly becomes Mary.

In the following passage reflects a sense of how the interaction with the robin makes Mary more natural and childlike: Mary began to laugh, and as he hopped and took little flights above the wall that Mary was so used to see him do, she



Poor little thin, sallow, ugly Mary – she actually looked almost pretty for a moment. ‘I like you! I like you!’ she cried out, pattering down the walk; and she chirped and tried to whistle, which last she did not know how to do in the least. But the robin seemed to be quite satisfied and chirped and whistled back at her. (49)

Hence, Mary is no longer the disagreeable little girl who abuses her Ayah and angrily pulls up flowers for an imaginary garden. “I don’t feel as sour as I used to before I knew the robin” (181). Finally, although the robin flies away Mary is able to recall the encounter and she is able to see both herself and others in new light: “She thought of the robin and the way he seemed to sing his song to her” (41). Moreover, “She had felt as if she had understood a robin and that he had understood her” (51). The experience of such a tender union, then, gives Mary the courage and the compassion to meet others.

Later she tells Colin that she should not have liked him before she saw the robin. The robin shows Mary the way to the garden. The encounter with the garden greatly resembles that with the robin, yet, being more integral to the plot, this encounter demands a closer examination. Before this, however, it is important to understand the role of the garden from the point of view of dialogic philosophy. In her book, Bixler identifies “the secret garden as the symbolic centre of the novel” (70).

However, identifies the garden as the relational centre of the novel, is less concerned with symbolism than with actual life. To the dialogic philosopher, the garden is not seen as, for example, a representation of the Edenic myth – it is simply a garden. This distinction is important to make, as it emphasises the difference between the world of ideas and the world of dialogue. The garden is regarded as the participant in an encounter.



Therefore, it is important to note that it is not the garden alone, nor Mary alone that brings about the transformation. "We do not find meaning lying in things", Buber (1947) writes, "nor do we put it into things, but between us and things it can happen" (42). Here it is an examination of the ways in which the encounter between Mary and the garden. Firstly, the encounter with the garden is characterized by autonomy, lack of utility and disorder. Initially, Mary reacts to the seemingly dead garden. Here, a sense that Mary is not primarily concerned for herself but for another life. As with the robin she comes to realise the true value of the other as a participant, rather than an object for experience and use. This is part of the basic truth of the human world.

Secondly, the encounter with the garden is characterised by activity, participation and responsibility. "The strongest and deepest actuality", Buber (1923) writes, "is to be found where everything enters into activity – the whole human being" and "the boundless You" (137). Or as Colin puts it: "The Magic works best when you work yourself" (258). This notion is central in the novel as Mary goes from contemplating the garden to working in it. "It is not only the attitude of my soul", Buber writes, "but how I let the attitude of my soul towards the world come to life, that affects the world, actual life" (142).

This awareness is present in Mary's desire to get a spade and some seeds: "If I have a spade," she whispered, 'I can make the earth nice and soft and dig up weeds. If I have seeds and can make flowers grow the garden won't be dead at all – it will come alive'" (87). Moreover, this passage shows that this encounter does not only inspire contemplation or activity, but also a loving sense of responsibility.

Thirdly, the encounter with the garden is characterised by an experience of unity and ecstasy. In the memoir, Burnett writes about her relationship to the Tennessee wilderness: "the most perfect rapturous of her moments always brought to

her a feeling that somehow – in some subtle way – she was part of it – part of the trees, the warm winds and scents and sounds and grasses” (264). Yet, being thus entwined is not without risk. Burnett writes: “If in the young all things not quite of earth are justly to be considered morbid, then this ecstasy, too subtle to be called a mood, was a thing to be discouraged; but it was an emotion all of rapture, and was a thing so delicate and strange that she kept it silently to herself” (273).

Another lovely passage from *The Secret Garden* is when Dickon proves to Mary that the wintery garden is still alive, by cutting into the green centre of a tree branch: “In the course of half an hour Mary thought she could tell too, and when he cut through a lifeless-looking branch she would cry out joyfully under her breath when she caught sight of the least shade of moist green” (105). Finally, the encounter with the garden is characterised by mutual transformation. Throughout the encounter, Mary and the garden mutually aid each other in becoming, that is, to actualise their inborn potential and come alive.

Mary discover sprouting bulbs, and intuitively she starts tending to them by clearing spaces around them which allows them to breathe:

Such nice clear places were made around them that they had all the breathing space they wanted, and really, if Mistress Mary had known it, they began to cheer up under the dark earth and work tremendously. The sun could get at them and warm them, and when the rain came down it could reach them at once, so they began to feel very much alive. (91-92)

The transformation can be perceived both in the garden and in Mary: “She could not believe that she had been working two or three hours. She had actually been happy all the time; and dozens and dozens of the tiny, pale green points were able to



be seen in cleared places, looking twice as cheerful as they had looked before when the grass and weeds had been smothering them" (84).

Talking to the bird, which eventually shows her the way into the secret garden, and expressing her affection for the robin is indicative of a changing attitude towards life in general and life in the Yorkshire moors and around the secret garden in particular. The Yorkshire moors, a place that may appear rough and uninviting, become phenomenally healing for Mary. "In India she had always felt hot and too languid to care much about anything. The fact was that the fresh wind from the moor had begun to blow the cobwebs out of her young brain to waken her up a little" (50). Mary slowly realises how good life is in this new place. Nature, as represented by the Yorkshire moors and the secret garden, has a life-changing effect on Mary: "She was getting on" (52). Nature also has a cultural meaning within the story since it teaches Mary to be responsible and caring.

Through becoming responsive to her environment, Mary presumably develops an environmental humility or at least an environmental awareness. Mary feels better when running around in the garden – she gains both physical strength and serenity. Mary develops her identity through spending time and working in the secret garden. She also develops and grows with the seasonal cycle, the growth of nature – still being 'wick', alive, despite having been neglected in the first years of her life. Mary works in the garden, exhausting herself but enjoying herself nevertheless. Mary learns to feel responsible for her environment. When Mary first discovers the secret garden and it appears to be quiet and static, she wonders whether life still exists in this place, "perhaps some of [the roses] had lived" (83). She is fascinated by the possibility of discovering life in the garden.



Thus, life with nature allows Mary to be with herself and to experience that an Indian Ayah is contrasted by the Martha; the robin introduces Mary to Ben; Mary gets to know Dickon, through the garden; and Colin goes through a similar transformation as Mary. The first actual encounter Mary has with another person is with Martha, who is a servant at Misselthwaite Manor and the sister of Dickon. Mary initially tries to relate to Martha in the way she used to relate to her Ayah: "Are you going to be my servant? Mary asked, still in her imperious little Indian way" (33). However, unlike the Ayah, Martha asserts herself and does not conform to this treatment, because Martha does not see herself as an It.

Mary listened to her with a grave, puzzled expression. The native servants she had been used to in India were not in the least like this. They were obsequious and servile and did not presume to talk to their masters as if they were their equals. They made salaams and called them 'protectors of the poor' and names of that sort. Indian servants were commanded to do things, not asked. It was not the custom to say 'please' or 'thank you' and Mary had always slapped her Ayah in the face when she was angry.

What Mary experiences in relation to Martha is something similar to reciprocity. When Mary considers slapping Martha, she is a little concerned that Martha will slap her back. After the initial shock, however, Mary begins to like Martha and to listen to her stories about her family and about the secret garden. Moreover, Martha encourages Mary to go outside, which leads to the encounter with the robin. The robin, in turn, introduces Mary to the old and rather cross gardener Ben. One could even argue that the encounter with the robin foreshadows the encounter with the gardener. Like the bird, Ben is a wild and lonely creature that is not easily tamed. Yet, through their mutual delight in the robin and their equally

unattractive tempers and appearances, Mary and the old gardener develop a sort of friendship.

Both Martha and Ben tell Mary about a local *moor* boy named Dickon, and in the same way that Mary grows curious about the garden, she grows curious about Dickon: "It was really this mention of Dickon which made Mary decide to go out, though she was not aware of it" (38). Yet, it is not until Mary has learned to relate to the garden that she is ready to encounter Dickon. It should also be noted that their first meeting takes place because Martha writes to Dickon and asks him to purchase gardening tools for Mary. Moreover, like the garden, Dickon is a mesmerising piece of fiction.

After becoming familiar with life with nature, then, Mary proceeds towards life with men, where relation is experienced and expressed through language and recognition. Through these encounters, Mary learns about reciprocity, responsibility and love. In her study, Bixler (1978) argues, that "another important characteristic of the georgic pastoral tradition" is that "it emphasizes cooperation not only between nature and man but also between man and man" and "that Communities as well as individuals can experience the marvelous change of rebirth" (202). This is the powerful force of relation. Moreover, being together in the secret garden the children begin to recognize, reflect upon and verbalise the existence of a sacred bond between all living things, or as Buber puts it, "to feel the breath of the eternal You" (57).

Life with nature introduces Mary to the world of relation through a curious grace and Mary to life with men. It should be noted that the wordless interaction with nature enables Mary to open up to relation, in a way that the interaction with men or God is not yet able to. Mary goes out into the grounds of Misselthwaite Manor expecting to experience nature but instead she encounters the nature. In the meeting

with the robin and the garden Mary is transformed, inside and out, which shows the immense power of the encounter.

In the next chapter reflects that healing and spiritual growth in the garden. Nature has a healing power for anyone's soul. In the novel, Mary and Colin began to spend most of their time in the secret garden, their bad manners changed into good ones, and their souls began to heal. The theme of nature's power suggested an importance of being outdoor, the concept of getting out of the house and playing in the fresh air and being healthy runs throughout the novel.



## Chapter Three

### Magic Realism

The world of relation arises is life with spiritual beings. *The Secret Garden* is not religious in any conventional sense, it is a deeply spiritual work, which is an aspect of the novel that is often overlooked by critics. In the novel, God becomes present to Mary through her relationship to the robin, the garden, Dickon and Colin. In this sense, "God is not outside the meeting, the meeting is inside God" (Haber 59). Moreover, one could argue that the relation the children experience in the spring garden triggers a religious impulse.

As Henry David Thoreau puts it: if men "should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would feel the necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life" (47). Colin tells Mary and Dickon:

Sometimes since I've been in the garden I've looked up through the trees at the sky and I have had a strange feeling of being happy as if something were pushing and drawing in my chest and making me breath fast. Magic is always pushing and drawing and making things out of nothing. Everything is made out of Magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us. In this garden – in all places. (230)

This chapter will be devoted to establishing an understanding of the religious foundation of *The Secret Garden*, from the perspective of dialogic philosophy. It will examine the nature of Magic and how this concept relates to Buber's concept relation. It will also look at how the nature of God and eternity is dealt with in the novel.

Firstly, there are instances of magic realism. An example of this is the way in which the robin helps Mary to get into the secret garden. Burnett writes: "Mary

Lennox had heard a great deal about Magic in her Ayala stories, and she had always said that what happened almost at that moment was Magic" (77). It was Magic that sent the robin.

Secondly, there is the magical transformation of nature, which Burnett refers to as a "mysterious and wonderful thing". Burnett writes "The garden had reached the time when every day and every night it seemed as if Magicians were passing through it drawing loveliness out of the earth and the boughs with wands" (160). Here, the children are constructing their own creation myths. Yet, this transformation is also linked, both symbolically and actually, to the transformation the children experience in themselves: Mary felt that the "Magic was working all the afternoon and making Colin look like an entirely different boy" (211).

Thirdly, there is Magic which can be wielded. This is the Magic of Colin, or the Magic of the Buberian ego. Colin says:

I am sure there is Magic in everything, only we have not sense enough to get hold of it and make it do things for us – like electricity and horses and steam. This sounded so imposing that Ben Weatherstaff became quite excited and really could not keep still. "Aye, aye, sir," he said and he began to stand up quite straight. (229-230)

This instrumental notion about Magic suggests, perhaps, that Colin will remain partly person, partly ego. His Magic is the Magic of It, that is, Magic that "wants to be effective without entering into any relationship and perform its art in the void" (Buber 131).

From the following passage, Colin's Magic is compromised by his desire to experience and use, rather than relate: "'Even if it isn't real Magic,' Colin said, 'we can pretend it is. Something is there – something!'" (227). Yet, one should not be too



quick in dismissing this Magic, as it is perhaps also the Magic of willpower and positive thinking – two forces that are also integral to the novel.

Fourthly, there is relational Magic that cannot be wielded. This is also the Magic of Dickon, or the Magic of the Buberian person. Mary is a great believer in Magic and "Secretly she quite believed that Dickon worked Magic, of course good Magic, on everything near him and that was why people liked him so much and wild creatures knew he was their friend" (210). Yet, she tells Colin: "But he doesn't call it Magic. He says it's because he lives on the moor so much that he knows their ways. He says he feels sometimes as if he was a bird or a rabbit himself, he likes them so" (142). Colin replies: "I believe Dickon knows some Magic, but perhaps he doesn't know he knows it" (229). The Magic of Dickon is fundamentally different from that of Colin. Dickon does not wield Magic, he participates in it.

Burnett argues that by naming the magic power, the children are able to wield it. She writes "to recognize, to know, the sacred power is primary. Knowledge of the power is symbolized by the ability to name it. What one can name, one has power over, for naming indicates knowledge of the essence" (97). Yet, although this is a valid point, one could argue that the most magically powerful character, Dickon, does not name his power, nor does he presume to have knowledge of it or even a desire to use it.

Hence, in *The Secret Garden* the divine elements are also nameless and undefined. Similarly, Buber argues:

Men have addressed their eternal You by many names. When they sang of what they had thus named they still meant You: the first myths were hymns of praise. Then the names entered into the It-language; men felt impelled more and more to think of and to talk about their



eternal You as an It. But all names of God remain hallowed – because they have been used not only to speak of God but also to him. (123)

This genuine address is present in *The Secret Garden*, when the children wish to rejoice in and express their gratitude to the Magic by singing the Doxology. Thus, it is not the name by which the children address God that is central but the spirit in which they do it. When address something as You, Buber argues, God listens. Similarly, Susan tells the children: "Th' Magic listened when tha' sung th' Doxology. It would ha' listened to anything tha'd sung. It was th' joy that mattered" (264). Theologian Paul Tillich, who was largely influenced by Buber, referred to this phenomenon as the "eternal now". Tillich writes:

Whenever we say 'now' or 'today', we stop the flux of time for us. We accept the present and do not care that it is gone in the moment that we accept it. We live in it and it is renewed for us in every new 'present'. This is possible because every moment of time reaches into the eternal. Not everybody, and nobody all the time, is aware of this 'eternal now' in the temporal 'now'. But sometimes it breaks powerfully into our consciousness and gives us the certainty of the eternal. (90)

The eternal now breaks through the pages of *The Secret Garden* as Colin, for the first time, enters the secret garden and "the sun fell warm upon his face like a hand with a lovely touch" (204). Colin then cries out: "Mary! Dickon! I shall get well! And I shall live forever and ever!" (204). This passage is also emphasised by Smedman, who writes: "Mary and Colin can know on an experiential level the sacredness of such moments of being, but, as children, they cannot articulate what they feel".

Therefore, she continues, "the author-narrator steps in to verbalize for them and us the continuity between *chronos* and *kairos*, between profane and sacred time, between time and eternity" (97). Burnett writes:

One of the strange things about living in the world is that it is *only now* and then one is quite sure one is going to live forever and ever and ever. And one knows it sometimes when stands by oneself in a wood at sunset and the mysterious deep gold stillness slanting through and under the branches seems to be saying slowly again and again something one cannot quite hear, however much one tries. Then sometimes the immense quiet of the dark blue at night with millions of stars waiting and watching. Makes one sure; and sometimes a sound of far-off music makes it true; and sometimes a look in some one's eyes. (207)

House and garden share a certain mysteriousness, yet the garden differs strongly from Misselthwaite Manor because "the garden is enclosed, but in contrast to the house it is liberating, wild, and health-inducing and egalitarian" (37). In accordance with Victorian notions, this garden is "seen as largely beneficent, recuperative, Edenic, and pleasurable" (38) or, as Gesler and Kearns put it, "Western culture is strongly affected by notions of a healing Mother Nature" (39). Clearly the garden is a therapeutic landscape because entering it for Mary means healing.

In contrast to the rather oppressive atmosphere of the house, Mary feels free in the secret garden. "She liked the name, and she liked still more the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in no one knew where she was. It seemed almost like being shut out of the world on some fairy place" (91). Strikingly, even the weather conditions improve after her discovery and, accordingly, the narrator opens up a new



several points in the novel. Firstly, after Mary's discovery the narrator comments "She was standing inside the secret garden" (78). Later that "she was inside the wonderful garden and she could come through the door under the ivy any time and she felt as if she had found a world of her own" (82). After a while, the growth of the plants in the garden reflects Mary's emotional and physical growth.

The garden, however, is also a space of paradox. Tracing back its history reveals that it used to belong to Colin's mother, who died there, which is why it had been locked up all the time. Colin's father even went as far as burying the key, so nobody could enter the garden again. Although being locked up is not regarded as negative by Mary, it still gives the impression that the garden is a place one should not be in. This negative side of the garden confirms what has been said earlier about therapeutic landscapes not always being entirely positive.

As Gesler and Baer point out, "the idea of a complete eradication of all health problems within a therapeutic landscape can be easily dismissed as utopian" (45). In fact, the garden, more precisely a tree in it, actually caused severe damage and changed Colin's life forever after his mother's death. Thus, the garden is not only a restorative, but also a potentially dangerous space.

Only after her life changing discovery of the garden is Mary able to help Colin. The first thing she does is bring the garden into Misselthwaite by telling Colin stories about her life outside the house and inside the garden. This alone is sufficient to bring about a metamorphosis in Colin – the same transformation that she herself has gone through. Just the thought of the garden alters his appearance notably. The physical impact on him is remarkable: "His whole face brightened and a little colour came into it." (178).



This supports Allison's above-mentioned hypothesis that hypersensitive people brood unnecessarily and thus fall ill, whereas whenever they are kept busy, their condition improves. Mary provides Colin with this mental stimulus in the form of the garden. His first day in the garden is reminiscent of Mary's, and, again, the weather is in tune with the harmonious situation.

Despite its dark past, the garden clearly serves as therapeutic, almost utopian, landscape here. What follows is a fairy tale-like transformation of the sad and ill Colin. All of a sudden, he is convinced that he is going to live and not die. What has been said in the case of Mary also holds true for Colin. In two ways, he grows into a healthy human being: on an emotional level and in a physical sense. Physically, he grows in a fundamental sense because he learns how to walk.

The moment he goes out of the house and enters the garden, he grows, literally: he first leaves his bed, then leaves his wheelchair and finally appears in full height. And this, in turn, has an effect on the children's perception of the house. With the children changing, Misselthwaite alters to the positive whenever the two of them act as focalisers. Both Mary and Colin are adventurous now and they "saw more rooms and made more discoveries than Mary had made on her first pilgrimage. They found new corridors and corners and flights of steps and new old pictures they liked and weird old things they did not know the use of" (253-254).

The enumeration and the use of words like 'discoveries', 'pilgrimage', as well as the repetition of the words 'more' and 'new' reflect the children's new adventurousness. In a nutshell, their depiction of the house alters completely and it loses its former dingy character due to the positive wave that comes over it in form of the children, who call this the 'Magic' of the garden, which is another rather utopian feature:

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The sun is shining – the sun is shining. That is the Magic. The flowers are growing – the roots are stirring. That is the Magic. Being alive is the Magic – being strong is the Magic. The Magic is in me – the Magic is in me. It is in me – it is in me. It's in every one of us. (231)

The emphasis on this 'Magic' turns the natural environment into a symbolic environment because the positive influence is attested to these mythical healing powers of the garden. Symbolic environments are often connected to myths about health, or can be understood through the meanings attached to geographical settings. In other words, the garden has turned into more than a mere garden; it is a place of magical forces and restorative energies. Finally, this powerful force transfers even onto Colin's father, who returns to Misselthwaite after another long absence of running away from sorrow about his wife's death and Colin's condition. In accordance with the rules of happy endings, seeing Mary and Colin healthy turns him into a happy man.

In *The Secret Garden*, the children refer to that which is unexplainable as Magic, which leaves room for various interpretations. This shows that Burnett, like Buber, is eager to keep the mystery alive by focusing on the encounter with God as it is experienced in the moment, rather than a clearly defined or pre-existing concept of God. Yet, it can be concluded that through the encounter with the nature, men and herself, Mary is able to encounter the eternal God. Despite this, however, the sense that the encounter with God is not the end but only another beginning. God is not a station but a way of travelling.

The next chapter deals with the literary devices in *The Secret Garden* which contains a technique, Burnett uses to produce a special effect in her writing in this novel. Literary elements have an inherent existence in literary piece which is

employed by writers to develop a literary piece. For example, of literary elements are plot, setting, narrative structure, characters, mood, theme, moral etc., Literary techniques, on the contrary are structures usually a words or phrases in literary texts that writers employ to achieve not merely artistic ends. Examples are metaphor, simile, alliteration, hyperbole, allegory and etc., The next chapter deals with the uses of techniques in this novel.



## Chapter Four

### Modus Operandi

Frances Hodgson Burnett in *The Secret Garden* made use of literary devices such as imagery, symbolism and personification for better understanding of the story. Imagery has been used by Burnett to make the story work the way it is. The Garden serves as imagery inspiring hope as it comes back to life with the help of the children. The imagery of natures and that of the healthy mind and body vs the dark and depressing imagery of Colin's room.

The author vividly describes the entrance door and the hall of Mr. Craven's mansion. All of the details are noted: the material the door is done with, what is situated on the walls of the hall, what the floor is done with there. And the author shows the huge size both of the door and the hall, and the little, tiny Mary in comparison to them. Thus, she highlights the meaning of the girl in this house at the beginning of the story, her invisibility there. Therewith, the author shows the greyness of these parts of the house, and as they tend to be 'the face' of the house, the reader seems to understand what kind of people live there, what kind of life is there in general.

Sometime after getting acquainted with Robin, Mary saw the bird in the garden again. She was so happy to see it, that she started to talk to the redbreast and the bird answered her. The author describes this conversation so brightly, that it seems that this conversation takes place between two close people. Thus, the author shows that the girl begins to 'wake up': to feel nature, have some emotions, even some kind of attachment, to the bird in this case.

Martha tells Mary about the moor near the house with the huge love, describing it so dearly, saying that "it's none bare. It's covered wi' growin' things as

smells sweet. It's fair lovely in spring an' summer when th' gorse an' broom an' heather's in flower. It smells o' honey an' there's such a lot o' fresh air an' th' sky looks so high an' th' bees an' skylarks makes such a nice noise hummin' an' singin' (62), saying that she would never live away from there, that the reader understands how huge role that moor plays in Martha's life. Therewith, the storyline shows how close the woman is to nature, how deeply she feels it.

Once, after the rain Mary, looking out of the window, saw the beautiful scenery there. She was so delighted, amazed and impressed with such beauty, because when she had lived in India, there nature was completely different:

The rain-storm had ended and the gray mist and clouds had been swept away in the night by the wind. The wind itself had ceased and a brilliant, deep blue sky arched high over the moorland. Mary never had dreamed of a sky so blue. In India skies were hot and blazing; this was of a deep cool blue which almost seemed to sparkle like the waters of some lovely bottomless lake, and here and there, high in the arched blueness floated small clouds of snow-white fleece. The far-reaching world of the moor itself looked softly blue instead of gloomy purple-black or awful dreary gray. (63)

Here the author shows how huge was the difference between living in India and England for Mary.

*The Secret Garden* becomes a symbol of motherhood, rejuvenation, and healing. Mary and Colin are both motherless and have to mother themselves. The garden keeps them secure, just as a nest keeps baby birds secure, and they venture out at their own pace as they explore the world and develop their growing selves. In the garden, they learn what a mother would have taught had Mary's mother not neglected



her and Colin's mother not died. Mary learns how to like people and be interested in things. Colin learns how to walk, run, and not be afraid to live. Both learn how to socialize, how to think of things other than themselves. They are transformed from physically ill, immature, and self-centred children into healthy individuals.

This mothering is provided through the spiritual presence of Mrs. Craven in the garden and the mothering Mrs. Sowerby bestows on Mary and Colin through her young son, Dickon. Dickon tells Mary and Colin that his mother believes Mrs. Craven is "about Misselthwaite many a time lookin' after Mester Colin, same as all mothers do when they're took out o' th' world" (210). It is Mrs. Craven's spirit who "set us to work, an' told us to bring him here" (210). Mrs. Sowerby reaffirms this when she meets Colin, telling him, "Thy own mother's in this 'ere very garden, I do believe. She couldna' keep out of it" (265).

The roses in *The Secret Garden* are symbolic of children. Ben Weatherstaff tells Mary how Mrs. Craven "loved 'em like they was children" (94) and would kiss them. After she died, the roses "was left to themselves" (95). Like Mary, they were 'orphaned.' Mary excitedly asks, "Did they quite die? Do roses quite die when they are left to themselves?" (95). Although Mary has only recently been orphaned, she never received a mother's love and, like the roses, has been neglected for ten years.

Both Mary and the roses, however, can be tended so they will become fully alive. The same thing is true for her cousin, Colin, who also has been left to wither away, in his case, because of his father's grief over his mother's death. Ben Weatherstaff gets annoyed at Mary's insistent questions about how to tell if the roses are dead or alive; he asks why she is interested in roses all of a sudden. Mary tells him she wants to play and have a garden of her own because "there is nothing for me to do. I have nothing and no one" (95). She views the roses as fellow children, something



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she can be with. They become her favourite plant in the garden, and she tends them with a motherly love so they can grow.

Ben Weatherstaff explains how Mrs. Craven told him before she died, "if ever I'm ill or if I go away you must take care of my roses," (222) exacting a promise for the continued care of the flowers, as if they were children. When Weatherstaff gives Colin a rose bush to plant, it represents Colin planting himself in the garden. He becomes a child of the garden to be nurtured by his mother just as she once nurtured her beloved roses. The roses grow like unrestrained children, with the author describing them:

Rising out of the grass, tangled round the sun-dial, wreathing the tree trunks and hanging from their branches, climbing up the walls and spreading over them with long garlands falling in cascades, they came alive day by day, hour by hour. Fair fresh leaves, and buds – and buds tiny at first but swelling and working Magic until they burst and uncurled into cups of scent delicately spilling themselves over their brims and filling the garden air. (228)

Mary and Colin also are all over the garden as they explore every part of it and similarly come alive. Burnett's views on raising children are exemplified, which the narrator explains how nurturing produces a healthy child:

Where, you tend a rose, my lad, a thistle cannot grow. While the secret garden was coming alive and two children were coming alive with it, there was a man wandering about certain far-away beautiful places in the Norwegian fiords and the valleys and mountains of Switzerland and he was a man who for ten years had kept his mind filled with dark

and heart-broken thinking. He had not been courageous; he had never tried to put any other thoughts in the place of the dark ones. (268)

Eggs and seeds symbolize the creation of new life, while bulbs symbolize rejuvenation. The most vivid example of this which tells the story of the robins and their eggs. Burnett capitalizes the E in 'eggs' to signify the sanctity of life and birth. The creation of new life is described as "the immense, tender, terrible, heart-breaking beauty and solemnity of Eggs" (249). The love of a parent feels for the unborn child is described by explaining that "if an Egg were taken away or hurt the whole world would whirl round and crash through space and come to an end" (249). In this poignant description of a parent's love for a child, Burnett's love for and loss of her elder son, Lionel, resonates powerfully; the passage also foreshadows Archibald Craven's awakening to his own love for his son.

The Eggs represent the creation of new life, just like bulbs and perennial plants, which come up every year, represent life's return. Mary asks if bulbs could "live years and years if no one helped them?" (85). Martha reassures her they do, saying,

They're things as helps themselves, That's why poor folk can afford to have 'em. If you don't trouble 'em, most of 'em'll work away underground for a lifetime an' spread out a' have little 'uns. There's a place in th' park woods here where there's snowdrops by thousands. They're the prettiest sight in Yorkshire when th' spring comes. No one knows when they were first planted. Mary looked at the fire and pondered a little. She must be careful if she meant to keep her secret kingdom. She wasn't doing any harm, but if Mr. Craven found out

about the open door he would be fearfully angry and get a new key and lock it up forevermore. She really could not bear that. (85)

They do not need the careful tending of roses, showing Mary that not all living things have the same needs in order to survive and grow. Bulbs are self-contained entities and need little nourishment in order to grow and reproduce.

Seeds also represent the opportunity for new life. Mary explains why she wants to plant seeds, saying, "If I have seeds and can make flowers grow the garden won't be dead at all – it will come alive" (87). After Dickon brings Mary several packets of seeds, he explains what flowers will grow from each. He tells her *mignonettes* and *poppies* will "grow wherever you cast it, same as poppies will" (98), and giving her more insight on the variety of conditions in which things come to life and grow. Just as these flowers do not need a specific type of soil or special cultivation, Mary will grow in any environment, as long as she has sunshine and fresh air.

Mary reiterates her interest in planting seeds when she meets with Mr. Craven, telling him she wants to plant "to make things grow – to see them come alive" (118). She explains how in India, she "sometimes made little beds in the sand and stuck flowers in them. But here it is different" (118). The difference is that in India she was amusing herself with something to pass the time, while now she wants to create new life. However, the fact that Mary plays at making gardens foreshadows Mary's instinct to create and nurture life, an instinct that needs only the right circumstances to thrive. This is a simplified recipe of what human babies need to thrive. Dickon explains how to care for seeds, telling his mother,

All a chap's got to do to make 'em thrive, mother, 'is to be friends with 'em for sure. They're just like th'creatures.' If they're thirsty give



'em drink and if they're hungry give 'em a bit o' food. They want to live same as we do. If they died I should feel as if I'd been a bad lad and somehow treated them heartless. (238)

The garden is personified as a living being by all characters who come to love it. A personification is a metaphor in which a thing or animal is given human characteristics. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which an inferred comparison is made between two unrelated things or nouns that are usually not brought together or in relationship with each other.

There are two elements of *The Secret Garden* that influence the play's style. The first of these is the realistic element, or the fact that the basic story behind the play could have happened in real life. The second is the element of fantasy. Even though all the places in the play are realistic, the ghostly powers of the Dreamers, the many references in the play to magic, and the power of the children's imaginations pull the realistic world into the realm of fantasy. There is nothing more powerful than the imagination of a child. The mansion and the garden maze is real, but the Dreamers have the supernatural power to haunt both places.

Dickon has the magic to call forth life from things that seem to be long dead. He also seems to be the one real character in the novel that understands and can consistently see and react to the actions of the Dreamers. It is the power of hope and the imagination of the children that bring the garden back to life and bring Colin and Uncle Archibald back to it.

*The Secret Garden's* structure follows the lives of its characters. The thoughts and back stories of the main characters are presented by the Dreamers in the form of visions or flashbacks. As the characters progress and grow, so does the theme and flow of the story. As each character grows that learn new information about them

from the Dreamers. Each of the main characters reaches a point in the story where they have to make a choice. Colin, after years of fear, finally chooses to leave his bed and return to his mother's garden. Here the others help him learn that there is more to life than death.

Mary is the character in the play with the biggest problems. Somewhat neglected by her family, when her parents die she is forced to leave all she has known. Her whole life has been nothing but disappointment, and because of this she has closed her heart, making it cold, small, and dark. She is the personification for the metaphor of the garden. She finds that all she needs is to learn to care for something. Once she realizes this, she can then choose to let others into her heart and to let them care for her.

*The Secret Garden* is a tale of redemption, rich with biblical symbolism and mythical associations. In Mr. Craven, his stern brother, and Mary's parents, readers have found evidence of a fallen adult world. Consequently, Mary and Colin are physically and spiritually malnourished, and, in the words of Burnett, down-right rude. Mr. Craven's redemption at the hands of Colin and his niece ensures the return of good rule to the ancient, gloomy house and of health to the children.

Dickon constantly surrounded by fox, lamb, and bird. His mother, Mrs. Sowerby, a plain-speaking Yorkshire woman, resembles the archetypal earth mother and embodies an ancient folk wisdom seen neither in Craven nor in Mary's deceased parents. Invoking traditional nature myths, Burnett aligns the spiritual growth of Mary and Colin with the seasons.

Mary arrives at Misselthwaite in winter. She is a stubborn and unhealthy child. She begins her gardening in the spring, and as crocuses and daffodils push up through the warming earth, her body begins to bloom and her manners to soften. Summer sees



the complete regeneration of both Mary and Colin, and by the time Craven returns to Misselthwaite in autumn, the children are harvesting the fruits of their labour – health and happiness.

According to Burnett's autobiography, her imagination was stimulated by stories of adventure and romance, such as ballads, biblical tales, and Roman histories. She was also influenced by the works of William Shakespeare, the Romantic poets, and novelists. Nature in Burnett's work like the English poet William Wordsworth, Burnett depicts nature as the great teacher of children, nurturing spiritual and emotional health. She described her own bliss in the gardens of her childhood and her feelings of entrapment in the crowded and lifeless environment of a large manufacturing city. In contrast, she recounts the flowering of her emotions and the liberation of her spirit in the wilderness of rural Tennessee.

If the house is a place of masculine rule, the garden is a place of maternal fertility and rebirth. The strong symbolic structures of *The Secret Garden* account for much of its emotional power as a narrative. The pattern of fall and redemption is associated with the biblical fall of human-kind. The locked garden is a version of the Garden of Eden, representing a lost paradise of love and idyllic happiness. In the tradition of medieval romance, the walled garden symbolized love, female sexuality, and fertility. *The Secret Garden* was initially a garden of love, and it symbolically remains a feminine place, the place of the maternal spirit, to which females bring males to find healing.

Finally, the overarching symbol of the book is *The Secret Garden*, a lost paradise of love and happiness – a version, perhaps, of the Garden of Eden. Throughout *The Secret Garden*, Burnett seamlessly intertwines the elements of her



craft, moving easily between the teasing narrative and dialogue that speaks to a child and the stands of dramatic development, complex characters, theme, and symbolism.

The next chapter summarises all the preceding chapters. It consists of general introduction of the tradition of children's literature, and about the novel *The Secret Garden*. It deals with the relationship between life and nature and also about the healing power of nature, and how Burnett had used the figurative language to employ it.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

The tradition of children's literature continues through diverse voices in every genre, from traditional folk and fairy tales, to historical fiction, realism, fantasy, picture books, and young adolescent fiction. The early twentieth century saw an expansion of the market for children's literature, with books published more cheaply than before and therefore more accessible to children of the lower or lower-middle classes. Women writers employ fantasy in their retelling of traditional fairy tales, folk tales, and myths. Realistic fiction, which presents opportunities for authors to grapple with social and moral issues, has been particularly fertile ground for female writers who wish to address issues of gender.

The historical context of *The Secret Garden*, set in the Edwardian Era, shows the importance of the British Colony of the time. "I didn't know about them in India" (118). Commonly highly regarded in this period, Burnett reinforces the importance of the British Empire. Mary Lennox had recently moved back from India after the death of her parents. India was a part of the British Empire and "was woven into the fabric of British life, and hence into the fabric of British children's fiction" (Kutzer 11). Like Mary Lennox had moved from India to England, the author had moved to America when she was just fourteen years old.

From another perspective the author pushes the reader to see India as a negative place for a child to grow up in. This can be seen with Mary's innocent tone of not knowing about flowers in India – something Burnett believes childhood should contain. The author's ideology as expressed in *The Secret Garden* shows a life close to her own experiences. "'When you see a bit of earth you want', with something like a smile, 'take it, child, and make it come alive'" (119).

Her childhood was a struggle from being a wealthy middle-class family, to a poorer family after the death of her father. Mr. Craven's ideology of bringing the earth back to life, closely links to author's ideology, alike to many of her stories which represented the theme of "rags to riches, and so did her real life" (Carpenter and Shirley 10). The slight pauses within the sentence reinforce the solidity of making something flourish again. Mary Lennox's personality echoes the author's desire to explore nature and earth.

The author's explicit concepts of childhood are represented through Mary Lennox as a whole. Mr. Craven reinforces how a childhood should be:

She must be less delicate before she begins lessons. Give her simple, healthy food. Let her run wild in the garden. Don't look after her too much. She needs liberty and fresh air and romping about. (119)

Burnett's effective use of word 'delicate' shows children of the time, especially Mary, are becoming sensitive to the environment. It is evident that she believes children should be enriched outdoors with simple, healthy food to allow them to enjoy the wonders of nature. Mr. Craven is to the point with short sharp sentences, allowing Mrs. Medlock to understand Mary should not need looking after every second of the day. Burnett believes that Mary should be 'free' with 'fresh air' and exploring. This is how she sees that a good childhood should be.

Implicit concepts of childhood are expressed through the portrayal of a disagreeable child and the nature a child needs to flourish in life. "She had felt her a tiresome charge and had indeed seen as little of her as she dared" (119). Mary Lennox is described as an "unattractive, unlikable and disagreeable" (Keyser 1) child hence Mrs. Medlock made no attempt to spend time with Mary if she did not have to.



Instead of presenting Mrs. Medlock as a compassionate woman who spent time with Mary to encourage her to flourish as a child, the author reinforces the fact that Mary does not belong to anyone. She can be seen as showing the representation of parents at the time; and that however 'unattractive' Mary may be, a parent should be able to nurture their child through childhood. This may also be the reason Burnett uses the metaphor of the garden as the parent Mary needed to encourage her growth and exploration through life.

Indeed, nature has a healing power for anyone's soul. And Burnett actually felt that power. After the death of her son Lionel, she was beset by depression and that persisted until she discovered a dead garden and planted it and brought it back to life. The same thing is applied in the novel *The Secret Garden*. As soon as Mary and Colin began to spend most of their time in the garden, their bad manners changed into good ones, and their souls began to heal, and so their ailment was gone. The theme of nature's power suggested an importance of being outdoor, the concept of getting out of the house and playing in the fresh air and being healthy runs throughout the novel.

*The Secret Garden* has charmed readers for over a hundred years with the story of three children who discover the magic, wonder, and healing power of the great outdoors. In *The Secret Garden*, the three children Mary, Colin, and Dickon, encounter the miracle of life in the growing plants and animals, which helps the children see that all life is a gift from God – a gift for which they need to be thankful. Like many other early twentieth century children's books, *The Secret Garden* reveals in the gentle beauty of nature emphasizing the wonder and awe that children feel as they discover the beauty of God's world for the first time. Throughout the novel, the children refer to their sense of wonder as 'The Magic'. For them, the beauty of thriving life is so powerful that 'magical' is the only way they can describe it.

Working in the garden gives the children appreciation for the gift of life. Seeing the miracle of life taking place in the springtime garden – roses and crocuses springing forth to life from seemingly dead plants – the children become aware of their selfishness and need for change. Before he met Mary, the only thing Colin could think about was death and dying.

Colin believes that his father hates him and wishes that he had never been born. This thought drives Colin to despair and hopelessness. As Mrs. Sowerby observes, there is nothing worse for a child than for him to think he is not wanted. Unwanted children, she says rarely flourish. Instead of embracing his suffering – his weakness, inability to walk, and possible crooked back – Colin just throws himself more and more into despair. His tantrums disrupt the whole house.

When Ben Weatherstaff, the estate gardener, accuses Colin of having crooked legs, Colin's pride and anger motivate him to use Dickon's help and stand. Dickon, the boy who has grown up on the moor, embodies the spirit of his interaction with the animals. Dickon's mild manner and charming Yorkshire humour tame all the creatures he comes in contact with, including Mary and the sulky Colin.

Before the garden, both Mary and Colin took life for granted. It is only when they see the garden coming to life and meet Dickon's misfit animals that they begin to understand that life is a valuable gift from their Creator. After his first experience with the plants and animals in the garden, Colin is no longer content to sit in his wheelchair waiting to die. The growth of the once-dead plants and flowers in the garden inspires him to have dreams and plans for the future, uninhabited by his disabilities. With therapy and practice, her absence by her death. At the end of the novel, Colin voices his newfound respect for life as a gift from God when he declares that he would like to live forever.



Through the magic of the garden, the children finally begin to see the value in their own lives and in the lives of the people around him. *The Secret Garden* reminds us that all children need love, protection, and exposure to the mysterious miracle of life to help them understand that every life is a gift from our Loving Creator.

The stylistic device of the metaphor of the garden is tremendously important within *The Secret Garden*.

A bit of earth, 'he said to himself, and Mary thought that somehow, she must have reminded him of something. When he stopped and spoke to her his dark eyes liked almost soft and kind. "You can have as much earth as you want," he said. "You remind me of someone else who loved the earth and things that grow. When you see a bit of earth you want," with something like a smile, "take it, child, and make it come alive. (118)

The garden metaphorically represents something so much more for both Mary and Mr. Craven. For Mary the garden is something that will nurture her mind and allow her to grow with the same ingredients as the garden needs. For Mr. Craven it is a connection to his late wife, a memory. The memory that grows throughout the story will be nurtured by Mary who brings the garden back to its former glory.

A link to the historical context is seen by the emerging psychological connection to one's conscious and unconscious mind, Mary has an environmental connection to the garden as she "takes the first steps towards proper girlhood and woman hood. She will trade her sickliness for health, her yellow skin for white and her Indian nature for an English one" (Price 4) as she develops alongside the garden.

*The Secret Garden* uses a third-person omniscient narrative voice throughout, although as a reader the opinions of Burnett are shown.



Mrs. Medlock looked pleased. She was relieved to hear that she need not 'look after' Mary too much. She had felt her a tiresome charge and had indeed seen as little of her as she dared. In addition to this she was fond of Martha's mother. "Thank you, sir," she said. "Susan Sowerby and me went to school together and she's as sensible and good-hearted a woman as you'd find in a day's walk. I never had any children myself and she's had twelve, and there never was healthier or better ones. Miss Mary can get no harm from them. I'd always take Susan Sowerby's advice about children myself. She's what you might call healthy-minded – if you understand me." (119)

Although the story is based around *The Secret Garden* and Mary's view of this, the narrator remains as third person and follows the rules of using 'she' as the narrator talks about Mrs. Medlock as another person not the person attempting to tell the story. The omniscient narrator shows they know 'everything' including Mrs. Medlock's feelings of 'relief.' Mr. Craven's dismissive tone is used to convey his mood and character. "“Anywhere, he answered. There! You must go now, I am tired”. He touched the bell to call Mrs. Medlock. 'Good-bye. I shall be away all summer'" (119).

Mr. Craven's character shows a lack of emotion towards Mary and is reinforced by his dismissive tone. Mary has just reminded him of his late wife's passion for the garden – although the reader has yet to find this information until later in the story. Mr. Craven's depressive state of mind is portrayed through his short sentences towards Mary and the use of punctuation such as an exclamation mark; showing he dislikes talking to Mary. Again, Burnett cleverly uses the theme illness. Mr. Craven is 'tired' or perhaps does not have anything more to say to Mary. The

Dismissive tone shows no remorse for the sharp language pointing out he 'shall be away all summer'. There is no sense of fatherhood towards Mary.

There is reoccurring theme of children being unhealthy and illness represented in Mary Lennox. The consistent notion of Christian Science is portrayed using the character Susan Sowerby's and the 'healthy mind'. Burnett uses every opportunity to remind the reader about being healthier and the Christian Science belief that no disease is corporeal, therefore 'no harm' can come from Mary spending time with them. Also shown is the necessity for her to have the human companionship, clearly previously lacking in Mary's life.

This scene moves the story forward as the reader is able to learn more about Mary's interest in the garden and now she has asked permission from Mr. Craven, she can achieve her goal of opening *The Secret Garden*. The reader also learns a great deal about the author's idea of a childhood, one where Mary should experience 'fresh air'. Also, the theme of Christian Science is first revealed through Susan Sowerby's ideology and healthy-mind.

The idea of magic is frequently mentioned in reference to the garden. Burnett's interest in Christian Science may have been in her mind as she described Colin's recovery. Christian scientists believe in God and the importance of the Bible. They also believe that sickness can be healed by prayer alone. Once Colin has begun his daily visits to the garden, he talks about the magic involved in his healing. The children use the word to refer to a mystical force and not to a magician's trick.

Colin says that he is going to conduct a scientific experiment in the garden. In this experiment, Colin is going to try to observe the garden's Magic in order to heal himself. The children, an elderly gardener who has discovered their presence, and the animals around Dickon form a circle to call on Magic. Afterwards, Colin finds that he



can walk around the garden, although he needs help at times and frequently needs to rest.

The 'mystic circle' is held every day in the garden, and every day Colin's health and strength improve. On one occasion the group sings a Christian hymn as they work in their circle. Burnett eventually says that Colin's recovery is due to his determination and to the fact that positive thoughts have great power. This relatively mundane explanation sounds a little strange after all of the references to Magic. Frances may have a greater belief in the power of thought.

The incident that causes Archibald Craven to interrupt his trip abroad and go home early could be described as mystical. It may well reflect of the Burnett's interest in spiritualism and theosophy. She explored both of these topics before she became a Christian Scientist.

Spiritualism is both religion and a philosophy. In either case, it involves a belief that the spirits can communicate with the living via people who act as mediums. Theosophy is a complex philosophy. The readers believe in a spiritual reality that can be contacted through meditation. This idea of living forever is brought up several times in the second half of the book as the magical atmosphere becomes more intense.

A noticeable aspect of *The Secret Garden* is that the distinction between different classes is always maintained, even as the plot progresses. Comments by some characters show that they feel that they are superior to people in the class below them even as they offer them some respect.

Despite the apparent friendship between Martha and Mary, Martha is still a servant who must wait on Mary and obey Colin. Colin maintains his imperious attitude towards servants. There is one touching incident near the end of the book



which indicates that Colin may be changing his attitude. He tells Susan Sowerby that he wishes that she was his mother.

*The Secret Garden* can be described as a good example on how the changing social circumstances as the beginning of the twentieth century came to be represented in literature. Books for children had a lesser didactic purpose, carrying fewer morals and religious messages. Stories became more complex and the adult writers tried to incorporate the children's perspective into their novels.

The pervasive mood of anti-Victorianism did also play a part in the more liberal outlook on childhood in general and on children's literature, although there is no single or simple explanation why so much independence was being granted at this time to fictional children. In addition to its links with anthropology and sociology, the change can be related to the greater independence being given to children by legislation.

In *The Secret Garden* Burnett incorporated all those ideas and devised a complex plot with themes of sickness, health, and – paralleled by the garden – regeneration, as the children grow out of repression of various kinds. What makes the story a wholesome book for children are its romantic anti-class attitudes, coming to display when Dickon joins Mary and Colin and somehow works as their master in gaining strength and health.

And last but not least, the various concepts of motherhood that are presented – the perfect mother, mother earth and the evil and unaffectionate mother – give an overall understanding of family concepts around the turn of the century. Furthermore, a series of melodramatic mysteries including the sealed garden, empty rooms, and noises in the night make *The Secret Garden* a mirror of Edwardian ideas and ideals about childhood.

*The Secret Garden* appeals to both young and old alike. It has wonderful elements of mystery, spirituality, charming characters and an authentic reading of childhood emotions and experiences. Common-sense, truth and kindness, compassion and a belief in the essential goodness of human beings lie at the heart of this unforgettable story. It is the best known of Frances Hodgson Burnett's works.

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**The Occult of True Black Womanhood: A Study of Alice Walker's *Meridian***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

**Thoothukudi**

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**NANCY REBECCA. S**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN16)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **The Occult of True Black Womanhood: A Study of Alice Walker's *Meridian*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

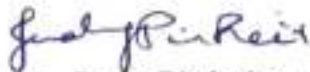
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## CERTIFICATE

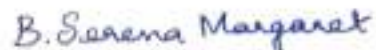
This is to certify that the project entitled **The Occult of True Black Womanhood: A Study of Alice Walker's *Meridian*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Nancy Rebecca. A during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project entitled **The Occult of True Black Womanhood: A Study of Alice Walker's *Meridian*** analyses in depth the journey of the protagonist who gradually awakens from her subordinate status as a black, female, daughter and mother to her own self and tries to become the maternal provider of the large black community. The protagonist celebrates her self-worth after being uprooted by the twofold jeopardy of racism and sexism.

The first chapter throws light on the short biography of Alice Walker discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in African American Literature.

The second chapter highlights on the horror of racism in the American soil and the plight of the African Americans who have been silenced, suppressed and denied freedom.

The third chapter captures Meridian's quest for wholeness from the phase of a victim to that of a fighter and a role model.

The fourth chapter traces how Alice Walker as a "womanist" is concerned with the liberation of all womankind by subverting the old literary myths which are for the heroes and creates new images of women through her protagonist.

The fifth chapter sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters. It shows Meridian as a new incarnation of a black mother with her black heroism.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Alice Walker, one of the major feminist black woman writers, appeared on the literary scene in the 1970s. She is the product of her age and socio-economical, historical and cultural back ground has caused her emergence and development as an artist of black literature. She began writing in the tradition of other women writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Maya Angelou, Toni Morison, and Gwendelyn Brooks. They draw an important tradition of African Americans have contributed much to the emergence of the black writers like Alice Walker to voice their predicament and plight through her literature. The milieu has made up for Alice Walker as an activist and a prolific writer. Her novels, short stories and autobiography evidently prove her concern and greatness beyond any doubt. The African American theorist and writer Bell Hooks has argued in an essay that Walker's Pulitzer Prize novel *The Color Purple* is a parody of the tradition of the 'slave narrative', stories written by male and female. Hooks argues that slave narratives connect the plight of the individual slave to that of other slaves as a plea and demand for political and social change.

Alice Walker has concerned herself with many themes, but the characters that present in her novels differ from those created by earlier black female novelists. Her characters are seen as harbingers of change and mouthpieces for the call for re-evaluation of certain societal norms at a time when not only the African American society but the entire American society was undergoing a paradigmatic upheaval. But for the black society to effect the needed transformation towards liberation and equality, it must first



look within itself, self-reflexively, and iron out the societal norms. Walker's novels reflect such transformational turning points because Walker has experienced the societal change and re-examination of gender and historical roles fostered by the black and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, engaged in the struggle for both their physical and psychological survival. The lives of these black women consist of struggle, a struggle to survive in the horror of racism and sexism. Walker's women are engaged in a struggle to control their lives, a struggle that may sometimes take radical swerves for the purpose of redefining the self and the role, no matter what the consequences might be.

African American Literature is a body of literature produced in the United states by writers of African descent. It begins with the works of the late 'eighteenth century writers when the slaves began to write their slave experiences and this was preeminently autobiographical spiritual narratives, inspired by their native African literary tradition and Christian teaching. It reached its earliest high point with the slave narratives of nineteenth century. Among the themes and issues in slavery and African American culture racism marginalization, oppression and social equality. As its roots were in African American writing has also tended to incorporate oral forms such as spirituals, sermons, or Gospel music, blues or rap. Though there have been attempts to assimilate African American Literature into the large realm of postcolonial Literature, it differs from most of the postcolonial literature in that it is written by members of an oppressed community who reside within a nation of vast wealth and economic power.

African American Literature begins with the creations of writers such as Philip

A new genre of African American Literature developed. It is defined as the slave narratives which are the recordings that are written by the fleeing slaves about their lives in the South after escaping enslavement. These narratives described the savageness of life under slavery as well as they derived sympathy for the slaves. The Slaves were recognized as individuals in these narratives. The genre of slave narratives gave the true picture of the life under slavery, the way to attain justice and to attain freedom. The works of authors like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs are the famous slave narratives. W.E.B Du Bois and Booker T. Washington are outstanding writers of the post slavery era. The novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), written by Harriet Beecher Stowe expressed the views of the abolitionist regarding slavery. To counter this type of attack on the Whites, the southern White writers created the 'Anti-Tom' novels, describing the true life under enslavement, as well as the more severe barbaric life suffered by free labours in the North. However, these writings faded away soon because of their brazen falsehood and unauthentic narratives.

The two slave narratives of great literary values are the autobiographies, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) by Frederick Douglass and *Incidents in the life of the slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs. Frederick Douglass (1818- 95 ) was a speaker for the abolition and of slavery an author of a heart breaking slave narrative. He eventually became the most well known African American of his time. One among the most influential lecturers and authors in African history. Some critics criticised the book and did not accept that a Black man could have written such a touching work, a similar situation like what Phillis Wheatley had encountered. Despite all this hurdles the book was an instantaneous bestseller. He later on improved



and expanded his autobiography, which was republished as *My Bondage and My Freedom* in 1855. He has also written numerous significant articles and essays.

In the post slavery era a number of African American authors wrote non-fiction about the condition of African Americans in the United States. Among them the most outstanding work among them is W.E.B. Du Bois (1868 – 1963) who published a highly influential collection of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*. These essays on race issues were authentic and striking and were probably taken from the personal experiences of Du Bois himself and his life as a marginalized Black man in rural Georgia. W.E.B. Du Bois stated that “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line” (10) . He was one of the establishers of the National Association of Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the year 1910. He also thought that African Americans should work united to encounter the problems of white prejudice and inequity for their common wellbeing. One more well-known author of this period is Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), who had different opinions from that of Du Bois regarding the problems of the African Americans. Washington was the establisher of a Black college called the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In contrast to Du Bois regarding the problems of the Afro Americans, Washington was the establisher of a Black College called the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In contrast to Du Bois who adapted a more hostile attitude towards ending racial friction in America, Washington believed that Blacks should first strengthen themselves and establish themselves equivalents to whites to put an end to racism.

The famous female writer of the Renaissance period is novelist Zora Neale Hurston, the author of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Hurston's writings



included short stories and fiction. Her writings were anonymous for decades because of the reason of her gender and of the irrelevant themes of her times. Moreover Walker established Hurston to be an inspirational model for her and all the other female African American writers.

Jean Toomer, Dorothy West, Frank Marshall Davis, Author Wallace Thurman and Countee Cullen are some of the other writers who became well known during the Renaissance period. Earlier books by the African Americans were primarily read only by the Black people. During the Harlem renaissance, the African Americans were primarily read by Black people only. During the renaissance, the African American literature, as well as Black fine arts and performance arts were well received and enjoyed by all the Americans irrespective of the colour differences and were accepted by them as a part of American culture resulted for the migration of the Blacks to the North produced a new sensation of independence in the Black community The refreshing Black urban culture of the Harlem Renaissance. This also endorsed the growing American Civil Rights Movement and the Black writer's works during 1940 to 1960.

The writers talked about segregation and racism in their writings when the Black activists simultaneously fought to end racism and create a new feeling of Black Nationalism. A large migration of African Americans began during World War I, reached its peak during World War II. During this Great Migration, Black people left the racism and lack of opportunities in the American South and settled in northern cities like Chicago, where they found work in factories and other sectors of the economy.

James Baldwin was one of the first writers to work against the issues of both

racial issues and sexual desires. In *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, he wrote confidential stories and essays while probing the feeling of being both a Black man and homosexual in unison. Baldwin's great friend was author Richard Wright, who was named as "the greatest Black writer in the world" by Baldwin. Wright is renowned for his novel *Native Son*, written in 1940. Baldwin was very much amazed by this fiction that he wrote his succeeding collection of essays in the name of *Notes of a Native son*.

The next great author of this period is Ralph Ellison who is the creator of the *Invisible Man* (1952). It won the National Book Award in 1953 and secured him a position in the African American literary forum. The second novel, *Juneteenth* was compiled together in 1999, after his death, from the approximate two thousand pages which he had written over forty years. This period also experienced the ascent of female Black poets, the most marked being Gwendolyn Brooks, who became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1949 for her book of poetry, *Annie Allen*. The other female poets who became eminent during this time are Nikki Giovanni and Sonia Sanchez. The contemporary writers are playwrights like Lorraine Hansberry, who is famous for the play, *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Some female writers whose themes focus on feminism and racism are Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange and Toni Cade Bambara. Maya Angelou is an American author, poet and civil right activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays and several books on poetry and was credited with a list of plays, movies and television shows spanning over 50 years. She is best known for her books, including her series of seven autobiographies, starting with the critically



acclaimed *I Know Why the caged Bird Sings* (1969). Her collections of essays are *Wouldn't Take Nothing or My Journey Now* (1993) and *Even the stars Look Lonesome* (1997) was nominated for Pulitzer prize. She was chosen by President Bill Clinton to recite her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" during his presidential inauguration in 1993. She was also a prolific writer of poetry: her volumes *Just Give Me Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Die* (1997) was nominated for Pulitzer prize.

Toni Morrison is celebrated as the most contemporary African American woman novelist. She powerfully evokes in her fiction the legacies of displacement and slavery that have been bequeathed to the African American community. Her eight major novels which include *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), and *Love* (2003) have received extensive critical acclaim. She worked as an editor for Random House during the years 1960 to 1970. During that tenure she popularized Black Literature and the Black authors and edited books of writers like Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones. Today Toni Morrison evolved as one of the most important African – American writers of the twentieth century.

Ntozake Shange is an American playwright and poet. As a self proclaimed black feminist, she addresses issues relating to race and feminism in much of her works. She is best known for her work for *Colored Girls Who have considered Suicide, When The Rainbow is Enuf*. She has also written several novels including *Sassafrass*, *Cypress & Indigo*, *Liliane and Bestey Brown*. Her Works on poetry includes *Melissa & Smith* (1976), *Natural Diasters and other Festive Occasions* (1997), *Some Men* (1981), *I live in Music* (1994).



Toni Cade Bambara is an African American author, documentary film maker, social activist and college professor. She was active in 1960s Black Art movement and the emergence of Black Feminism. Her anthology *The Black Woman* (1970) with poetry and essays by Nikki Giovanni, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Paule Maeshall and few of Bambaras students from the SEEK program was the first feminist collection to focus on African American women. She is well known for her short story *Blues Ain't No Mocking Bird* (1971). Some of her novels are *The Salt Eaters* (1980), *Those Bones Are Not My Child* (1999).

African American women novelists offer a glimpse into the interpretation of African American experience and the exposition of that reality. Both authors use their native language and their literary convention to give different perceptions of the African experience. These women novelists explore the issues of freedom and equality which were denied to Blacks in the United States for a long time. Their text consists of the native accent present in the Black speech. This takes the reader accurately into experiences of the Blacks. Most of the themes in their novels include the examination of the subjects related to African American culture , racism , religion, feminism , poverty , and slavery. They expressed the feeble voices of the Black women in particular , in their novels. The authors of interest had undergone sufferings, marginalization of being a Black and a woman in a racially discriminated society. Hence their writings were authentic in delineating the lives of the African American people especially that of women.

During the 1970s, African American women writings came to be accepted by the

mainstream readers. The books written by many Black writers regularly topped the sales and won many awards. For example, the books like *The Colour Purple* by Alice Walker and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison have topped the sales and won many awards at the same time. The work of African American writers began to be accepted by the academic world as a genre of American Literature. A number of scholars and writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and poet James Emanuel are importantly recognized in their efforts to classify African American Literature into a separate genre during this time period.

Alice Walker is an American novelist, short story writer, poet, and activist. Alice Walker wrote the novel *The Colour Purple* (1982), for which she won the National Book Award for hardcover fiction, and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. She also wrote the novels *Meridian* (1976) and *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), among other works. An avowed feminist, Walker coined the term "womanist" to mean "A black feminist or feminist of color" in 1983.

Alice Walker wrote a famous essay that brought Zora Neale Hurston and her characteristic novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, back into the lime light of the literary sphere and the common readers. Walker won both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for her novel *The Colour Purple* in the year 1982. The novel was also later adopted into a film by Steven Spielberg. One among the first books of the African American authors to achieve top-selling status was *Roots: The saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley. It won the Pulitzer Prize and became a well-liked small screen mini serial. Then Haley wrote *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in the year 1965. Other significant writers in the recent years include fiction writers like Gayl Jones,



Rasheed Clark, Ismael Reed, Jamaica Kincaid, Randall Kenan and John Edgar Wideman. African American Poets like Rita Dove won a Pulitzer Prize and served the prestigious post of the Poet Laureate of the United States of America during 1993- 1995. Natasha Trethewey was the recipient of Pulitzer Prize for her poetry book, *Native Guard* in 2007. Edward P Jones also won Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, for his novel called *The known World* in the 2004.

As Claudia Tate says "Amid the harsh repression of slavery in the early days and the marginalization and veiled oppression today, Americans of Africa descent, and particularly black women, managed sometimes at their own peril to preserve the culture of their ancestry and articulate both their struggles and hopes in their own words and images"(45). Black Women Literature is significant in its own way as it marks the place where race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect. It is unique because it does not necessarily suggest value system other than the honoring of Black women's strength and experiences. It is valid because it recognizes that women are survivors in a world that is oppressive on multiple platforms and it seeks to celebrate the ways in which women negotiate these oppressions in their individual lives. Amongst these Black American women writers Alice Walker occupies a unique place by her creativity and range and depth of characterization and analysis.

Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) concerns with women, specifically for its commentary on African motherhood, which reflects Walker's own conflicts during her first pregnancy and abortion. *Meridian* is set in the American south during 1960's and early 1970's. The heroine Meridian is a black woman from a southern town. She marries



and has a child, later gets divorce sends her child away and ends up working in a voters registration, campaign, encouraging African Americans to register.

Meridian is different from her co-workers in that she interacts with people as individuals rather than by stereotyping them. For example, while others lecture black families about the importance of voting. Meridian sits and talks with them trying to address their basic needs of food, heat and affection. The novel takes a complicated look at black- white and black- black relations. A large section of the novel deals with a marriage between a white woman and black man. Walker seems to support an ethics based on personal interaction more than on universal rules.

Today Walker continues to express creatively her wish for wholeness for those who have erased from history, torn from their racial heritage, silenced, mutilated and denied freedom. With incomparable vision and insight, she captures the folklore, language, pain, spirit and memories of African Americans only to weave them in to a quilt of compassion that she spreads before the world full rich and flowing.

Alice Walker's second novel is a heartfelt and moving story about one woman's personal revolution as she joins the Civil Rights Movement. Set in the American south in the 1960s. Meridian, a courageous young activist who dedicates herself heart and soul to her civil rights work, touching the lives of those around her even as her own health begins to deteriorate. It is a lonely battle but it is one Meridian will not abandon, whatever the costs.

In *Meridian*, Alice Walker presents the heroine who decides to abandon the

traditional role of mother, and is able to serve as a mother figure on a different level. According to Walker, the African Mother is a spiritual anchor. Meridian is concerned with the complexity of the ideologies of motherhood. The novel has as a dominant theme an appraisal of the ideology of motherhood within the context of changing forces in the southern U.S. of the 1950s and the 1960s, times when this society was forging strong movements of liberation.

## Chapter Two

### Aphonic Black Heritage

African men and women were deprived of their basic human rights when they were brought to the shores of America as slaves in the seventeenth century in order to serve the plantation economy of the American south. They were all treated as beasts of burden, but black women were further exploited sexually by their white masters to ensure an unfailing supply of labour force for an expanding capitalist society. Slavery as such has ended, but not the systematic exploitation of these people on racial and sexual levels. Even after all movements and protests through the ages black women continue to occupy a marginal place in the American society. In recent years, however, there has been a remarkable change in their psychological environment: they are now proud of their black heritage and aware of their true sex role in white, male-dominated America. Such a stance has, of course, started to influence the majority opinion about these minority women.

The basic myth of racism, in other words, is that white skin brings with it cultural superiority that the white is more intelligent and more virtuous than the black by the mere fact of being white. On the psychological level, thus, whiteness is automatically equated with beauty and culture, and blackness with ugliness and savagery. Racism started in America when white masters of the land brought the first Africans in chains and used their labour to enrich their coffers. As a result, black people soon ceased to exist as human beings in the white world.

A full understanding of a society's current condition occurs if a thorough comprehension of the society's past is recognized. Alice Walker, in her novel, specifically utilizes references to Native American history to help depict African



American life in the south during the Civil Rights Movement. The text makes reference to the Native American past to effectively present its relationship to the position of African Americans during this period and to better understand that position. The novel accomplishes this by comparing Native and African American sentiments of nature, relating the prevalent racism directed toward both groups, and by raising questions about who is guilty of oppression.

The effects of racism and the various ways that characters respond to it are explored throughout the novel, as Meridian, Truman, and others attempt to make sense of a world in which brutal racism is the norm. The civil rights movement provides the backdrop for the book: most of the plot takes place in a national moment when people throughout the country were joining in activism and faced hateful retaliation. Throughout the book, character's feel a sense of grief for the way that the system works against them: they try to determine how to forge a life in a world that is, in many ways, not built for their freedom.

Racism figures as a dominant theme in the works of black authors, irrespective of sex. But the double-edged persecution of the African American woman finds full expression only in black feminist writings. They depict her pain of being black and female and, at the same time, present her desperate search for the genuine self. The analysis of the allied themes of racism and sexism in African American fiction by women against the background of a brief historical and sociological study of these two age old phenomena of American is regarding life. The purpose of such an extensive survey is to bring out the changing image of black womanhood as reflected in the novels of African American women of different generations.

For Native Americans, land was the physical embodiment of their freedom. As Europeans conquered increasingly, the independence of Native Americans was proportionally being reduced. The native peoples of America had no concept of owning, selling or buying land, let alone money itself. Gradually the Native Americans were being killed while the survivors were left with less and less land. Because Native American culture was tied strongly to the land and had no way of adapting to this forced foreign way of life, it has been almost wiped off from America. It is then appropriate to use an oppressed people tied to the land and nature of America to help describe African Americans and their history of being tied to the land. African Americans have been tied to the land for starkly different reasons than Native Americans. For African Americans being tied to the land has meant, in the past, being physically enslaved to toil the land against their will. But the book *Meridian* shows that this bond between African Americans and 'the land' is still strong in some instances, despite being spawned by the ignoble institution of slavery.

In history during slavery, the black people were never treated as human beings. Therefore, even though they have now gained some rights as the legitimate citizens of this country and the recognition of blackness begins to spread all over the society, they are still 'grazed at' by the white people as a kind of object, except that they are now in some sense beautiful and artistic. Lynne belongs to this group of people. She helps black people because she gets sick of the tedious Northern life, and wishes to be closer to look at the beauty and to satisfy her lust for possessing it. That's why Lynne cannot help herself even when she well knows it will be "probably a sin to think of people as Art" (130) and repeatedly warns herself that she will pay for this. And this also explains why Lynne insists on staying in Mississippi while Truman very much wants to leave. "For two years she thought of nothing else: If Mississippi is the



worst place in America for black people, it stood no reason, she thought, that the Art that was their lives would flourish best there" (130). So it is such an ideal yet selfish intention of Lynne that fore ordains her later tragedy.

The theme is conveyed in the story of a child of thirteen who bears a baby and kills it after she has bitten its cheek like an apple and is put in prison. Lynne, who is raped and whose daughter Camara is murdered, loses her child and almost her reason. Meridian acts on behalf of the black community in a small town in Alabama are to force the end of the flooding that menaces the children. The city has closed the swimming pools sooner than integrate them. In the hot weather, black children wade in the ditches behind their houses, where the city without warning flushes the reservoir of excess water.

In *Meridian*, there is a story about the Musical Tree. The tree is located on the campus of Saxon College, and has been cherished by the students there. It is said to be related to a legendary figure named Louvinie in African American folklore. Louvinie is an African woman who has been sold to America and is enslaved on the Saxon plantation. Being too unpleasant to look at, she is thought to be unfit to attend children and is thus placed to do work in a kitchen. However, she is so good at telling tales that the white children adore her very much: "They followed her wherever she went and begged her to tell them all the scary, horrible stories that she knew" (43).

To satisfy children's curiosity, Louvinie tells those tales one after the other and will weave new ones after old ones. One day she creates the most terrifying story that causes the only son of the Saxon family who suffers from a flimsy heart to die on the spot. She might have continued telling stories had there not occurred a tragedy in the Saxon household that came about through no real fault of her own. It had never



been explained to her that the youngest of the Saxon children suffered from an abnormally flimsy heart. Encouraged by the children to become more and more extravagant in her description, more pitiless in her plot, Louvinie created a masterpiece of fright, and bursting with the delight she always felt when creating, she sat under a tree at the back of the garden just as the sun was sinking slowly through a black cloud in the west and told the children the intricate, chilling story of the old man whose hobby was catching and burning children up to their necks and then draping their heads- which stuck up in rows, like cabbages- with wriggly eels dipped in honey. Long before the culprit received his punishment, young Saxon had slumped, dead of a heart attack. For this incident, Louvinie receives the severest punishment:

Louvinie's tongue was clipped out at the root. Choking on blood, she saw her tongue ground under the heel of Master Saxon. Mutely, she pleaded for it, because she knew the curse of her native land: without one's tongue in one's mouth or in a special spot of one's own choosing, the singer in one's soul was lost forever to grunt and snort through eternity like a pig. (34)

Without the tongue, Louvinie can no longer speak, let alone tell a story. She signifies the aphonic of all the African American women. Facing the danger of losing her soul, Louvinie buries her clipped tongue under a tree which is then the Music Tree. Filled with Louvinie's misery as well as hope, the tree yields a strong life force and grows up into the biggest one in the country. It continues not only Louvinie's life but also her vital voice. Even before her death forty years later the tree had outgrown all the others around it. Other slaves believed it possessed magic. They claimed the tree could talk, make music, scare birds and possessed the power to obscure vision. And a hundred years later, the tree goes on protecting students from the school

authority's surveillance and furthermore, gathers students to play music and celebrate the Sojourner ceremony It "united all the students at Saxon, the rich and the poor, the very black- skinned and the very fair, the stupid and the bright" (45). The Musical Tree is the reincarnation of Louvinie who can also be seen as a true musician, protesting against slavery and looking for her own expression all the time. By way of music, Louvinie's story and her spirits are both retained and perpetuated:

The living tree is evidence that no power can silence a human voice. Even when the tongue is destroyed, the voice, like the singing head of Orpheus, indestructible, assumes an even more powerful medium of expression, that is, music. More significantly, the myth of the Music Tree seems to suggest that one can destroy language but not music: the singer, not the soul. (38)

The tongueless Louvinie is a symbolic reminder to the blacks who were deprived of their language when they were brought to American plantation. Through the stories of the Musical Tree, Louvinie, Miss Winter and Meridian, the author seems to be implying that if there does exist a language that belongs to and can best work for African Americans, it is music. The sexism and racism that exist in the west may resemble systems of domination globally, but they are forms of oppression that have been primarily informed by Western philosophy. Within our society, all forms of oppression are supported by traditional Western thinking. The primary contradiction in Western cultural thought is the belief that the superior should control the inferior.

The Sojourner Tree at Saxon College commemorates Sojourner Truth, the nineteenth century black feminist activist who gave the famous speech "and ain't a woman?" (42) at Akron, Ohio. She says, "White women need to be helped into



carriages and lifted over ditches and to have the best place everywhere" (46). The black women on the contrary have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns. Like Louvinine, the mystical voice exemplifies the struggle for wholeness and equality (115). According to Kashinadh Ranveer, the Sojourner Tree represents the black oral and musical tradition. It also commemorates the atrocities inflicted on black people during slavery. Out of it Walker brings out: "The power of the tradition of storytelling in African American culture, a tradition of eloquence and dissent that Hurston employs as a narrative for her novel" (31).

As a result, black feminists advocate a removal of the problematic western ideology from black people's minds, which has been deeply planted since Africans were first sold to America and has been helping continue the oppressions.

In *Meridian*, Walker has also put forward her idea and postulation for a united and better society, which could be referred to as the ancient African thought. Race is often used to exemplify the real existent relationships in one racial group and the complex relationship among different racial groups, while racism is often employed to denote the confrontations and conflicts among diverged racial groups, especially the majority and minority groups, which have more historical and cultural background. The racial segregation and white domination become naturalized as inevitable and unalterable 'instinctive' relations imposed by whites and acceded to, however reluctantly, by blacks. "On one side of them along the line of bright stores, stood a growing crowd of white people along the shabby stores where Truman and the sweeper stood was a still as death crowd of blacks" (7).

Participation in the Civil Rights Movement is one way in which the blacks fought against racism. The Civil Rights Movement had very different meanings for



blacks and for whites. For black people it meant the possibility of freedom. The Civil Rights Movement was a black movement, conceived and led by blacks to empower blacks. The Movement enabled black people to turn their personal pain as victims of racism and their individual struggle with racism into a strong, collective political struggle to end racism. Participation in the Civil Rights Movement made blacks feel strong and proud of being black, and it reaffirmed their historical sense of connection and commitment to each other as a people. The Civil Rights Movement freed black people from the psychological effects of racism as they struggled politically to end racism.

The characteristic scene featuring Meridian, 'the quiet revolutionary' shows her leading a group of children. The right she fights for this time, on the children's behalf, is the simple right to see a freak show on a day other than that designated for blacks. She stares down the town's gaudy white tank, "bought during the sixties when the townspeople who were white felt under attack from outside agitators - those members of the black community who thought equal rights for all should extend to blacks" (18).

Meridian's act on behalf of the black community in a small town in Alabama is to force the end of the flooding that menaces the children.

The public white swimming pool, having been ordered, by the federal government, opened to blacks, was closed by city officials who were all rich and white and who had, moreover, their own private swimming pools in their own black yards. There had never been a public swimming pool for blacks, few of whom, consequently, knew how to swim" (190).

In the hot weather, black children wade in the ditches behind their houses, where the city without warning flushes the reservoir of excess water.

It was Meridian who led them to the mayor's office, bearing in her arms the bloated figure of a five-year-old boy who had been stuck in the sewer for two days before he was raked out with a grappling hook. To the people who followed Meridian, it was as if she carried a large bouquet of long-stemmed roses. The body might have smelled just that sweet, from the serene, set expression on her face. They had followed her into the town meeting over which the white-haired, bespectacled mayor presided, and she had placed the child, whose body was beginning to decompose, beside his gavel. Meridian raises her voice against segregation. Deborah Mc Dowell says, "Meridian challenges her as a mother is unquestioning acceptance of her secondary citizenship" (267). Mrs. Hill speaks of the courage of the black women such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth who bravely risked their lives. After the American civil war in the south, Black Women did not want to work in the cotton fields. The cotton owners tried to starve them back to work. Mrs. Hill in *Meridian* says, "They were always imitating Harriet Tubman escaping to become something unheard of" (110). Harriet Tubman, herself an escaped slave, helped many others to escape slavery. Mrs. Hill admires the courage of Harriet Tubman, risking her own life while freeing the other blacks.

When Lynne, a white woman, has a quarrel with Truman and uses the word 'nigger' to refer to him and the black people, Truman and Meridian are both hurt. Though they know the use of the word among their people is not considered offensive but rather a matter of style, it contains the meaning of racism toward blacks. Walker gives a definition to the word: "a nigger is a black person who believes he or she is incapable of being responsible for his or her actions, who claim that the white folks



are to blame for everything, including his or her behaviour" (84). What's more; black people are never shown in the news unless of course "they had shot their mothers or raped their bosses" grandparents, and a black person or persons, giving news conference was unheard of" (67).

Meridian experiences a strong sense of identity of being a person in her own right. She finds fulfilment in her new involvement as a Civil Rights activist and in her own sense of self-worth. Unlike the traditional Black women, Meridian has broken the societal shackles, fought black parental pressures and pursued her with single minded devotion to become the envy and admiration of her male friend, Truman. In contrast with the traditional belief, she does not dream of a home, a husband and children. When Truman watched Meridian defying the tradition and leading the black children to the circus wagon, he said, "God! How can you not love somebody like that" (8).

Ten years after the Civil Rights Movement, the town of Chicokema in Georgia is still segregated. Meridians' confrontation with a tank, which is brought by whites in the town during the sixties to protect them from 'outside agitators', symbolizes her rebellion against the authority and power which categorically denies black people equal access to social facilities and events. As the result of racial segregation, interracial marriage and sex are crimes both to whites and blacks. The tragic mulatto suffers from the crimes. Mr. Dexter's example demonstrates how this interracial intercourse meets its tragic end. Dexter is the son of George Dexter, an obese half-white man in his fifties. His mother is white. When she is pregnant by the black man who works for them, her parents shut her up in the cellar and thrown away the key. They feed her "pig brain and a little watery milk". When Dexter was born, he is "thrown out into the street with the rest of the trash" (65).



Mrs. Hill even complains to Meridian, "It somebody thinks he'll have to pee when he gets to town, let him use his own toilet before he leaves home. That's what we did when I was coming up!" (85). As discussed earlier, racism as an *ideology* refers to the linking of the unchangeable physical characteristics of a group in a direct, casual way to their psychological and intellectual functioning and on such basis, distinguishing between superior and inferior races, so the behaviours of racism should be understood from the angle of both blacks and whites. The novel is written more from the angle of an overt confrontation between black and white than from the angle of the tentative survivor of a black family. The struggle of the major character's wage against racism is located in, sometimes veiled but, a network of family and community. The impact of racism is felt primarily through the character's mistaken definitions of themselves as men and women, black and white.

The coalition established between Truman and Meridian as suggested in the novel is thus under the precondition that Truman is feed from such a psychological burden. The novel is set in an age when black men still cannot escape from the natural desire for the white women, yet need to hide their true feelings to prove their love for their own people. They will not marry their white women even though they have been living together as couples, just to prove their loyalty to black people. Because of this, it is common to see in society people like Tom Johnson who have lived with a white woman for years, only most people do not know about it. He shuttles her back and forth from his house to a friend's house. Whenever he had important guests, Margaret was nowhere to be found. She was waiting at their friend's house (136). In this age, although blackness is called upon and has gained overwhelming support among black men, black feminists notice that the affection for whiteness has never been completely

uprooted. Alice Walker shows this from Truman Held's perspective, who deserts Meridian and marries the white exchange student Lynne Rabinowitz.

As Alice Walker's protagonist in *Meridian* is in one of the southern states where the repeal of segregation has not penetrated into the hearts of the people, she conveys to the people the urgency of dismantling the assumptions of the dominant culture. She boldly leads a group of black children to see a Wagon show in one small town in Mississippi. Meridian defies the rule of the local authority that allows the black to go to the circus wagon only on Thursdays. "The people who don't have to work in that plant claim that black people who work there smell so bad that they can't stand to be in the same place with them" (5). With the Emersonian garb of "civil disobedience" she challenges the "southern town's separate but equal rights tradition" (Gates 169). Against the race codes of the south, Meridian bravely marches "through the ranks of arrayed riflemen" facing the tanks aimed at her. The black children, some adults, and even some poor whites went in to see the wagon show. Then a symbolic inversion of roles occurs in this scene and Meridian can be said to triumph over tradition and authority. Meridian emerges as a frontier woman and in herself assertion in "destroying illusion, smashing myths being responsible to some truth, to the struggle. That entails . . . cracking through the veneer of this society's definition of "masculine and feminine" (Deborah 266). Meridian, in her daring journey of empowering people, ventures beyond the 'Lakshmanrekha' which is beyond the sphere of social sanction.



## Chapter Three

### Feminine Wholeness

The novels of Alice Walker attempt to deliver into the issues of sexism, racism and classism. Her novels explore the Black people who fight against the slavery and injustice. Alice Walker presents African American culture, history and the lives of the Black people in her fiction. Walker's novels are studied and critically examined from the social and the historical points of view as they lead to social constructions. Her novels attempt to focus on the contemporary racial issues of the African Americans and the possibility to change the situation for their bright future.

In the novel *Meridian* (1976), Walker writes about the Civil Right Movement of the 1960s from the perspective of a young black woman. African American motherhood is redefined in the novel providing a new view, to look at the life. Alice Walker has written a fine novel with the events strung over 25 years, although most of the events occur between the height of the civil rights movement, (a social movement opposed to violence, the destruction of life) and the present. Walker writes with a sharp critical sense with the tactics involved during the civil rights movement the nature of commitment, interracial love, and communication, the vital and lethal strands in American and black experience, violence and nonviolence. The novel is crucial to an understanding of the evolution of Walker's female characters. One of the major themes of the novel is motherhood in America and the celebration of the true meanings of motherhood. By tracing the history of black people in terms of the lives of mothers. Walker illustrates how motherhood is an angel of seeing life, of valuing all life, of resisting all that might destroy it. It reiterates that motherhood is not merely a biological state but an attitude towards life. Walker focuses on the broad racial



experiences of the African Americans and as a champion of the Womanist world, she is concerned of black women who were deeply alienated by the dominant white culture.

The protagonist of the novel is Meridian whose existence presents a problem that will be solved only by her death. Her dreams were about the releasing of her mother, by dying, from the burden that motherhood has been. The book chronicles a series of initiatory experiences which Meridian undergoes in an effort to find her identity and her own moral centre where she tries to develop a completeness of being. The motif of death and rebirth runs throughout the novel which it recalls in nature to transform the decay into growth, loss into gain.

*Meridian* is a blend of various aesthetic and social concerns that are harmoniously combined. It is an exploration of a young Woman's coming of age and her journey from loneliness, guilt and self-doubt, to self-acceptance, empowerment and love. Meridian is set on a path to greater self-realization and endures the hardships firmly and irrevocably establishing her identity amid the chaos of social upheaval, sexual alienation and people who are not always approving or supportive of either the woman or the cause. *Meridian* is organized into three major parts: the first part focuses on Meridian's initiation into adulthood and her preparation for a journey, the second part describes Meridian's active participation in the civil Rights Movement after her renunciation of her child, and the third part 'Ending' concentrates on atonement and release. Meridian Hill, the protagonist is the former lover of Truman Held who arrives in Chicokema, Georgia, to meet her. Truman does not understand the mysterious illness that grips her, causing her to experience fainting spells and paralysis. He first sees her starting down a manned tank as she escorts local

schoolchildren to a side show attraction displaying a mummified woman, on a day the children, mostly poor and black, are forbidden to attend. After collapsing and being brought home unconscious, she and Truman catch up. Ten years ago in New York City, Meridian was unwilling to assert that she will kill on behalf of a black revolutionary organization, to the dismay of the others assembled. Then, even further back in time, Meridian, at the age of thirteen, was unwilling to accept Jesus into her life, a decision that prompted her mother to withdraw her love. Meridian, back in the present, has decided to return to her roots as a former civil rights worker, and vows to live and work amongst the people.

Meridian first met Anne-Marion while canvassing a local neighbourhood for voters. Meridian meets the Wild Child, a pregnant, homeless teenager. Meridian captures her, then bathes and feeds her. When Meridian makes phone calls to find additional assistance for her, the Wild Child escapes, runs out into the street, is struck by a car, and dies. Meridian, Anne Marion, and other students and neighbourhood residents carry the Wild child's casket, leading the funeral cortege onto the campus grounds. But the president of the college denied them access to the chapel for the services. That night the students riot and chop down the sojourner, the schools iconic magnolia tree. Similarly, Meridians father deeds sixty acres of his farmland back to the Cherokee who once owned it, specifically to Walter Longknife. He camps on the parcel for a brief period in the summer then cedes ownership back to Meridians father. The area, with its serpent shaped mound, is then made into a historical site that bars blacks. Meridian and her father are no longer allowed access to the pit in the serpents tail where they experienced the swooning, paralysis, and strange manifestations that are part of their unique family condition.



Meridian becomes pregnant as a teenager, marries, and drops out of school to have the baby boy, who makes her feel indifferent at best. Around the time her marriage to Eddie is dissolving, Meridian notices the presence of white civil rights workers in a black neighbourhood. Later, the house in which they are staying is bombed. The incident sours Meridian to volunteer for the cause. At the headquarters, she meets Truman. Soon they get beaten, arrested and jailed for indulging in political demonstrations. Meridian's mother disapproves of Meridian's radical political activities. Unexpectedly, Meridian is offered a scholarship to Saxon College. Her friends attempt to convince her mother that it is a great opportunity for Meridian. Giving up Eddie Jr., Meridian starts school but is plagued with the guilt that always dogs her. Meridian tries her best to battle loneliness and adjust to college life. After the Wild Child incident, she move off campus, actively continuing her civil rights protests and demonstrations. She also falls in love with Truman. The two begin dating, but their newfound bliss as a couple is compromised by the arrival of college students-white women-from the North who volunteer to assist the movement. Truman is taken by one of the new arrivals, Lynne, and the two begins dating. Although Truman and Meridian briefly resume sexual relations, Truman continues to pursue his budding relationship with Lynne. Pregnant, Meridian has an abortion and gets her tubes tied. After Lynne leaves, Truman attempts to rekindle his former love for Meridian, asking her to have his children. Meridian, in response, strikes him with her book bag, cutting his cheek.

With graduation approaching, Meridian again falls ill, losing her sight and lapsing into unconsciousness. she stays in bed for a month. Miss Winters, one of Saxons few black instructors, nurses her back to health. Anne-Marion, who has also



been at Meridian's side, eventually concludes that she is incapable of loving Meridian and turns her back on her friend. Truman and Lynne, now married, are living in Mississippi, where her whiteness begins to endanger them and their rights, movement when a fellow rights worker, Tommy Odds, has the lower half of one of his arms shot off. Increasingly, Lynne is excluded from the marches and meetings. Despite having a daughter, Camara, Truman grows more and more distant from his wife. He drives to Alabama to visit Meridian. Newly obsessed with his former lover, he tries to win her back, but Meridian spurns his advances. After the death of Camara, Lynne visits Meridian, whose illness has advanced and claimed most of her hair. Lynne is bitter over the slow dissolve of her marriage and the way her once-idealistic life has turned out. She has come in search of Truman, whose visits to Meridian have become more frequent.

Lynne had left her family for her new life with Truman and the movement. After the shooting, Tommy Odds rapes her. He returns with three friends and encourages them to do the same, but they refuse. Lynne, hysterical, entertains thoughts of leaving and tells Truman what happened, but he doesn't believe her. Tommy tells Truman that Lynne is with him solely to atone for her sins, out of guilt for the racism blacks had suffered for centuries. Lynne and Truman grow increasingly distant, as Lynne eventually succumbs to the sexual advances of his friends and other men in the community. Eventually, the men tire of her and, pregnant, she moves to New York and lives on welfare. Truman also moves to New York, where he becomes an artist. When Lynne comes to his apartment uptown to tell him that Camara has been attacked by a man and hospitalized, she discovers that he is living with a young blonde woman. After Camara dies, Truman sends for Meridian, who arrives to

comfort him and Lynne. Lynne recalls her impressions of southern Jews and the way they treated her. She eventually resolves that she has no regrets for leaving her past, and its association with white oppressors, behind.

The novel's final section opens with the Atlanta funeral cortege of Martin Luther King, Jr. Eight years later, Meridian struggles with questions of radicalism and how the movement ultimately turned out. Truman finds it easier to leave such issues alone. Meridian remains in her small town, advocating for the black residents to vote and try to change their lot. She recalls the time she took to regularly attend church services. Once, an old man, whose radical son had been killed while working for the movement, addressed the congregation. Meridian regained her wavering desire to kill on behalf of the rights of blacks. Meridian and Truman continue their voter-registration drives in earnest. Truman asks Meridian to love him as she once did. Meridian readily asserts that she does love him but that her feelings have changed. Cured of her illness, Meridian prepares to move on, leaving Truman behind to continue the work that she started in Chicokema. Reading the poems she has posted on the wall, Truman falls to the floor in a swoon. Upon awakening, he concludes that he must take up the internal struggle of which Meridian has finally freed herself.

The fraught relationship that Meridian has with her mother casts a shadow over much of her life, and she struggles to overcome this and other obstacles as she searches for self-awareness and self-acceptance. Her mother's emotional distance, disapproving nature, and moral superiority fill Meridian with guilt and sadness, which persist well into adulthood. Meridian longs for guidance and a sense of belonging. Unsure of the existence of god and her own relationship to the spiritual world, Meridian finds that traditional paths and explanations do not comfort her. Instead, she



turns to the civil rights movement, which gains force and momentum during her young adult years. Ultimately, she struggles with her own sense of sacrifice and dedication to the cause. She questions her own revolutionary impulses after admitting her inability to kill on behalf of the movement. Feeling a gulf in her life between the ideals of the other civil rights activists and the ways by which they actually go about implementing change, Meridian returns to her roots, working and living in often impoverished and rural communities.

Meridian selflessly helps others in order to compensate for the guidance she never received from her mother. The work, coupled with her bravery and determination, result in the emergence of a calm, sustaining, and growing self-awareness. At the beginning of the novel, she is a broken and damaged individual, mourning a love and loss she cannot verbalize. At the end, she emerges whole and healthy, thanks to her struggles and the hard won wisdom she has acquired along the way. Meridian ultimately realizes that no one person, movement, or institution can offer her the assistance she seeks and she finally turns to herself. Meridian's journey to self-discovery is marked by physical and sexual abuse, a broken marriage, and a child she decides to give away. Her strange illness is in some ways a manifestation of her instability and insecurity. Her bouts of lost consciousness and episodes of paralysis signal that she is a woman without an identity or a sustaining inner life. Ultimately, she realizes that her power lies in her unique and unwavering courage.

Meridian is energized by a younger generation coming into its full power and raising its voice in dissent against the institutional racism that prevailed through the 1960s. Through occasionally violent protests and demonstrations, Meridian and other activists attempt to institute change and alter perceptions. Idealistic as they are, they



ultimately find various degrees of satisfaction with the goals and ideals of the civil rights movement. Meridian feels that she will always stand on the fringes of the movement since she is unprepared to take her dissent to a radical, if not murderous, level. Lynne struggles with adapting and applying her own idealism to meaningful change in the lives of southern blacks. Truman eventually sours to the movement, having lost sight of its intentions in his self-absorption. In the end, Meridian realizes the fatuousness of dying or killing for the movement, concluding that the battle is won in small ways, such as getting blacks registered to vote and improving the lives of people victimized by the unchecked expression of racism.

In *Meridian*, young activists attempt to break with tradition by bringing an end to the racism and segregation that had overshadowed black Americans for centuries. Walker shifts her focus from the present to the past to explore the lives of people who helped pave the way to the present moment. The experiences of Louvinie and feather Mae, for example, frame the issues that Meridian and her father face. The serpent mound also evokes this powerful historical precedent, serving as a vital connection between Meridian, her father, and the ancestors who came before her. Throughout *Meridian*, Walker stresses the universality of the human experience and suggests that no one has cornered the market on suffering. Rather, many individuals from a variety of groups and backgrounds share a common history of exploitation, guilt, suffering, violence, and, ultimately, freedom, triumph, and acceptance.

Meridian is plagued by a mysterious inherited illness, much like epilepsy, which parallels and triggers her spiritual and physical transformation. The sickness renders her unconscious, episodes she refers to as 'falling down', and it subjects her to paralysis, blindness, and hair loss. On one hand, the condition connects her directly to

her father and great-grandmother, who suffered the same burden. The illness is also the physical rendering of Meridian's deep emotional and spiritual angst, the grief and sadness that have marked and gripped her throughout her life. The illness becomes a means for Meridian to suffer, to perform penance for this ambiguous wrong she felt she has done. It also offers her atonement and, ultimately, self-acceptance. When she is well again, rising out of her sick bed and heading full force into the future, she can finally forgive herself and love and accept herself for who she is.

Walker prefaces her novel with a lengthy list of definitions and traditional usages of the word Meridian. A total of twelve different meanings are included for both the words noun and adjectival form. This alone signifies the fact that Meridian resists easy definition or simple categorization. She is a complex and capacious character whose presence and identity cannot be reduced to a simple phrase or formulation.

The term also sets up a comparison between Meridian and the growing civil rights movement. One of the most common definitions of the term is "zenith, the highest point of power, prosperity, splendour" (74). Not only does the novel trace the rise and growing power of social activism, united in the face of racist and segregationist policies, but it also tracks the ascent of Meridian from her spiritual and physical pain to a newly whole being in full charge of her capacities and inner wealth. An alternate meaning, 'distinctive character,' applies just as well to the novel's protagonist.

The Wild Child, who makes only a brief appearance in *Meridian*, represents the possibility of pursuing life independently, on one's own terms. The Wild Child is an iconic figure, Walker does not even give her a name. The residents of the slums



surrounding Saxon College know little of this mysterious, almost-feral girl who rummages for food in garbage cans and has not fully acquired language. Meridian ultimately fails to help her and, in fact, plays a role in her death- the Wild Child cannot be tamed, and she died trying to escape that fate. Like the Wild Child, Meridian strips her life of external influences, material goods, and physical comforts as she moves from community to community, registering voters and fighting racism. Both women live on the fringes of society, away from the scrutiny and judgment of mainstream life. Meridian's great grandmother, Feather Mae, suggests a similar presence, a free, radical, and unconventional spirit who, after her profound experience in the pit in the serpent mound, renounces all religion not based on physical ecstasy. Later in her life, she took to walking around naked and worshipping the sun. These unique women pursue their lives on their own terms, extolling their fiercely individualistic spirits.

Truman faces numerous influences and desires in his life, which ultimately conflict and scatter him, making his personality ambiguous and unresolved. His inner conflict is expressed mainly in his fixation on the women in his life and the grip that they have on him. Meridian and Lynne represent two extremes, and Truman is drawn to each but is unable to commit to either. Meridian ultimately frees herself of his mercurial affections and his confusing presence, which are obstacles to her physical and emotional recovery. Initially, in their student days, she believes that Truman is guilty of the same overly reductive and short sighted racial patronage as Lynne, and that he fetishizes Lynne's whiteness just as Lynne lives vicariously through his blackness. Later, as an artist in Harlem, Truman can only objectify black women, casting them in mute marble or obsessively painting representations of Meridian that



are far from the woman she actually is. Just as Lynne views blacks and black life aesthetically, Truman turns to artistic representation to confront and work out his conflicted sense of his role and identity as a black man and his understanding of race and race relations.

Truman subscribes to traditional notions of gender roles, in which the man is the dominant force in a relationship, and his assumptions of male dominance are the source of his arrogance and short-sightedness. He expects women to uphold a standard of purity that he does not apply to himself, and in this way, he is a victim of the sexual attitudes of his world and times. He is drawn to powerful, intelligent, and charismatic women who only reveal the conflicted and confused man who exists beneath the swagger and stereotypical male behaviour. Truman also struggles with his relationship to black culture. His pretension and desire for worldliness have led him to study abroad in France, and his dialogue is peppered with rudimentary French phrases. His interest in the movement, to which he initially dedicates much time and interest, sours. Only when he is freed of the various confusing presences and influences that mark his life is he able to confront himself as an individual and fill his life with purpose and meaning.

When Lynne first appears in *Meridian*, she is an idealistic student who has arrived at Saxon college to take part in the allure of the burgeoning civil rights movement. She and the other northern transplants adopt a patronizing attitude toward the black women of Saxon, eroticizing and romanticizing their otherness. Lynne uses the movement to transcend her sanitized upbringing, through her guilt at coming from a white, privileged background becomes all-consuming. Her idealism and personal agenda initially hinder her effectiveness as a civil rights worker. On a voter-

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registration drive, accompanied by Meridian, Lynne comes into contact with a variety of impoverished, rural communities. During one visit, Lynne is more interested in arguing with than helping a highly religious woman who trusts her faith, and not the state and federal government, to instigate change in her life.

The gulf between ideology and reality and between theory and practice eventually shrinks for Lynne as she learns to sympathize with the reality of racism as it affects individual lives. Lynne feels she must go to greater lengths to establish herself within the black community as well as in the movement. However, her whiteness will always set her apart, and she remains an outsider, ultimately pushed to the fringes of the movement. Lynne's racial guilt is unanswerable, and she sinks into a slovenly, stagnant state. Eventually, she feels she must be the sacrifice that atones for years of racial injustice, and she does not resist or fight adversely, she feels that by allowing him to have his way, she will be atoning for her guilt. After the death of the daughter she has with Truman, she is stricken and dispossessed, with no identifiable future.

The tank sits in the town square in Chicokema, where Meridian is living when the novel opens. Painted white and decorated with red, white and blue ribbons, it was bought in the 1960s to ward off 'outside agitators,' those who advocated the extension of civil rights to all of the town's residents, including blacks. Positioned near the tank is a statue of a confederate soldier, whose leg was permanently crushed when the tank was being put into place. These gestures to the fact that the civil rights movement is like a new civil war, one that has come with great force to replace and supersede that earlier conflict. When Truman meets up with Meridian again after a considerable absence, he witnesses her leading the town's children, forbidden on that day from



towering the traveling exhibit, across the square. Men positioned inside the tank move the muzzle and point it directly at her, but she is neither cowed nor deterred. The tank serves as an ironic presence, suggesting that freedom must be defended from those who do not match the tanks white colouring. It also symbolizes the violence and oppression that marked not only the history of slavery but the civil rights movement as well.

The Sojourner is the name given to the largest magnolia tree in the country, which grows in the quadrangle of Saxon college. It is associated with Louvinie, a slave on the plantation whose property would eventually be turned into Saxon College. Louvinie buries her tongue, cut put in punishment for unintentionally causing the death of one of the Saxon children, beneath a scrawny magnolia tree, which eventually grows into the renowned, towering giant. Thus, the magnolia serves as a living reminder of the past, of growth in the face of oppression and the millions of slaves who were silenced, their tongues metaphorically removed, by the institution of slavery. The tree also serves as a source of comfort for the lonely Meridian, who initially has trouble adjusting to college life. At one point, Meridian even chains herself to it to prevent its removal, a task at which she ultimately fails. When the students, in revolt, chop down the tree, the sojourner's symbolic import changes. Now its destruction represents an abrupt breaking with the past and the racist traditions that marked it.

Like the Sojourner, the serpent mound and the deep mysterious pit contained in the coil of its tail is a powerful connection to the past. The ancient mound, built by the region's original Native American inhabitants, is located on a patch of land behind the Hill home. It is a reminder of the need to study, honour, and learn from the past.

Meridian's father has a spiritual connection to the lives of people buried there, and he honours the native presence that preceded his own as tenants of the land. The mound, to him, symbolizes the interconnectedness and the universality of human experience. It helps him to contextualize and better understand the black experience by signifying the lives of another marginalized people who were forever altered by a racist white power base. However, just as the land was taken from the Cherokee, Meridian's father is similarly forced to give up ownership of the parcel. Thus, also like the Sojourner, the mounds symbolic meaning and significance change when the area is taken over by the government and turned into a historical park that initially bars blacks from entering. What had once been a powerful connection to the past becomes a radical disconnection from it, as the site is exploited and its deep spiritual, cultural, and historical significance is trivialized and commercialized. Meridian tries to transform herself although she has forced negative experiences through marriage and motherhood. Her journey through myth and legend takes her back in time and space as she prepares to move forward in consciousness. When she renounces her child and leaves the small Mississippi town to attend college in Atlanta, Meridian Hill begins the first journey towards transformation. Saxon college symbolize white values that have been seeped into the thinking of middle class blacks. Meridian despises capitalism and by her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the Atlanta Movement she wants to seek social justice, she wants black women to be accepted as equals.

Her anger and frustration against Truman is reflected through abortion and sterilization. It is a metaphor for rooting out sexual weakness because Meridian wants to meet Truman at an equal level. It is a key event that pushes Meridian forward to act



on her own. In fact, Meridian's transformation cannot be complete until she transcends sexual, maternal and racial categories through her participation in the revolution and her commitment to recreate the world where black children may thrive without thorns of guilt. Walker analyses how sexism and racism influence black woman-black man-white woman relationships. Truman marries Lynne because he wants a woman who is perfect in all the eyes of the world, an ideal woman, and the white woman is the closest thing to power he can get in white America. But the other black revolutionaries, like Tommy Odds, view Lynne as a White bitch. Truman finally returns to Meridian three years after he married Lynne and confesses that loving Meridian makes him feel healthy and purposeful.

Meridian's search is related to her search for freedom, joy and contentment in being a woman, a search for self-love and a yearning for communal love. In keeping with the black literary tradition it is a search for escape from the body and freedom for the soul by discovering the truth in the darkness. Her ties are not with a man, a family or with a specific community. Motherhood for her includes not only rearing of children but nurturing life, the continuity of life.

Meridian stands as a witness to the common lot, a survivor of the movement. She, who had not wanted to kill people in the movement, is converted to new approach to revolution. She has reached a point in her life where she is no longer evasive. Listening to the old music, she is moved by the beauty of the black church. To transform the society the black people must understand their own heritage and transform themselves. It is in the process of attempting social change through the movement that Meridian discovers her own personal path. This discovery is itself the core of the novel. It is in the sense that Meridian's search for self affirmation and



wholeness acquires a mythic dimension. Meridian embraces her black heritage, her woman's heritage and reaches out to her people. She is a liberated black woman who knows what she should take from the past to create a new future. Truman knows that in her pilgrimage. Meridian would return to the new world devoid of sickness. Thus, Meridian's incorporation into the community is a new birth.

## Chapter Four

### Black Womanist Tenets

Alice Walker is one of the most successful, significant and culturally influential African American Women writers. She is considered to be an uncompromising spokeswoman for black women, and her sharp critical sense makes her a talented critic. The themes of Alice Walker's writings are always connected to her life experience as a coloured woman, living in a white patriarchal society. The subject of her writings include her heritage, its folklore and traditional art, her sufferings as a black woman, racism in her homeland, Georgia, the violence perpetrated by men, both black and white against black woman. Alice Walker also deals with the attempts of black women to overcome their marginalization and to change their gender roles in order to live a more dignified life.

Alice Walker's dealings with the very relevant, familiar and societal topics in a bold and over manner that constantly engages the attention of the reader. Her works consistently reflect her apprehension with the fundamental sexual and the racial issues particularly of the black woman. Her female characters struggle for an emotional survival. Her novels are known to be boldly feministic and liberate. Hence her writings are fit to be studied in an elaborative way for their significance.

Walker is a staunch defender of both human rights, and of rights of all living beings. She is a prolific writer, and travels the world to stand on the side of the poor, and also the economically, spiritually and politically oppressed. She also stands, however, on the side of the revolutionaries, teachers and leaders whom she believes seek change and transformation of the world.

Walker is a great Womanist and worked to make all women realize their significance and Ability. In 1983, Walker coined the term 'Womanism' to mean 'Black Feminism'. The Term was made to unite coloured feminists under one term. She said that Womanism gave them a word of their own. Her work is forced on the struggles of black people, particularly women and their lives in a racist, sexist, and the violent society. Walker is a leading figure in liberal politics.

Majority of Alice Walker's work in all genres is devoted to what she has called 'Womanism'. Walker's fiction focuses on the progression of female wholeness, the development of female identity and a community in the background of the racial environment. Her non-fictional writings celebrate her connection with other African American women writers.

Alice Walker is one of those pioneers who celebrate black womanhood in their writings. She calls herself a 'Womanist' because Womanism, in her opinion, expresses women's concerns better than feminism. In the fictional world of Walker, woman is no longer subservient to man but rather struggles against her patriarchal culture and its institutions to define her individual identity. Walker destroys, or subverts the old literary myths which are for heroes and creates new images of women in her novels. As a womanist she is concerned with the liberation of all womankind's from the psychology of oppression. Walker clearly shows that they are victims of both racism and sexism in the American society and at the same time seeks to transform them into emergent black women. This note attempts to examine how *Meridian*, one of her most celebrated novels, reflects her strong belief in the black Womanist tenets. It tells the story of the black woman in a period of transition, the story of a coming to consciousness and a subsequent development of self and search for authenticity.



Walker's first novel. *The Third of Grange Copeland*, is about a black girl growing into a young woman who eventually, realizes that the black woman too can stand up to oppression. The struggle that Ruth just dreams of, a struggle that would put an end to the sufferings of African American women, becomes the leitmotif of Walker's second novel *Meridian* (1976) centred around the life of a black woman, it presents her search for selfhood against the background of rapid socio-cultural changes of the 1960s. She is a Civil Rights worker who comes to perceive the true meaning of feminine freedom when she can redefine her role which has been imposed on her by a patriarchal and racist society. *Meridian* is a maturation novel which celebrates the protagonist's triumphant emergence as a strong and wise black woman.

The first part of the novel describes her initiation into adulthood and the beginning of her search for her black woman self; the second part focuses on her renunciation of her child and her active participation in the Civil Rights Movement; and the third and final part deals with her release from sexual bonds with an accent on her greater commitment to the 'survival whole' of her people.

*Meridian* opens with the protagonist's encounter with Truman, one of Meridian's old comrades in the movement. Her conversation with him prepares the ground for a journey to her recent past. This backward movement in time brings us to close terms with the story of her growing up. She 'had left North' because she could not ally herself with the revolutionary group in New York and accept violence as the path to change. Preferring non-violence as a new approach to social reform she had "come back to south remaining close to the people to see them, to be with them, to understand them and herself" (19).

Meridian's personal and political experiences are interwoven to show her maturation in a broader perspective. Her initial exposure to sex is still a nightmare to her. She was pursued by a lascivious man called Daxter when she was only twelve. But this does not prevent her from acquiring a boyfriend, Eddie. Meridian marries her lover and conceives his child. However, their marriage soon falls apart because she feels that to live merely as someone's wife means self-effacement which she with her sense of freedom cannot ever accept. Meridian sees marriage as a 'sanctuary' something which has cut her off from the outer world. Here Walker dismantles the image of woman as the submissive wife and with it the romantic stereotype of marriage as 'made in heaven.' She does so not by creating the opposite image of a dominating wife but by presenting the woman's need to exist meaningfully in society, the larger context. Meridian feels the need all the more because as a black woman she is doubly enslaved by race and sex.

Now the focus shifts on to Meridian's initiation into the responsibility of motherhood. She is not happy to have the child because she did not want it. Tradition imposes motherhood on a woman and encourages herself sacrifice for the sake of her family and society. But Meridian finds this condition of womanhood simply suffocating. The plight of her own mother makes her see motherhood as "being buried alive, walled away from her own life, brick by brick" (62). To her, maternal sacrifice is but another form of "slavery." She even curses herself for "shattering her mother's emerging self" (51). African American motherhood, in particular, is viewed as a vehicle for preserving black heritage in the face of white cultural domination. But the myth of black motherhood as a 'sacred calling' is reversed in *Meridian*. The protagonist wants to shake off her maternal bonds, too, because they no less hinder



her from realizing her personal and social self. Moreover, she does not want to rear her child in a society "Where (black) children are not particularly valued" (174).

Meridian is caught in a dilemma as she struggles to break away from tradition, for socio-historical factors have cemented the mother-child bond strongly. She decides to renounce her child to study at Saxon college and to actively participate in the Civil Rights Movement. But she simultaneously feels guilty for her failure to reach "the standard of motherhood that had gone before" (91). The agony of such an inner conflict results in her illness from which she recovers after her reconciliation with her mother in a dream. She tells her: "Mama, I love you, Let me go" (131). Meridian gets back her lost strength and sets out alone, in search of her authentic self.

Saxon College, which wants Meridian to become a 'lady', is soon identified by her as one of her enemies. The college symbolizes white, capitalist values which she has ever despised. To become a 'lady' is to conform to another stereotype, dependent as much on social class as on sex. Meridian will not play such an 'obsolete' and false role by imitating the behaviour of those women of the past. As a Civil Rights worker of the 1960's she will continue her fight for social justice, for the rights of all black women.

Walker then focuses on the Meridian-Truman relationship to show further development of her protagonist's personality. Truman is described as "the vain, pretentious" (99) activist whom Meridian meets in the movement. In the course of their struggle for human rights she falls in love with him and conceives his child. But Meridian's rapture of love does not last long. She has an abortion when Truman gives her up for a white woman, Lynne. Truman marries Lynne in order to enjoy special privileges in white America. The event proves crucial to Meridian's quest for self.



She realizes that to discover her real black womanhood she has to rise above her sexual weakness. Abortion and sterilization symbolize her final liberation from the bondage of sex and motherhood. Freed from the compulsiveness of traditional role-playing and awakened to the complexity of living, Meridian passes from her feelings of inadequacy and guilt to a new sense of self-confidence. She now wants to meet Truman on equal terms. Within the fabric of the complex relationship of Meridian, Truman and Lynne, Walker thus shows how the forces of racism and sexism work together to humiliate the black woman who, in order to be fully human, has to face the challenges of life with courage and strength.

In the final section of the novel, Meridian's quest for black womanhood turns into a greater concern for the wholeness of black society. As a womanist Walker believes that besides being conscious of sexual issues, she must be "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. After Meridian has discovered her own strength and freedom as a woman she can relate herself to her community at large: "There is water in the world for us brought by our friends though the rock of mother and god vanishes into sand and we, cast out alone to heal and re-create ourselves" (236).

She finds the ultimate meaning of her womanhood in her commitment to transform the present social system for the benefit of all black people. And the transformation she insists on is possible not through violence but through a spiritual awakening. The movement acquires a new meaning as we see it through her eyes. Her 'memory songs' will be her significant contribution to the revolution because it is "the song of the people, transformed by the experiences of each generation, that holds them together, and if any part of it is lost, the people suffer and are without soul" (221). Meridian's final discovery suggests to break loose from the stereotypes for the

social and spiritual upliftment of their community as a whole. When Truman returns to Meridian, she sets him, 'free,' and in so doing she herself also becomes 'free at last'. Without such freedom she cannot truly participate in nurturing black life. The novel ends with a new image of Meridian as a liberated black woman with a hard won insight into the riddles of life.

*Meridian* thus presents a most balanced picture of black womanhood. It openly mirrors the black woman's experiences of exploitation- political, racial, sexual, and emotional and then envisages her total freedom through her pursuit of her wholeness as a human being. The novel vividly creates an image of the African American woman with her complexity, diversity and depth.

Black motherhood in *Meridian* is treated as a question and a problem. Many of the women in the book have children before they are ready, and are forced to give up dreams of education, of a career to care for children they never intended to have. When Meridian gives her child up for adoption in order to pursue a long held dream, she does not feel liberation but rather a weighty sense of guilt that makes her depressed throughout college. She also feels like a burden on her mother, who has many children. Nevertheless, she understands that one of the deepest pains of slavery was the separation of mothers and their children, and empathizes with the powerful connection between a mother and her child.

The connection between women is always a major issue explored in Black feminist texts. Meridian's classmate at Saxon, Anne Marion with whom she shared a deep bond of trust was broken by Morion's inability to comprehend Meridian and her suffering, her accepting that she could never 'kill' for revolution. But even with contradictory political ideals, with Meridian believing in communism and Anne



Marion not minding being a capitalist, Marion understood that the connection could not be snapped.

In prison or at home or her own cell, Meridian belonged to the conflicts of her soul and thoughts of the human race. When Truman tells her that he hates to see her always alone, she replies that is her 'values' and 'besides', "all the people who are as alone as I am will one day gather at the river. We will watch the evening sun go down. And in the darkness maybe we will know the truth" (77).

The Wild Child as Meridian called her, the insane dirty roadside girl; the slave from West Africa named Louvinie whose tongue had been chopped off as she told horror stories to the children of the Saxon household and who had planted the "mighty, ancient, sheltering music tree" the Sojourner; are symbols of the African woman, the Black American unacknowledged and unknown.

Lines from a poem by Alice Walker titled *Remember me?* The poem represents the healing of the wounds inflicted on the black woman by oppression and her own rejuvenation that leaves her calm, powerful and in control of her future and of the human race to which she offers all strength and goodness of her soul:

I am the woman

with the blessed

dark skin

I am the woman

with teeth repaired

I am the woman

with the healing eye

the ear that hears.



I am the woman: Dark  
repaired, healed  
listening to you. (21-31)

A black woman sings the song of freedom in Meridian's voice, setting free the glorious spirit of the African woman rising to liberate herself. In hope, the African queen regains her throne.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

The unspoken words of the African souls in America found voice and place in words of many writers. One among them is Alice Walker, the poet, writer and activist who felt that writing saved her from the sin and inconvenience of violence. Alice Walker's novel *Meridian* is a transcendental story of the woman Meridian Hill who sets out on a journey to free her race and herself from discrimination. She begins a journey of loneliness and strength.

Black women have been victimized not only by racist and sexist assumptions but also by scholarly neglect. Yet they have tried down the ages to present their case through various media, especially through literature. Black women novelists of the twentieth century have openly portrayed in their works their experiences of exploitations political, racial, sexual and emotional. Driven by an overriding impulse towards self-assertion, which can be traced back to the cultural ethos of the 1960s, they have later succeeded in turning their identity into a soul of strength. Their works of fiction, publications over the last two decades, reflect their verses of American experience that was excluded from both black male and white female writings. They strive to present the black woman's quest for total freedom as a human being. A systematic study of the novels mentioned earlier would take us through many a chapter in her life in America and help see her rise gradually from passivity to consciousness.

Black women of the modern era have vehemently protested against racial and gender discrimination in the American society and sought to prove that they indeed belong to the 'human species'. Thanks to their long struggle, they are just beginning

to be recognized as "Human beings, as sexual creatures clothed in their own personal skins, as American citizens with public rights and duties, private longings and desires, like any other citizen of this republic" (Hernton 166). They have also amply proved that they can create formal literature and master "the arts and sciences" (Gates 8).

With Black women refusing to be silenced, they raised their voices in some of the fieriest writing of the era. Their struggle was aided by the writings and work of progressive black artists who focused on destroying the myth and images which crippled and degraded black people and the creation of new myths and images that would liberate and empower them. This was the ideological basis of the Black Aesthetics / Black Arts Movement. Walker's writing had become propaganda for all these happenings. Alice Walker, who belongs to the same period and rank, has contributed a lot to the movement through her writings and active participation. She addressed the issues like gender, sexism, black womanhood, their predicament and black female identity, mother daughter relationships, sisterhood, sexual orientation, Black heterosexism, domestic violence, family, community and culture. She joins hands with the writers like Nikki Giovanni, Audre Lorde, Sonla Sanchez, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Barbara, Maya Angelou, for the cause. They have enabled, in the words of Alice Walker, "Black women, especially those, most marginalized by race, caste and class, to have their voices heard and their histories read" (97).

Walker's heritage and history provide a vehicle for understanding the modern world in which her characters live. She relies upon sexual violence and physical abuse to portray breaches in black generations. Typically she brings to her works a terrible observance of black self-hatred and destruction: Walker's work should be admired not because it represents a flowering of black or female consciousness, but because at best



it brings to life the varied scent and colors of human experiences. Gloria Steinem's views about the greatness of Alice Walker are also worth mentioning. She writes "There must be thousands of people scattered around this country each one of whom thinks only she or he knows how necessary and major a writer Alice Walker is" (79).

Alice Walker is a womanist rather than a feminist. She champions the freedom of black women from oppression of all kinds, and a total empowerment of self as well as the wholeness of the community through her novels and short stories. She writes with a didactic purpose. Her aim is to educate the society by exposing women's predicament before it. Her fiction can be considered as both a product of existing social conditions and a form of critical opposition to them. Mary Helen Washington, an Alice Walker critic, states that the author is an apologist for black women and she uses the term 'apologist' in the sense that Walker speaks or writes in defense of a cause or a position." The cause is the liberation of Black womanhood, but as an apologist, she demonstrates this position basically in the sense of acknowledging *Meridian* is her long standing Civil rights novel. Here Walker acknowledges Meridian's plight. The rise of Meridian can be taken as the rise of a black woman to this acknowledgement like Alice Walker herself.

Over more than four decades of her writing life, Alice Walker has immersed herself in protest, civil disobedience, writing, speaking, and travelling and film making on behalf of numerous causes. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s involved her in demonstrations, the voter registration campaign and defiance of Mississippi's racist laws during her marriage to Leventhol. The 1970s saw her as a regular contributor to Mrs. Magazine and a friendship with Gloria Steinem. Using her writing in a politically engaged and socially responsible manner, to give voice to the

voiceless, she stands out as a pioneering literary figure, creating new voices and new visions of the role literature can play in shaping and critiquing society. *Meridian* is a typical novel that depicts all these experiences of Walker. Here Meridian takes Walker's place to expose the sexual politics in the feminist movement and the how black women were subordinated and side lined.

The novel *Meridian* is to be studied in this light. The main plot of the novel deals with the tale of Meridian, the title character, her childhood miseries, then her life as an activist, her evolution from a school girl to a successful protagonist. At same time, Walker also brings out many other women characters victimized by racism, sexism, color politics, class differences, and their pitiful states because of being black, and their plight as slaves etc. Along with Meridian, the tales of exploitation and oppression of black women are the part and parcel of the novel. The sexual and racial harassment of Meridian would not be sufficient to bring the issue home. Hence, Walker has included many other sharply portrayed women whom Meridian comes across while living her life as an activist, moving from place to place, only to give kaleidoscopic pictures of black people, their predicament, and their miserable, pitiful state. Like Celie in *The Color purple*, Meridian dominates the entire novel. It tells her story from her school days to her appearance as a historical figure, making room in the heart of the people, serving them, raising their problems, children's problems without fear, irrespective of her life and family. Walker acknowledges Meridian's plight.

Meridian Hill like her creator, is thrust into the heart of the Civil Right Movement after she receives a scholarship to a black women's college in Atlanta (Saxon college), looking the way when those ladies land in jail or return to campus



beaten by the police, as a result of their activism. Amid this atmosphere Meridian proves a failure as the type of revolutionary her friends demand that she be. She can say that she would be willing to die for the cause but that she would be willing to kill for it. A question haunts her, "if they committed murder and to her even revolutionary murder was murder. What would the music be like?" (14). Meridian continues, "For it is a song of people, transformed by the experiences of each generation, that holds them together, and if any part of it is lost the people suffer and without soul. If I can only do that, my role will not have been a useless one after all" (17).

Meridian comes to this realization after suffering deliberating guilt for having failed in the other roles imposed on her. She shares with other Walker's female characters' vulnerability to the dictates of others. She 'loses' her mother, and thus fails as a daughter when she finds herself unable to love God with the same mild less intensity that her mother does. She fails as mother, according to other standards. When she gives her infant son in order to free herself to attend Saxon, even though she feels that to do so is to save both his life and her life. As early as Meridian and as recently as her 1992 novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Walker has been about the business of debunking some of the myths of black motherhood.

At Saxon, Meridian lets her body wither away believing that if she could become pure spirit, perhaps, she would be absorbing to her mother's love. Oblivious to her mother's utter failure as nurturer and further burdened by the guilt of being forced by Saxon's rules to deny that she ever had a child. Meridian aborts the second child that she is pregnant with and removes any possibility of further children by having her tubes tied.



Ostracized by her fellow revolutionaries, Meridian, like Walker, who spent summers during her college years in Mississippi and Georgia, devoted herself to nonviolent means of furthering the cause of Civil rights. As she travels about the south registering voters and aiding her people in any way she can, whether they register or not, she performs selfless acts of bravery that more often than not, benefit the children. When the novel opens, for example, she is facing down a tank to win for the children the simple right to see a freak show on a day other than that of set aside for blacks. She concludes each 'performance' by slipping into a deathlike trance, her body paralyzed and useless. Each time though, like the hardy petunia, she slowly comes back to life.

Meridian recognizes over her role in the revolution long after Truman Held, the father of her aborted child, tells her that it was only a fact. By the time Truman catches up with her one final time in Alabama, she has given away virtually all her material possessions. Even her death trances seem a rehearsal for her death. The final performance is not to take place; however, Meridian is in the process of changing her mind about dying. She chooses eventually not to be a martyr. Her struggle ends with her liberation with her success in the movement. She achieves liberation not only for herself but for the entire race of black women through their awakening, education, and political rights which is the very mission of Alice Walker's life.

To conclude, in *Meridian* Alice Walker has written a fine, taut novel that accomplishes a remarkable impact on the universal community. The issues she is concerned with are massive. Events are strung over twenty five years, although most occur between the height of the civil rights movement and the present. She writes with a sharp critical sense as she deals with the issues of tactics and strategy in the

civil rights movement with the possibility of interracial love and communication, the vital and lethal strands in American and black experience, with violence and nonviolence, holiness and self-hatred.

Walker wrote the novel at a time when many young black people were steering from the tenets of nonviolence and civil disobedience that had characterized the early years of the movement and took on more militant and extreme positions that alienated their supporters. Some literary critics believe that the novel is a critique of the path that the Civil Rights Movement had taken. They claimed that Walker felt that the revolution never addressed the suffering of women; rather it merely perpetuated destructive and often chauvinistic values. Many critics also felt that Walker used *Meridian* to showcase her 'Womanist' attitudes.

A strong believer in the inherent power of the woman, Walker depicts her title character as an innately tough and resolute person, though not one without problems as well. In fact, Walker argues that personal struggles are an unavoidable part of life and how one overcomes one's obstacles and ultimately, defines their character.

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**Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: A Study of Reframing the Image of the  
Oppressed Muslim Women**

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**PRISCILLA SHARONA A.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN17)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: A Study of Reframing the Image of the Oppressed Muslim Women** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

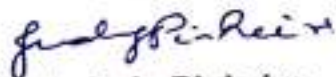
THOOTHUKUDI

*A. Priscilla Sharona*  
PRISCILLA SHARONA A.



### CERTIFICATE


This is to certify that the project entitled **Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: A Study of Reframing the Image of the Oppressed Muslim Women** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Priscilla Sharona A. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project entitled **Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns: A Study of Reframing the Image of the Oppressed Muslim Women*** explores the present state of social exclusion of the Afghan women through the lives of the protagonists Mariam and Laila who symbolized the reality of their culture and surroundings. It reiterates the fact that a woman's love for her family can make her strongest, selfless and courageous enough to sacrifice everything even herself to protect her relatives.

The first chapter throws light on the origin of Afghan American Literature with a short biography of Khaled Hosseini and his unique contribution to Afghan American Literature.

The second chapter highlights analyzes the family relationships in the novel applying Dr. Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory.

The third chapter focuses attention on the subjugation of women in Afghanistan. The strict Islamic laws undermine women's basic human rights and sabotage their equal participation in human community.

The fourth chapter reframes the image of the central characters reflecting the feminist and womanhood perspectives.

The fifth chapter sums up all the key premises dealt with in the preceding chapters and establishes confidence in women's undaunted willpower to emerge successful amidst all odds.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Khaled Hosseini is a man with a mission, a mission to redeem his country of all its ills, to make it beautiful, like it once was. He does this by writing beautiful novels with breathtaking canvas, spreading across Afghanistan and the Afghan diaspora all over the world. It tells the story of the Afghan people, Afghan women, children and men, those who are caught in the web of religion, politics and terrorism.

The literature by Afghan American authors is considered as Afghan American literature. Afghan Americans are among the newest and smallest of America's ethnic communities. Millions of refugees from Afghanistan fled to the United States during soviet and civil war and created their own community in U.S. They migrated from their homeland to the US to survive themselves and their families. Some of these people found the way and motivation to express their feelings, emotions memories and dreams to the world. They shared their experience as Afghans and as immigrants in the United States. Out of these experiences a literature has been emerged and is getting its own identity in the world literature. The Afghan-American literature has several distinct features : war, terrorism, violence, personal experiences, diasporic experiences, clash of identity survival urge for homeland, family relationships, women's violation, women's struggle for education, religion, Afghan culture and traditions.

Khaled Housseni was an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. born in Kabul, Afghanistan. His father worked as a diplomat, The oldest of five children, Hosseini was born in Kabul in 1965. His mother taught Farsi and history at a girls' high

school in Kabul. His father was a diplomat for Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry, and when he was posted to Afghanistan's embassy in Tehran, the family moved with him. The Hosseini's returned to Afghanistan in 1973, the year that King Zahir Shah was overthrown by Daoud Khan in a bloodless coup. From 1973 until 1976, Hosseini attended a French-styled high school in Kabul, the Istiqlal Lycee. In the same year, the family moved once again, this time to Paris, where his father took a new diplomatic post. Hosseini's father was the second secretary to Afghanistan's ambassador in Paris, or the third-ranking diplomat serving there. During his assignment in Paris, the Hosseini family received news, through their government connections and friends in Afghanistan and from French news sources, of the Communist coup and then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Hosseini's heard stories of executions and learned of the deaths of friends and distant relatives and realized that they would not be able to return to Afghanistan.

Hosseini attended high school in San Jose, graduating in 1984. He earned a degree in biology from Santa Clara College, and then went on to study medicine at the University of California, San Diego, completing his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. He practiced medicine as a primary care physician at a large health management organization from 1996 to 2004. He is married and has two children: a son Haris and a daughter Farah. His wife Roya was born in Bethesda, Maryland, and is a lawyer.

Hosseini was interested in writing and storytelling from a young age. He told Tamara Jones of the *Washington Post* that he wrote plays as a child, "cajoling his



younger brothers and cousins into performing" them (Stuhr 2). Later as an adult, he found writing a welcome change of pace from the hours he spent at his medical practice. Jones wrote, "[m]edicine was like an arranged marriage he grew fond of; writing was the grand romance between high school sweethearts"(2). He told James Cowan of *National Post* that he started writing "suspense thrillers and Victorian tales of gothic horror, but soon moved on to short pieces of literary fiction" (2). Mir Tamim Ansary mentioned Hosseini in his book *West of Kabul, East of New York* (2002) and described him as a "young Afghan doctor whose passion after work was writing—not ghazals, not quasidas, not even rubaiyat, but horror stories in the tradition of H.P. Lovecraft" (284). As a child, Hosseini read classical Dari poetry and some Western fiction translated into Farsi, including *Mickey Spillane* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Like his character Amir in *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini loved westerns as a child and his favorite film was *The Magnificent Seven* (Hansen 2003). He did not learn to read English until he moved to the United States.

Hosseini returned to Kabul in 2003, spending two weeks visiting the sites of his childhood and traveling more widely to learn firsthand about the current conditions and outlook of the Afghan people. He was named as a Goodwill Envoy to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in 2006 and has returned to Afghanistan and traveled to refugee camps in Chad as part of his UN assignment.

Afghanistan, the native country of Khaled Hosseini and where all of his three novels are set has a tumultuous history. Although almost every country in the world has violence and bloodshed in its history, Afghanistan's past has been spectacularly bloody.



Something which makes this fact painful is that it is still not peaceful today and is full of civil war, religious extremism and civil strife. Much of this strife is because it was at the crossroads of history, foreign invaders have always tried to overtake it and the locals have always fiercely resisted, resulting in the internalization of violence.

Nadeem Aslam FRSL is a British Pakistani novelist. *The Wasted Vigil*, this beautifully crafted novel captures the rich history and inherent beauty of Afghanistan, as it confronts its brutal tragedies. It takes readers into the very heart of Afghanistan, revealing the impact of the large historical and religious forces the decades of war, exploitation, and fundamentalist repression on the life of five fundamental characters. It is a work of fiction that reveals the emotional truth of life in this war ravaged country.

Philip Hensher is an English novelist, critic and journalist, whose *The Mulberry Empire*, is a brilliant synthesis of fact and imagination captures the events surrounding the British invasion of Afghanistan in 1839. The cast of characters illuminates the politics and people of both sides of the conflict that resulted in the defeat of the British and the triumph of the Afghans. *The Swallows of Kabul* is a novel written by Algerian writer, Yasmina Khadra it was originally written and published in French. This novel looks at the complexities of the Muslim world through the lives of two couples affected by the Taliban rule in Kabul.

Vladimir Nabokov was one such author. For the first few years the only thing he could write about was the experiences of the expatriate Russian community who were nostalgic about their native country to which they could never return. Nabokov knew that as a writer it was his trap, to remain confined in his native country and native people. In

order to expand himself and his writing, he abandoned writing in Russian, started writing in English and started writing about themes which were native to the United States and not to Russia. It was found during the course of the present study that something similar is happening to Khaled Hosseini in his third novel. His inner writer wants to spread wings and take on other issues but his inner Afghan does not let him let go of the issues of Afghanistan and Afghans. And *The Mountains Echoed* is a result of that. Only future will tell what will Hosseini one day become, a writer without a sense of place like Nabokov, or one like a sense of place but trapped in the immigrant experience.

Khaled's first two novels *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* have been published in more than seventy countries. *The Kite Runner* alone spent more than five years on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Khaled's much-anticipated third novel *And the Mountains Echoed* was called "his most ambitious novel yet" by the *Entertainment Weekly*.

Racism plays an important role in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The author uses racism to describe the characters and the culture represented in the stories. In *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini uses prejudice as a tool to tell this story of betrayal and redemption. He pursues his story with prejudice and racism in Afghanistan as well as in the United States. *The Kite Runner* pits two classes against each other, the educated modern and secular elite and the medieval masses.

So it is clear that Khaled Hosseini is showing a divide between the secular, rational and logical elite of Afghanistan which believed in peaceful co-existence with fellow tribes and ethnicities and the uneducated madrassa-fed masses of Afghanistan who



believed in the version of Mullah Fatiullah Khan and those of the Taliban fighters. Hosseini showed this clash beautifully in *The Kite Runner*. His worst fears came true when his country fell to the extremists. The most important of events in *The Kite Runner* tell the story of its primary characters on one hand and on the other hand they discuss the momentous events that were going on in the country at that time. Hosseini has beautifully blended the personal events with the political ones in his first novel.

Hosseini employs the means of symbolism to illustrate how ethnic and religious discrimination takes place in the country. Most of all, *The Kite Runner*, is about the individual's search for redemption; redemption for the crimes committed in the past; redemption for the regrets of not doing one's duty; regrets for things left unfinished; regrets for fulfilling the moral and ethical duties towards friends, family, society and country. Khaled Hosseini's third novel is radically different from his first two but the themes of loss and violence are persistent in this one too.

A recurring theme in *And the Mountains Echoed* is that of suicide. More often than not, we find that the characters of the novel find redemption and peace in death, death that they bring upon themselves by committing the acts of suicide. One of the themes of the novel *And the Mountains Echoed* is its depiction of homosexuality, in the relation of Mr. Wahdati and Nabi, his employee. Though nothing happens between the two as Nabi is straight and the affair never comes to anything as Wahdati is paraplegic, but the very fact that an Afghan author is willing to breach the subject which is taboo in Islamic societies, and more so in Afghan society shows that he is willing to air the feelings and emotions of his fellow people. He is very committed to this act. Even though



it does not have a uniform narrative structure, *And the Mountains Echoed* has many persistent themes in it. Actually it is these themes which bind the narrative into a single whole. Memory of loved ones and loved places, their loss and a love for the family are some of the binding themes of the novel. The themes of loss, memory and familial love are expressed with the most intensity in the sibling love between Abdullah and Pari. Their story is heart-rending but also what drives the novel.

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini has depicted the sibling love in its most heart-wrenching state. Abdullah and Pari seem inseparable but they get separated and Abdullah has almost no desire left. He then migrates and finds love in his wife and even more than that in his daughter whom he names Pari, but the hole that his sister left in his heart is never filled. He suffers a stroke just when he thinks he is going to meet his sister and loses all memory. When he finally meets his sister he is in no condition to recognize her. But perhaps in this twisted way, he finally has peace as he has got the magic potion which has made him forget the very memory of his dear and beloved sister. It is found out that almost all of the novels of Khaled Hosseini have a deep sense of place. Its primary characters love their place, their birthplace fondly and always remember it. In fact it is only natural that a migrant author like Khaled Hosseini would write characters who have a deep sense of place. The characters of *And the Mountains Echoed* both embody and transcend the sense of place.

Hosseini touches on the role of women in most of his novels, but it is the main theme of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. He was raised at a time in Afghanistan when women were free to attend schools and seek professional employment. Many women in

his family were professionals, and he was not raised with the worldview of protecting women from outside intrusion. He wrote in the Book Browse interview that he hopes readers will develop a sense of empathy for Afghans and specifically for Afghan women, “on whom the effects of war and extremism have been devastating. I hope this novel brings depth, nuance, and emotional subtext to the familiar image of the burqa-clad woman walking down a dusty street.” He continued, asserting that under the Taliban, women were denied education, the right to work, the right to move freely, access to adequate healthcare, etc. Yet I want to distance myself from the notion, popular in some circles, that the West can and should exert pressure on these countries to grant women equal rights. . . . This approach either directly or indirectly dismisses the complexities and nuances of the target society as dictated by its culture, traditions, customs, political system, social structure, and overriding faith. (4)

Hosseini told Jones that he has received criticism for having portrayed women who wear and come to terms with the burqa. Both of his main female characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* at some point, as they are out in the streets clad in the garment, express a satisfaction with the anonymity and sense of protection they feel from wearing it. Hosseini claims no sympathy for this practice, and states that he wishes “every single woman in Afghanistan could lift the burqa and walk the streets freely,” but he also believes that this should be a choice that the women make. He points out that women wore them in Afghanistan for centuries before the Taliban came to power. “It is not quite the concern for women in Afghanistan as it is for us in the West. It’s not as urgent a matter as security, as food, as being able to get medical care for their kids. I’m just not



sure," Hosseini continued, "what a reliable gauge of women's liberation in Afghanistan the burqa is" (4).

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Hosseini returns to Afghanistan and once more offers his readers a love story. As in *The Kite Runner*, the relationships are complicated and diverse. There is first and foremost the love between two women, supporting each other in their marriage to the same man. There is also a more traditional love story a childhood romance that at first seems hopeless and then becomes reality. All of this set in the midst of war and famine over three decades in both the cities and countryside of Afghanistan. The two women are quite different from one another and were raised in completely different worlds, although within the same country. They nonetheless forge a strong bond of family and friendship *A Thousand splendid suns* is most of all, a story of the oppression of women and how even in such bleak conditions there is still hope for them; that there is still humanity left in the darkest corners of earth. There is not much hope for women in the religious theocracy like Afghanistan, but still the hope that is should be picked up and worked upon, this is what the message of Khaled Hosseini is *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

The characters of the novel, particularly women, often keep up the hope, even in very adverse conditions. They bear the oppression of men, society and religion and yet go on in the hope that one day their condition will be redeemed. Though their conditions express oppression, at many important junctures in the novels the characters also express hope. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the story of the women of Afghanistan. It is told through the pains and hardships that two women Mariam and Laila go through, who are



married to the same sadistic, wife-beater. The women of Afghanistan are oppressed many times over. They are oppressed by the orthodox traditions of Afghanistan which does not let them much freedom. They are oppressed by their men, who take benefit of the helplessness of women in their country. But most of all, they are oppressed by religion, which is the primary reason of all other oppressions.

A persistent theme of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is its theme of marriage vs. true love. There is a very clear difference between forced marriage on one hand and true love on the other. Education of women, or the lack of it, is another major theme of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Women have very little freedom in Islamic Afghanistan, but after the Communist coup, the one good thing which happens is that they start teaching girls as much as they do boys. It is a brief respite for the education scenario for women in Afghanistan. But when the Taliban, comes to power, they again ban all education of women. The story comes full circle.

One can see how Khaled Hosseini has dealt with the endless endurance of women and how he brings out the difficulties, pain and endurance faced by Mariam and Laila. Their confidence and self-determination helped them to break all the shackles. He creates a vision of women empowerment through these powerful characters Mariam and Laila.

The project explores the discrimination and the struggles that the central characters Mariam and Laila face, as they live in a very harsh period for women's rights in Afghanistan. The whole story is a complex narrative woven by the author in the eyes of two women representing the newer generation in Kabul when Mariam protects Laila

from the torment of Rasheed; whom she kills and gets executed to leave Laila live her love again with Tariq and her children. So the women in the novel are metaphorically the splendid suns of the title, which should always set and shine again, to represent hope for a better Kabul in the near future.

## Chapter Two

### Family Systems Theory

Dr. Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory is applied to the selected novel in order to study the family relationships in it. These concepts are the key concepts in the Bowen Theory. They can be used in our day today life to overcome the family problems and improve family relationships. It mainly analyses the husband-wife, parents-children and sibling relationships. By applying the Family Systems Theory by Dr. Murray Bowen the family relationships in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) could be analyzed the Family Systems Theory is a theory introduced by American Psychiatrist Murray Bowen in his book *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (1978). It suggests that the individual cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but as a part of their family. Families are the systems of interconnected and interdependent members. No individual can be understood separately from the system called family.

According to Bowen, a family is a system in which each member has a role to play, a responsibility to follow, expectations from one another and rules to respect. In Bowen's Family System Theory, there are eight interlocking concepts and they are the core of the theory. According to the Merriam Webster's dictionary, family is a group of individuals living under one roof and usually under one head. The people who live together in a family include parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings, husband, wife, children, grandparents, nephews, nieces and so on. Family is a basic social unit in human phenomenon. Members in the family love and care each other. They are connected to



each other physically, genetically and emotionally. Even though they fight with each other eventually, they come together again and do not lose the loving bond among them.

Having a family is very important for every human being, because he has backing and support at each level in his life. He needs help and encouragement of his family members in his bad times. So the person having loving and caring family never loses confidence and never fails to overcome his difficulties. Among the eight concepts in the Bowen theory only five are considered for the selected novel. These concepts include, triangles, differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, family projection process, nuclear family emotional system. A triangle is a three person relationship system that contains much more tension without involving another person because the tension can shift around three relationships. If the tension is too high for one triangle to contain, it spreads to a series of interlocking triangles.

The differentiation of self scale allows the person to think, feel and behave as an individual thinking that the person should feel at first on his own. There are tremendous differences between the functioning of an individual and the functioning of a group or family. These differences between individuals and families reflect differences in people's levels of differences of self. An individual with poorly differentiated self depends so much on the acceptance and approval of others. On the other hand a person with well differentiated self recognizes his realistic dependence on others, but he can stay calm and clear headed enough in conflict, criticism and rejection.

Bowen defined the cutoff as a process of separation, isolation, withdrawal, running away or denying the importance of the parental family. Dr. Bowen defines the

concept emotional cutoff as: An average family situation in our society today is one in which people maintain a distant and formal relationship with the family of origin, returning home for duty visits at infrequent intervals. (57) Cutoff is one of the ways people attempt to resolve the relationship tension which results from that unresolved attachment and the anxiety. Emotional cutoff refers to the discontinuation of emotional contact of family members with each other.

The family projection process describes the primary way parents transmit their emotional problems to a child. The projection process can impair the functioning of one or more children and increase physical, emotional and social problems in them. The children can also inherit some problems and strength as well through the relationship with their parents. In Bowen's Family System Theory, the nuclear family is the emotional unit. The concept of nuclear family emotional system describes four basic relationship patterns. These patterns govern where exactly the problems develop in a family.

The family member's attitude and beliefs about the relationships play a very important role in these patterns. The family relationships are very important part of human life. The people create positive relationships through positive behaviour and positive attitude. The friendship may not be a permanent one, but family relations are lifelong and everlasting relations. Every relationship in one's life is not healthy and happy one, some relationships can be unpleasant or bad. But such relationships also get improved with the progress of time. These types of relationships can be described as frustrated, distracted, toxic, self-absorbed, insecure, unhappy, complicated, abusive, faithless, uncommunicative, selfish, imperfect, hypocritical, love-hate, sacrificial etc. In a family a person shares strong bond with his mother, father, wife, children and siblings.



Sometimes it becomes difficult for some people to create healthier and happier relationships with their kin, but it is possible to do so. These qualities include flexibility, changing attitudes, adaptive nature and adjusting behaviour. If everyone in a family possess these qualities, the family becomes problem free. To demolish family conflicts, the family members should love, adjust, support, encourage and console each other. Husband-wife relationship is one of the most important and dedicated relationships, in this relationship two persons act as one. Sometimes this relationship is lovely, beautiful, dedicated, truthful, loyal and attractive, but some couples are not able to develop their relationship and so they have to face loss of love, faith and attachment in their relationship. Such relationship cannot be considered a happy and successful one.

Since every individual is different from each other, there are various types of husband and wife such as loving, caring, faithful, supportive, adaptive, flexible, possessive, faithless, dishonest, wicked, hurting, malicious, explosive, argumentative, dominant, and so on.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* narrates the story of two Afghan women: Mariam and Laila who grow up in different families with different backgrounds and different atmosphere. Still both the women face a miserable life in the company of a single person with whom they are married. The very first husband-wife relationship found in the novel is the relationship between Mariam and Rasheed. Mariam seems disappointed with the marriage; therefore she looks nervous all the time. Rasheed and Mariam's married life is not happy at all, because she is forcefully pulled into the relationship with him. Being a dominant kind of husband Rasheed treats his wife as a slave and doesn't allow her to live her life according to her wishes. He compels her to accept his way of living which



Mariam hates to follow. One incident describes the miserable condition of Marriam in the relationship. She cooks rice for dinner. While eating rice Rasheed spits it out because according to him it was uncooked. Hosseini draws the scene as:

He snatched her hand, opened it, and dropped a handful of pebbles into it.

"Put these in your mouth."

"What?".....Mariam chewed. Something in the back of her mouth cracked.

"Good," Rasheed said. His cheeks were quivering. "Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you know what you've given me in this marriage. Bad food, and nothing else."

Then he was gone, leaving Mariam to spit out pebbles, blood, and the fragments of two broken molars. (94).

The relationship between Rasheed and Mariam gets developed when they get the news of her pregnancy. Rasheed seems too much happy with the news and hopes to have a baby boy. Mariam's unexpected miscarriage makes Rasheed nervous and he starts to hate her. The disturbance in their relationship reaches the utmost level that he marries a helpless girl, Laila who loses her family in a local blast. She also gets ready to marry an already married man since she is pregnant with a baby of her lover.

At the beginning Rasheed and Laila's relationship as husband and wife looks good, but after Laila's delivery with a baby girl, Rasheed becomes unhappy with her and ill-treats Laila as well. According to Bowen's Family System Theory if one of the

spouses develops any kind of dysfunction in his or her personality, there creates lot of tension in their relationship. Mariam develops physical dysfunction that is her continuous miscarriages which results into the tensions between her and Rasheed. The conflicts in their marriage affect their relationship and it creates emotional as well as physical distance between them. The triangle is formed in the relationship among Rasheed, Mariam and Laila. In the triangle Rasheed and Laila are insiders at the beginning and Mariam is at the outside position, but after tension in Rasheed and Laila's relationship increase at a higher level, Mariam enters into the inside position and becomes an insider. Now Rasheed is an outsider. Mariam and Laila get together and try to resist him. The tension in the relationship increases so high that the triangle involves other and creates a series of interlocking triangles.

Another husband-wife relationship is between Laila and Tariq. The husband-wife relationship is a very dedicated and sacred relationship. Laila and Tariq become successful to have such relationship after facing a lot of problems before getting together and marrying each other. The marital conflict is noticed in the relationship between Rasheed and his wives: Mariam and Laila. As Rasheed is excited to have a baby boy and both his wives fail to give him a boy, he violates both of them. He mistreats them and beats them occasionally. Hosseini portrays one of the incidents in which Rasheed mistreats Mariam, Laila and Aziza when they try to run away from the home. Rasheed declares to Laila,

You try this again and I will find you. I swear on the Prophet's name that I will find you. And, when I do, there isn't a court in this godforsaken country that will hold me accountable for what I will do. To Mariam first,



then to her, and you last. I'll make you watch. You understand me? I'll make you watch. (243).

In the Family Projection Process parents transmit their emotional problems to their children. Hakim's attitude and mentality are transmitted to his daughter, Laila. He is a progressive and modern person; likewise Laila also adopts his thinking and poses herself as a modern thinking woman. On the contrary, Rasheed transmits his vices to his son, Zalmai. These vices are not inherent so that Zalmai succeeds to improve his behavior later on in the novel. The emotional cutoff occurs in the relationship of Mariam and Jalil. After her mother's death, she is taken to his house, but Jalil's wives set her marriage with a person already married twice. Mariam doesn't want to marry and requests Jalil to stop her marriage, but he keeps quiet. Helplessly she accepts the marriage and decides to remove her father from her life.

Parents play a very important role in children's life. Even before the birth of a child, it is connected to its parents. There is emotional and eternal bond between the parents and their child. Parenthood is an exciting and pleasant experience in one's life. Parents always work hard for the overall development of their children. Child development is a long process which involves interactions and give-take relationship between parents and children. The close and warm relations between parents and children result the healthy and progressive life of the both. Parents-children relationship is as important as any other familial relationship in human life.

One of the parents-children relationships is between Nana and Mariam. The novel opens with the depiction of their relationship. Nana is Mariam's mother and together they



live in a Kolba in an unnamed village near Herat. Mariam is more attached to her father than her mother. She waits eagerly for Thursday since her father visits her on the day. Nana feels jealous of Jalil as Mariam loves him more love than her. Therefore she tries to damage their relationship by telling her about his wicked past deeds with them. As a mother she should be happy to see the attachment between Mariam and Jalil, but she always warns her to keep herself away from him for anytime he can deceive her and leave her. Mariam does not agree with her and has a lot of trust in her father. Jalil and Mariam also share the parent-child relationship. Though she is Jalil's illegitimate daughter, there is a strong bond between them. They live separately, notwithstanding he visits her on every Thursday. Hence, she also waits curiously for Thursdays.

Though Jalil shows a lot of concern, care and love for his daughter, he is not able to take a stand for her. He can't accept her as his daughter openly and meet her in front of people. The relationship between Jalil and Mariam is a good one. They have love, affinity and attachment for each other, but get separated after her marriage against her wish. As a father he fails to stand up for her and do something in order to provide her a good life. Mariam feels disappointed with her father and tells him that she never ever see him again while leaving him for her husband's house.

Jalil looked down, and, like an overgrown child, dug at something with the toe of his shoe.

"You were ashamed of me."

"I'll visit you," he muttered. "I'll come to Kabul and see you. We'll..."

"No. No," she said. "Don't come. I won't see you. Don't you come? I don't want to hear from you. Ever. Ever."

He gave her a wounded look.

"It ends here for you and me Say your good-byes". (50)

Another father-daughter relationship in the novel is between Hakim and Laila. Hakim is a teacher and progressive kind of man. Being happy to have such a father, Laila loves him so much. There is a strong bonding between both of them as father and daughter. She loves her father more than her mother. Hakim is successful as a father to instill love, compassion and attachment in his daughter's heart. Hakim always supports his daughter and encourages her to learn and seek education. As mentioned earlier, the parents must be supportive and encouraging for their children so that they may foster good relationship between them. Hakim develops a healthy relationship with Laila.

The relationship between Laila and her mother is not deep, but is formal kind of relationship. As in any mother-daughter relationship mother and daughter both are emotionally and eternally connected to each other, the connection seems absent in the relationship between Laila and her mother. The mother-daughter relationship is full of selfless love, care, attachment and compassion. These qualities are found in the relationship between Mariam as a mother and Aziza as a daughter. Although Mariam is not Aziza's biological mother, they share the relationship of mother and daughter. They maintain their loving relationship till the end. Aziza shares her relationship as a daughter not only with Mariam, but also with her biological mother, Laila.



Since Laila gives her birth and has physical as well as emotional bonding with her, they together create a better relationship as mother and daughter. As a father Rasheed creates a good relationship with his son, Zalmi, but simultaneously fails to become a good father for his daughter, Aziza. Right from the beginning he is always fond of boys. He wanted a baby boy and not a baby girl. He treats Aziza and Zalmi differently. He fulfills each and every wish of Zalmi and spends lot of money on his demands. On the other hand Rasheed doesn't have even a little bit of love for Aziza in his heart. He always hates her only because she is a girl. Hosseini depicts his hatred for her:

He looked down at the ground, noticed Aziza at his feet.

Get off my heels!" he snapped, making a shooting motion with his gun. "Stop following me! And you can stop twirling your wrists like that. I'm not picking you up. Go on! Go on before you get stepped on." Aziza flinched. She crawled back to Mariam, looking bruised and confused. (248)

The relationship between parents and children is full of love, attachment, compassion, responsibility, understanding and dutiful acts. Though Tariq is not a biological father of Zalmi, he loves him so much. On the contrary Zalmi doesn't like him and hates him. Tariq succeeds in developing his relationship not only with Zalmi but also with Aziza also.

The novel explores these parents-children relationships among which some are good and successful relationships whereas some are failure and lose everything in the relationship. Some parents are ideal, loving, careful and dutiful towards their children,



but some are exceptions to it. In the same way some children are obedient and followers of their parents, but some do not have love, respect and trust in their parents.

Siblings are the members in the family who play a major role of parents and friends in one's life. Siblings have a large amount of scope for one another, because they grow up in the same house and share same people and incidents. Siblings spend lot of time together with each other as compared to the parents and therefore they are closely connected to one another. They share their feelings, emotions, secrets and experiences with each other, because they feel comfortable and secure to share them with each other. Siblings can also be like friends. They fulfill the need of friends in one's life. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* there are several sibling relationships. They are not depicted in a wide range, but they are present in the novel. They have an impact on other relationships also. Therefore they are very important relationships.

The sibling relationship between Mariam and her so called brothers: Farhad and Muhsin are noticed in the course of the story. Their relationship lacks affinity, attachment, respect and understanding. Another sibling relationship found in the novel is between Mariam and Niloufer, Jalil and Afsoon's daughter. They share the relationship of sisters and develop a little bit compassion and attachment in their relationship enjoying their time by speaking to each other and listening to songs on gramophone. The next sibling relationship observed in the novel is the relationship between Laila and her two elder brothers: Noor and Ahmad. The relationship between them is also not portrayed in detailed manner. The novel talks a little about their relationship as sister and brothers. When she was only two years old, her brothers left Kabul to participate in the war against

the Soviet rule. The relationship of Aziza with her step brother, Zalmai is also one more sibling relationship in the novel.

Their relationship at the beginning is not a good one, but it develops with the time and they become good brother and sister. In this way, the novel describes positive and negative sides of family relationships. Though there are negative family relationships, they end with an optimistic note. It means there is a possibility of change for the better. The writer wants to indicate that there are better upcoming days for the families in the novel. For the purpose of improving relationships, the members need to give up misunderstanding, ego and immaturity in the relationships. In order to improve the relationships the members should know the reasons and effects of the confusion and mistrust in the relationships. In order to improve our family relations members should interact and communicate with each other and try to build a happy and healthy relationship.

## Chapter Three

### Subjugation of Afghan Women

Hosseini's novel *A Thousand splendid suns* takes its title from a poem written about Kabul by the seventeenth century poet Saib-e-Tabrizi. The novel covers three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban tyranny seen from the perspectives of two women. Khalid Hosseini exposes the cultural, political, religious and social structures of Afghanistan in degrading and devaluing Afghan women. The strict Islamic laws undermine women's basic human rights and sabotage their equal participation in human community.

The Afghan women struggled hard to survive and to free themselves from the suffocating chains of oppression and violence. All the female characters of the novel endure terrifying situations where they are abused beyond human imaginations. Hosseini draws a similarity between the fate of two characters, Mariam and Laila, who hail from drastically different backgrounds but are connected by a tragic twist in their lives. They share the same pain and agony and undergo similar stereo-typical trials of being women in Afghanistan. The author shows how their struggles and trials lead them to fight back and to hope for happiness and a better future. Further Hosseini underlines the parallel of Afghan women's suffering with the fate of Afghanistan. He masterfully weaves the personal narrative of Laila and Mariam into the backdrop of Afghanistan's turbulent recent history.

Women's rights have diminished in the society of Taliban authority; they are banned to laugh loudly, to play sports, to even talk or shake hands with non mahram



males, and most importantly to study in schools or any other educational institutions. In, the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Khaled Hosseini talks about the lives of Mariam and Laila presenting the heartbreaking reality of women in Afghanistan. Their story portrays some of the major issues in under developed countries such as inequality, poor educational systems, and child marriages.

Mariam is a young girl living in a Kolba (hut) outside Herat, a small city in Afghanistan. She and her mother live a secluded life deviant from the hullabaloo of a typical Afghan family. "Harami" is a strong swearing word for an outcast, an unwanted woman by the family and by the society.

Mariam in the beginning is not even aware why she was addressed with that name, until she knows the meaning of the word it has a lesser impact but with maturity the word started burdening Miriam's life. She was single handedly brought up by her mother Nana with occasional visit by her biological father, Jalil. Though her father did shower lot of love whenever he comes to visit her, Mariam did want more from her father. Jalil never had the guts to accept her legally. Nana had tried to reason out to Mariam many times that life is not as rosy as it seems to be, but young Mariam never pays heed to it. Once her mother told her that, "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam." (7). She later realized what her mother told. How true the statement was, the writer in spite of being a man is able to bring out the sensitivity of women's issue. No matter what the cause of the problem, it's the

women who pay the price, and later when Mariam was married to Rasheed, she is going to encounter abuses every moment of her married life till her execution.

The role of Nana, mother of Mariam role in the novel is less, but she is present throughout the novel. Mariam later in her life was able to connect more with her mother and the guilty feeling that she left her mother for Jalil only to be betrayed and the mother's ultimate suicide had left a deep impact in Mariam's life. She has always tried to protect Mariam in the best of her capability. But one mistake she did was not sending Mariam to school. That became the biggest drawback and hurdle for Mariam's growth and development. When Mullah Faizullah insisted that Mariam should go to school Nana outrightly rejected the idea of sending her daughter to school.

Learn? Learn what, Mullah sahib?" Nana said sharply. "What's there to learn?" She snapped her eyes towards Mariam..."What's the sense schooling a girl like you? It's like shining a spittoon. And you'll learn nothing of value in those schools. There is only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don't teach it in school. Look at me...Only one skill. And it's this tahamul. Endure. (17).

"Endure" the words echoes in the ears of Mariam later in her life. Though, hearing the words sounded harsh for those who are reading the inner line meaning that Nana wanted to convey is quite true. Nana knew that women like her have no value in the Afghan society and ultimately they have the power to endure the harsh treatment of the men. Later Mariam remembers her mother's word "Endure" which works like an ointment healing the wound that Rasheed inflicted everyday of her married life.



Mariam's mother Nana, spiteful and stubborn, has Mariam, consequent to her illicit relationship with Jalil, a successful businessman. He has three wives in Herat and eleven children living in a mansion and visits Mariam his only illegitimate child once a week.

Mariam aspires to lead a life beyond the Kolba enjoying the many hues of life that Jalil introduces to her in his talks. Mariam resents her limited place and wants to live with him and her half-siblings in Herat. She expresses this to Jalil, by asking him to take her to see 'Pinocchio' on her fifteenth birthday. Jalil is reluctant to accept, at last agrees hesitatingly, but then never shows up to take her to the film. Nana warns Mariam that she is a 'Harami' (an illegitimate child) and that she is wrong in expecting anything from Jalil. Without paying heed to Nana, Mariam walks to Herat and finds Jalil's house. He doesn't let her in and hides inside; she sleeps on the street thinking that Jalil would come and take her. The next morning, Jalil's chauffeur drives Mariam home where she finds her mother hanging herself from a tree. Mariam is broken and taken to Jalil's home after her mother's funeral. Jalil's wives want to get rid of the disgrace and Jalil has no say in their decisions. They force on him their decision to marry her off to Rasheed, a Pashtun, and a widowed shoemaker in Kabul.

Mariam is broken and longs to see Mullah Faizullah, her Quran teacher for the last time. She nurtures immense hatred for Jalil and swears that she would not see him again. Rasheed treats Mariam decently initially; he is protective about her in the initial years of marriage. Mariam hopes that she will get something out of marriage, something which had always remained elusive for her mother. But she gets her first taste of horror when Rasheed forcibly has intimation with her. It is a traumatic experience for the little



girl, but she is glad that Rasheed behaves well towards her for the rest of the time. After a while, she becomes pregnant and Rasheed's love for her increases but he makes it clear that he prefers a male child and is hoping that Mariam gives him that. She starts behaving like a proper housewife and cooks and cleans for Rasheed. She tries to please him.

However, one day Mariam slips in the bathroom and suffers miscarriage. Rasheed is dismayed and is gloomy and Mariam is very sad. She feels that it is her fault that the child died. But a few weeks after that she becomes pregnant again with Rasheed's child but she suffers miscarriage again. She has seven miscarriages in a row and all this while, Rasheed becomes increasingly abusive towards her. He starts beating her black and blue and is neglectful of her needs. It is very obvious now that Rasheed's love for her was just to get a male heir. Marriage becomes a trauma for Mariam then as there is no respite from Rasheed and his beatings. She is constantly insulted by him and beaten to no end for no fault of her own. Once when she makes bad daal, Rasheed makes her chew stones which break her teeth, making her cry with agony. Marriage now has become perfect hell for her.

He expects Mariam to fill the gap of a lost son that Rasheed had from his previous marriage. But after she suffers miscarriage after miscarriage, he abuses her both physically and verbally. It becomes clear that Rasheed only uses Mariam and has no emotions towards her. She thinks that her life is the consequence of sinning against Nana and continues to be a victim of domestic violence.

Laila is a young, intelligent girl from a loving family, growing up down the street from Rasheed's and Mariam's house. The Afghan war against the Soviets disrupts Laila's

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Laila is a young, intelligent girl from a loving family, growing up down the street from Rasheed's and Mariam's house. The Afghan war against the Soviets disrupts Laila's



childhood and both her older brothers leave to join the holy war. Her mother Mammy is highly disturbed because of this and is neither at peace with herself nor her family. She never bothers about Laila and her husband and is obsessed with her sons' sacrifice. Laila seeks comfort from her best friend Tariq, a boy a few years older than her. People in the country seek refuge in Pakistan but Mammy is reluctant to move saying it is betrayal to the nation. Just before Laila reaches adolescence, her parents receive the news that both their sons have been killed. This becomes a regular feature on the land and bombs fall on the city. Tariq and Laila are teenagers by now and in love. Tariq tells Laila that he and his family are fleeing to Pakistan; the couple makes love for the first time very passionately. Somehow a few days later, Laila's parents also decide to leave Afghanistan, but as they are packing, a rocket hits their house, killing Laila's parents and wounding her.

Laila is torn and broken having witnessed so many deaths: of her friends, of her parents. Rasheed and Mariam nurse Laila back to health. Rasheed does this with as selfish motive, and after she recovers, a stranger by name Abdul Sharif brings the news that Tariq has died. Devastated and realizing that she's pregnant with Tariq's child, Laila feels safe and agrees to marry Rasheed. Mariam is initially hurt and threatened by Laila's presence as Rasheed belittles Mariam further. She despises Laila and refuses to have anything to do with her. Laila gives birth to a daughter Aziza, and the women come close to see happiness in the child. As it's a girl child, Laila also becomes a victim of Rasheed's violence, and the two see themselves as allies against Rasheed's abusive, manipulative ways. He does go penniless, unable to support his family, his fierceness and bigot ideology do not teach him a lesson. He decides on sending Aziza to an orphanage against the wishes of Laila. However, by the end of the novel it's Rasheed's cruel and



manipulative ways that lead to his death. However, a few years later, Laila gives birth to a son, Zalmai. Rasheed is more involved with Zalmai and doesn't care for the others in manifesting his love for his son.

After years of abuse and sadness, Laila is shocked and frenzied to see a man standing at her front door, Tariq. She understands that the Abdul Shariff episode is a trap set by Rasheed so that Laila wouldn't run away. Tariq and Laila spend the afternoon together while Rasheed is at work. However, Rasheed finds out from Zalmai that Tariq came home and brutally begins to beat Laila. The two women see death in his eyes, and with a shovel Mariam kills Rasheed. Mariam takes the blame on herself, turns herself over to the Taliban to bear the consequences. She clears the way for Laila to find sanctuary for herself and her children in Pakistan with Tariq. Mariam gives in, as she finally finds love in Laila and her children.

In Pakistan, Tariq and Laila marry and finally begin the life they dream of. With time, both of Laila's children accept Tariq and enjoy their new life. Their happiness is overshadowed by the news that the United States has attacked Afghanistan and Laila grows nostalgic. Conditions in Kabul improve because of the U.S invasion and Laila insists that her family move back home so they can help rebuild their city. Laila visits Mariam's old home and is able to relate to Mariam's talk about her Kolba, she comes to terms with her grief over Mariam's execution.

Laila and Tariq build a new life in Kabul. Laila becomes a schoolteacher, a respectable woman in Afghanistan as her father dreams, during her childhood days. She works in the orphanage where Aziza once lived. And when Laila becomes pregnant, she

decides that if she has a girl, she'll name her Mariam. Both Laila and Mariam exhibit characters that are unique in their own way, Laila strong with indomitable spirit ready to confront the male domination whereas Mariam weak submissive yielding to life's situations.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Hosseini seems to undertake the position of an orientalist writer who speaks for Afghan women without having closely lived with the Afghan people. The first Orientalist stereotype illustrated in this novel is that of the misogynist Muslim male. From the very beginning of the novel one can see one of the oldest stereotypes about Muslim people. Jalil is an old wealthy man who owns various houses and other properties, someone who has total freedom to fornicate and marry as many women as he likes. By describing his character as a male with "three wives and nine children, nine legitimate children, all of whom were strangers to Mariam" (5). Hosseini perpetuates the classical Orientalist characterization of Muslim men as prototypes of sexual monstrosity and debauchery.

Another male character employed to represent the traditionally stereotyped Orientalist attitudes towards Muslims is Rasheed. Hosseini adopts the same Orientalist strategy by depicting him as a gentle, affectionate and caring husband who is absolutely considerate of his wife's emotions and welfare but who later turns into a sex-obsessed brute. In the beginning, Rasheed is a widower, a poor stone carver desperately in need of a soul mate. He gets married and introduces his new wife, Mariam, to his life in Kabul by taking her on a tour in the city, patiently explaining its architectural wonders. The incident of forced marriage is continuously associated with conventional Orientalist



attitudes towards the Islamic social and legal system and its conception of marriage as an institution. Hosseini here generally represents women in Afghanistan as subjects to the male's authority. Only the elder member of the family can decide about their personal choices even when it comes to their lovers or future husbands.

The second Orientalist stereotype which Hosseini perpetuates through his narrative is the debate over the compulsion of wearing a veil. Just a few days after his marriage to Mariam, Rasheed begins to insist that his wife should wear a burka in public. The requirement of wearing burka or 'hijab' is itself orientalized in the sense that it conveys more than what Eastern people associate with it. For the Orientalist this custom signifies fanaticism and subjugation because the burka does not allow women to show their beauty and enclose them inside a black carcass devoid of femininity. For New-Orientalist intellectual women, rights and freedom are intricately connected with the degree of their detachment from cultural practices and formulations such the veil or the 'hijab'. The third conventional Orientalist attitude defended by Hosseini is linked to the Muslim preference of the male over the female. Rasheed is obsessed with the hope of having a male heir. When Mariam's first pregnancy ends in miscarriage, Rasheed becomes furious and eventually loses hope after the other miscarriages. Hosseini emphasizes the other savage side of an oriental husband when he depicts Rasheed as totally insensitive to the sadness and pain these miscarriages inflict on Mariam. Within such oriental categorizations, Rasheed is presented as a superior irrational male who cannot accept any possible scientific explanation.



They seem to think that women are nothing but machines for reproduction, machines who work and tend for men, give birth to their children, bring them up, feed them and cloth them and keep themselves in background their entire lives. One of the most enduring feelings which the reader gets after going through *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is the feeling of the female bonding between Mariam and Laila. The novel gives hope that even though life can teach us very harsh lessons and land us among people who don't love us but it is still possible to find love and caressing in midst of violence and hatred. The mother-daughter bond between Mariam and Laila is a proof of that.

## Chapter Four

### Feminist Retaliation

Gender equality has been the longest war women have been fighting since time. Throughout history, women across the world who have fought for gender equality and women's rights are considered as feminists. Women, deprived of their rights do not understand that they are indeed a feminist, when they want gender equality. Women in Afghanistan have been going through gender inequity in its severe form since ages.

Feminism is broadly described as a set of movements for deconstruction of gender roles for political, social and economic equality between men and women. It aims at ending sexism and exploitation by establishing equal opportunities for women in education and employment. The axiomatic statement by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman," implies that distinctions are conventionally drawn between gender and sex. Feminism is a global phenomenon dealing with gender equality. Men and women who fight against patriarchy, dominance, marginalization and degrading rule and regulations can be considered as feminists.

Feminism differs from country to country considering the situations and circumstances of the victims. Islamic feminists fight for the equal rights for Muslim women by providing educational opportunities, international human rights and progressive interpretation of the Koran. They raise their voice for justice and equality from within Islamic traditions. Feminism has been waging a war against male chauvinists

who have degraded women, but it does not mean that the women have been waging this fight alone. There have been men who have assisted the women in fighting this battle.

The women are gloried only as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives in all the relations related to men. She is glorified as someone who has immense patience and who sacrifices her life for the family. In other words women are conditioned by the society to become sacrificial lambs who could only think about rearing children and looking after their husbands. They were the sacrificial lambs of the society and the society thrived on their sacrifices. It was after the advent of feminism that education was made available to the women. Earlier it was a privilege that was enjoyed by only a few women who belonged to royal or aristocratic families. Rise of feminism as a movement also paved the way for equal status of women in the world. Prior to the advent of feminism women were treated as objects and even as objects they were inferior to the males.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* Khaled Hosseini portrays how strict Islamic family laws are imposed on women by forcing them to adhere to fundamental values of virginity, marriage and divorce. Khaled Hosseini depicts the plight of women behind the walls of Afghanistan during several invasions in the country. The issue of feminism and gender inequity has been raised through the character of Mariam and Laila. The novel stresses over the rights women were not given along with the restrictions to education, choices and liberation that restrict their great potentials in the male dominated world.

Male dominance over the women in Afghanistan is a major concern that relates this novel to feminist aspect. Forceful marriages, lack of freedom, lack of identity, limited space in terms of mental, social, cultural and psychological level and torture that was perpetrated towards the Afghan women are the issues that are of concern to by the



feminists across the globe. Social and political injustice that has been done to the Afghan women vis-à-vis gender inequity and socio political activism by the women of Afghanistan during their tough times.

Feminism is a diverse collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies that are concerned with social, political and economic inequality between man and woman. Feminists strongly believe that women and men should have equal rights. Women who are deprived of their rights do not understand that they are indeed a feminist during the process of fighting for gender equality. Afghan women are one such case who are directly or indirectly fighting for their rights that makes them feminists in one or another way. Afghanistan brings all the ethical dilemmas of feminism and gender equity together.

The issue of Afghan women's rights and freedom became a major concern, just after the September 11, 2001 attacks, and the subsequent US military campaign in Afghanistan, which successfully overthrew the Taliban regime. Soon after the U.S. attacked Afghanistan in October 2001, the miserable figure of the burqa-clad woman awaiting freedom was figured out by writers across the globe. The concept of feminism and gender equity has been raised in literary writings along with the socio political scenario of Afghanistan. There is a history over the centuries of subjugation of Afghan women. This history of the continuous violence against women has been traced by several writers in their writings. Khaled Hosseini with his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is one of them. Khaled Hosseini has been analyzing the situation of women in Afghanistan, not through the ideological formulation of before and after the Taliban

Hosseini traces the dark phase in the history of Afghanistan when women of the country suffered the most. The Taliban government observed strict inhuman rules for women which resulted in the wretched conditions of the women with mystified inquisitiveness.

In such a social set up mercy seemed to be a distant thought. The Taliban Government banned higher education for women and made burqa compulsory for them in public. To make the disgraceful conditions of the people of Afghanistan more palpable especially the women as portrayed in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the writer has compared the status of women before and during the reign of the Talibans in Afghanistan. The pitiful conditions of the women arrest the attention of the author greatly.. Hosseini has successfully represented the unpredictable destiny of Afghan women in general and their miserable condition during the regime of the Taliban government in particular. Apart from other issues like history, ethnic clash, and religion, the author has emphasized the issue of gender discrimination in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. His novel depicts the plight of women behind the walls of Afghanistan during several invasions in the country. The issue of feminism and gender inequity has been raised through the character of Mariam and Laila. Both of their fates are connected through a tragic twist of circumstances.

However, because of the status of women within the society, their decisions are forced on them. Mariam had to marry Rasheed a shoemaker who is many years elder to her, because her father and his wives force her to do so. Her acceptance is merely a token of act. Laila, the other protagonist had to marry Rasheed because she was orphaned and pregnant. Both situations are untenable in her society. The novel stresses over the rights



women were not given along with the restrictions to education, choices and liberation that restrict their great potentials in the male dominated world.

The story begins in 1974, as Mariam, an illegitimate child of a wealthy businessman from Herat, is growing up with her mother, Nana. Nana is the first woman we meet in the novel who has become the prey of male villainy. Nana worked as a housekeeper in Jalil's house until she was impregnated and abandoned by him. Nana is an outcast who has been violated, discarded by her master. Nana sees the truth of both men and traditions thus is deeply embittered as she expresses, "A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. It isn't like a mother's womb. It won't bleed, it won't stretch to make room for you" (26). She tries to open her daughter's eyes to this wisdom, "Learn this now and learn this well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam" (7). Mariam constantly faced and blamed for circumstances that were out of her control. She never did anything wrong, yet had to endure a lifetime of hardship. She was a selfless human being cursed for being a woman. Her illimitable plagued her as well, in ways we would imagine it would not have had she been a boy. These line are the prophetic lines said by Mariam's mother when she was a child that came true in her life after some years.

In a few years this little girl will be a woman who will make small demands on life, who will never burden others, who will never let on that she too has had sorrows, disappointments, dreams that have been ridiculed. A woman who will be like a rock in a Riverbed, enduring



without complaint, her grace not sullied but shaped by the turbulence that washes over her. (141)

Following her mother's death, Mariam is left alone. Reluctantly Jalil takes her to his home where under pressure from his family, Jalil marries off 15 year old Mariam to Rasheed, a brutish cobbler 30 years older than her. In his house Mariam feels, "...uprooted, displaced, like an intruder on someone else's life" (56). Her initial days of marriage, however, bring hope- an over-protective husband and the demanding household chores. She feels she is wanted when Rasheed's words of the veil make her feel protected. Rasheed is shown as a split personality when he says to Mariam about the women who come to his stores, uncovered, show their feet, wear make-up and look into his eyes directly. He calls them and their husbands as shameless people who think they're modern and don't bother about the honour and pride. Rasheed's another shade of his personality comes from his craving to watch nude women in magazines and that it is a justified act because he is a man. As per the Islamic beliefs, the 'burqa,' meaning the curtain is meant not to put a barrier between a man and a woman but between two men.

According to Mernissi, Fatima in her book on *Women and Islam*, the word hijab, the Islamic headscarf, is three-dimensional, each one blending into the other. The first one is to hide something from sight, the second dimension is spatial i.e. to separate and the third is ethical: belonging to the realm of the forbidden. But the West views the burqa as a barrier to women's physical, mental and spiritual capabilities. Until recently it was thought that the disappearance of the veil was inevitable. It was sure that greater education and opportunity for women in the Muslim world would result in the

elimination of this relic of women's oppression. People stood firmly and unquestioningly against the veil and the burqa, viewing them as signs of women's disempowerment. But in the course of researching, the veil is seen as a symbol of intolerance, a badge of individuality and justice. However, Rasheed's insistence on women wearing the hijab is meaningful and also lawful. But it is also seen that Rasheed has involved himself in watching nude women in magazines. And this is justified by Mariam herself, considering that his needs are different since he had lived a solitary life after the demise of his first wife and son. This gives an insight of the psyche of the woman who compromises with such acts of men declaring that it is their physical and emotional needs.

Rasheed a typical Patriarch in a deep rooted patriarchal society treats Mariam as an object. He is the embodiment of wild man in Medieval texts as described by Hayden White, "He is desire incarnate... glutton, lascivious, and promiscuous, without even conscious of sin or perversion. His physical power conceived to increase in direct ratio to the diminution of his conscience"(167). Rasheed's verbal and physical abuses of powerless Mariam is due to her failure to give him a son to hold his name, which is hardly her fault, but this is how a traditional culture sees it.

Over the years, she learns to endure, harden herself against his derogatory talk, his scorn. His manhandling her with a belt becomes a regular feature, she trembles and shivers with fright, as he sneers and slaps the belt with bloodshot eyes. It is the fear of a goat released in a hungry tiger's cage. She pleads Rasheed to reconsider his decision of marrying Laila, as she is old, old to bear the pain. Her fortitude is immense, she internalizes and endures Rasheed's physical and psychological dominance as destiny.



However, at the end Mariam is not a silenced, peripheral self. She effaces the overwhelming male presence of Rasheed, turns into a rebel female and comes out of her typical feminine cocoon.

Unlike Mariam, Laila on the other hand is living a free and emancipated life. Laila goes to school and is aware of her rights. She is lucky to have the support of two liberal minded men, a father and a boyfriend, both of whom have taught her how to stand for her rights. Her father believes that education is the absolute top priority. He says to Laila,

...marriage can wait, education can't...You're a very, very bright girl... when this war is over; Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, may be even more. Because society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila, no chance. ( 114)

But Laila's freedom does not last long. She loses all her family in war and is compelled to marry Rasheed. In the beginning Rasheed treats her with care but then Laila commits the unforgivable sin of giving Rasheed a daughter, not a son. In Afghanistan a woman's value has been measured by her ability to bear children especially boys. From here onwards she becomes the target of Rasheed's abuse and torture in the same way as Mariam. She is ruthlessly beaten, subjected to extreme violence. Laila obeys her husband as he often warns her and her children of sending out to the streets. people in her environment consider her a woman and no longer a mere girl. As she becomes a woman, she also becomes a feminist.



The novel also stresses over restrictions to education, choices and liberation that restrict their great potentials in the male dominated world. It depicts a gradual adherence of women towards the rules and regulations made against them by the society as in case of Laila. Throughout her life she has struggled to obtain freedom from any man and as she has grown up and becomes a woman, she slowly sees the position she sits in the world. The ideas of women rights are superseded. Laila finally realizes that the world is male dominated but still she doesn't lose hope.

Rasheed, a very domestically violent 60 year old husband of Laila, explained very clearly that "A women's face is her husband's business only"(48). This quote gives an example of a male warning a female, Rasheed to Laila, that he is the owner of Laila. Women are considered properties to men in this world. When Rasheed goes through rough time, the comfort Laila gives was not appreciated nor respected. As Laila tries her best to satisfy Rasheed, she was nothing but a means of satisfying his physical needs, somethings Rasheed will pull out and use when needed. Laila is only another piece of property Rasheed uses like a car, a house or a gun.

Laila's only use was granting Rasheed a child. This is considerably the argument stated in which women are only properties to the male superior. This is the case with most of the women in Afghanistan. They were treated as an object not as a human being. When Laila is ready to give birth to her son, only one hospital in all of Kabul serves women. This hospital is severely short of staff and lacking in medicine and anesthetic. It seems extreme to portray a cesarean section without anesthetic, but this is historically correct. Laila was to be operated on without any sort of medication during the time of

Fundamentalist regime in Afghanistan indicates the hypocrisy of the male dominated society where women were so segregated that sanitary medical conditions, let alone mixed gender hospitals, were denied.

The strength these women had shown during the tough time was magnificent and shows the activism on their part. Kabul had only one hospital for women, few doctors were working there, and they had little or no medicine or means to anesthetize their patients: ...The doctor took a breath, then told Laila that the hospital had no anesthetic.... "Then cut me open", Laila said. She dropped back on the bed and drew up her knees.... "Cut me open and give me my baby (259).

These were the circumstances through which Afghan women were going through during the horrified reign of Taliban. The women in the novel often work to retain hope while dealing with the realities of political and personal oppression. At significant points throughout the novel, characters express their individual hopes. For instance, when Mariam asks Mullah Faizullah if she may attend school, her journey of hope begins. For Laila, hope lies in Tariq and an attempted escape from Rasheed. Most characters walk into such events with high levels of hope for the future, but once reality sets in, a character's hope is crushed. Not only do these waves of hope provide the reader with suspense and emotional attachment to the characters, but this cycle appears to reflect the cycles of hope and dashed dreams that Afghan women suffer over the period of time.

The personal stories of hope are mirrored in the political hope of the Afghan citizens. Jalil and Rasheed emphasize the importance of their reputations by doing their best to avoid any shame to their names. Jalil thus takes action by casting Nana out of his



house once she becomes pregnant with his illegitimate child. He also does not keep his promise to take Mariam into town with him. He also marries off Mariam to Rasheed after Nana's death. For his part, Rasheed notes that he would need to marry Laila because he could not have her living in his house without some sort of pretense otherwise, people would gossip about him. He also spends beyond his family's budget in order to make it seem that his family has wealth. Ironically, both men behave in ways that are ethically shameful. To protect their names in order to meet their own ideas of social expectations, they neglect or even abuse their offspring and wives, sacrificing the welfare of those around them.

The women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* have very different educational experiences. Mariam is tutored by Mullah Faizullah in the Koran, and she learns how to read and write. Yet, when she asks her mother about going to school, Nana insists that the only lesson that Mariam needs to learn is to endure. This shows the social set up against women who were made to learn endurance since their childhood. While on the other hand Laila's father emphasizes the importance of her education. Hakim diligently works with Laila on her homework and provides her with extra work in order to expand her education. He emphasizes that Laila's education is as important as that of any boy. After the streets of Kabul become too dangerous, he insists on tutoring Laila himself. He comments about the importance of women attending universities. Aziza is educated by both Laila and Mariam, who contribute what they know in order to educate her. Mariam teaches the Koran, and Laila eventually volunteers to teach at her school. The end of the book feels hopeful in terms of the education of women in that Zalmai and Aziza head off to school together.



A clear distinction is made throughout the novel between true love and marriage. Since the marriages in the novel tend to be forced, they are not likely to be influenced by love. For Nana, the prospect of marriage was ruined by a 'jinn'. She remembers the lost prospect fondly. Mariam finds hope in her marriage as something that could lead to contentment and possibly to love, but the marriage actually devolves into abuse and oppression. Only Laila escapes the abusive bonds placed on her by Rasheed when she finds true love in Tariq. The contrasts between forced marriage and true love are obvious once Laila and Tariq are finally able to get married and live as a family. Daily living in a forced marriage, for Laila, involved disgust and futile hopes for a better future. With Tariq, in contrast, daily routines leave Laila content and fulfilled. Sexual relations between Laila and Rasheed were completely one-sided, with Rasheed forcing himself upon Laila. With Tariq, however, Laila finds safety in making love. Perhaps most importantly, Laila felt fearful and restrained with Rasheed, but she can be honest and brave once she finds true love in Tariq.

The actions of these characters symbolizes their strength to endure things as they join together in feminist retaliation against the man who has taken away their rights to live according to their own choice. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, two generations of characters are brought inharmoniously together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives, the struggle to survive and to raise a family, to find happiness, are inextricable from the history playing out around them. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the story of Afghanistan includes the story of the role and place of women in Afghan society.

However the novel, towards the end kindles a ray of hope for all those women who have been suffering under the male dominance and are deprived of all freedom. The novel gives voice to those women whose voice has been muffled by the illegitimate patriarchal authority. Mariam and Laila finally take the cudgels towards their emancipation and overcome their subjugation. Laila's inspiration helps Mariam to take control of her own destiny. Rasheed has been an awful, abusive husband to her, but up until this point, she never defended herself. Mariam changes more than any other character over the course of the novel. She kills Rasheed and selflessly takes the rap for the crime so Laila can live on. She never dreams for a better life. But she wants to be free from all the brutality.

As Mariam and Laila become closer through their shared love of Aziza, Laila's daughter, and a common need to survive the brutal and tyrannical Rasheed, Mariam, for the first time, finds herself wanted and needed and part of a family. By virtue of this sense of belonging, she undergoes a transformation that is complete at the point she tells Laila to "[t]hink like a mother. I am". After killing Rasheed to prevent him from killing Laila, Mariam, older and more accustomed to hardship, must form a plan to save them from the repercussions of her act. There is no possibility of convincing Talib authorities that she committed this act in self-defense. For women under the Taliban there is no self defense, there is only obedience to the male authority, and punishment for failing to be obedient.

Mariam, confident and in control, makes her decision to turn herself in. She is a mother sacrificing herself for her children. Laila, still young and still finding her way, cannot comprehend this decision, but follows Mariam's orders.



Mariam makes the ultimate sacrifice for the woman and children who have become her family and for the relationship she sees that Tariq and Laila might have. Although her final act is tragic, it is also heroic and a choice that she makes on her own. Mariam lives out the final days of her life in the Walayat Women's Prison. To the women in the prison, many of whom are imprisoned for attempting to run away from their husbands, Mariam, who has killed her husband, is a hero. She is honoured and cared for by her cellmates and loved by their children until her final day. It is well to recognize that Hosseini's characters are neither passive nor helpless, but they are abused and their lives are made tragic by the social and the religious mores and the political restrictions placed on them and the lack of any kind of support afforded to them. Hosseini strengthens his case in pointing out the hypocrisy behind laws by the Taliban who forbade women from working outside the home even when no males in the family could support them.

Mariam herself was surprised that she possessed such heroic traits whom everyone condemned as a 'harami'. She breaks all the shackles and comes out a real, true hero. Her great strength allows her to face the sacrifice she makes, to save the ones she loves. She makes Laila understand that she and her children cannot live like fugitives; they deserve a better life, a peaceful solitary life, away from this unforgiving country. She says:

It's fair," Mariam said. "I've killed your husband. I've deprived your son of his father. It isn't right that I run. I can't. Even if they never catch us, I'll never...." Her lips trembled. "I'll never escape your son's grief. How do I look at him? How do I ever bring myself to look at him, Laila jo? For me it ends here. There's nothing more I want. Everything I'd ever wished



for as a little girl you've already given me. You and your children have made me so very happy. It's all right, Laila jo. This is all right. Don't be sad. (349-350)

The actions of these women show their strength to endure things and to retaliate against the man who has taken away their rights to live according to their own choice. The novel ends with a happy note where the bloody war has ended, the Taliban rule vanished and women feel secured and emancipated, where schools are reopened for the girls and women are free to work.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Khaled Hosseini places his novels into the category of storytelling. He often refers to himself as a storyteller. He may simply say this out of humility, choosing not to attribute higher literary motives to his writing. He, however, does mention in more than one interview that there are many good storytellers in Afghanistan and that he grew up listening to stories. He thus separates himself and his writing in part from the Western novel tradition and links himself instead to a tradition that is part of the greater Afghan culture, or an oral tradition, Afghanistan also has a rich written poetry heritage. Knowing that Hosseini's own early reading interests were solidly within the realm of Western literature, one can look at the various forms and styles associated with the novel, the bildungsroman, the historical novel, and even that of domestic fiction.

Hosseini wished to be seen as a storyteller and one can see that he fulfills some of that role by passing on stories and experiences both from his own experience and from his imagination. His narratives are straightforward tales centered on the daily events of his protagonists. But, it can also enrich one's own understanding of Hosseini's fiction by looking at it within the tradition of Western literary fiction.

One can also view the novel as domestic fiction, although it is difficult to compare Hosseini's works with those of Austen because of the brutal nature of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and the twentieth-century graphic reality which is present in both the novels. Both novels deal primarily with the intimate relationships of the family within the confines of the family home. Hosseini, could be compared to as he was much

more likely than Austen to let the events of the outside world seep in to his tales and to deal with the seedier, more brutal side of everyday life. Finally, one cannot ignore the fact that Hosseini, the author, is an immigrant and a member of a minority group within the United States. Hosseini's novels follow the literary tradition of novels of personal transformation; historical novels providing illumination to readers about country, time, and place; domestic novels providing insight into intimate family relationships taking place primarily within the four walls of the home; or ethnic and immigrant novels exploring the struggle of becoming part of the fabric of a new country.

It is well to recognize that Hosseini's characters are neither passive nor helpless, but they are abused and their lives are made tragic by social and religious mores and the political restrictions placed on them and the lack of any kind of support afforded them. Hosseini strengthens his case in pointing out the hypocrisy behind laws put into place by the Taliban who forbade women from working outside the home even when no males in the family could support them, who prevented females from attending school, and who endangered the lives of women and children by limiting the availability of health care for women to one severely understaffed and unfunded hospital in Kabul.

Introductory chapter deals with the emergence of Afghan American literature. It gives the clear picture about Khaled Hosseini, particularly his writings, and the culture and history of Afghanistan. One of the abiding themes of Khaled Hosseini is religious oppression and Islamic fanaticism in countries like Afghanistan. He is not at all tolerant about groups like the Taliban and does not apologize for them in any case. Though he does not engage in direct criticism he castigates religious oppression, entrenched in the



scriptures. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* tells us the intertwined stories of the two Afghan women, Mariam and Laila, both married to the same abusive man, during the years of the Soviet occupation, then the civil war and the Taliban dictatorship. The novel focuses on subjugation and objectification of Afghan women under patriarchy and Taliban regime.

The second chapter analyses the major family relationships applying The Family Systems theory evolved by Dr. Murray Bowen among the eight concepts in the Bowen theory only five are considered for the novel *A Thousand Splendid Sun*. Hosseini has dealt with the five concepts "triangles, differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, family projection process, nuclear family emotional system." The concepts are well explained by giving apt situations from the text.

Subjugation of Women in Afghan society represents religious fanaticism in Afghanistan. It was proved that there are ample religious and institutional grounds for discrimination against women in the Afghan society and that is why misogyny is so rampant in the country. It cannot be easily rooted out as it is deeply ingrained in the religious customs, rituals and habits of the people. Over time, men have managed to hold women in a stranglehold of institutional misogyny. Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is most of all, a story of the oppression of women and how even in such bleak conditions there is still hope for them; that there is still humanity left in the darkest corners of earth.

There is not much hope for women in the religious theocracy like Afghanistan, but still the hope that is should be picked up and worked upon, at least this is what the message of Khaled Hosseini implies in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Hosseini traces the

dark phase in the history of Afghanistan when women of the country suffered the most. The Taliban government observed the miserable conditions of the women with mystified curiosity. The dreadful conditions of the women was, the harsh inevitable reality in Afghanistan during the reign of the Taliban government. The Taliban could easily intrude in the affairs of the people of the country irrespective of gender during that period. In such a social set up mercy seemed to be a utopia.

Feminist retaliations deals with Women in Afghanistan suffer not only under patriarchy but also became soft target of the religious bigotry under the Taliban regime. The conquest of Taliban only added to the Titanic sufferings of Afghan women. The harsh Taliban regime misinterpreted the religious dictums to strengthen the oppression on women. As one can see in the novel the Taliban government frequently carries out executions, flogging and shooting of women who are accused of breaking the orders. One such victim is Mariam herself. Women's world is curtailed to their houses.

The strong female bonds, sisterly and even a motherly bond that is formed between Mariam and Laila are soul-stirring. Laila and Mariam work towards a better future not only for themselves but also for their children. Raising their kids together leads to a motherly relationship between the two that lasts for an eternity. Mariam indeed is a symbol of courage and selfless love. Mariam gives up her life so the woman she cared for Laila, could live freely shows how powerful the female bonding could be. Throughout this novel, the bond of love between the two women becomes their strength to resist and endure the ruthless patriarchal tradition and Mariam represents the stoic women who possess the amazing inner strength at adverse situations.



*A Thousand Splendid Suns* tells the story of women who are condemned, silenced, oppressed and are violently victims of brutal male dominance. The women as main characters are victims of injustice and inequity. But, throughout the novel all the tough and hard circumstances propel the characters towards a greater, superior and unified identity, selfhood.

Hosseini uses the theme of domestic abuse to highlight the issue of social injustice among women in Afghanistan. The protagonists in the novel are constantly being abused physically and mentally by their cruel husband. With this theme he also explored the inequality among men and women. However, at the end of the story, Mariam finally can find her bravery when she accidentally kills Rasheed. Mariam knows the punishment for a murderer, but she will not regret it. She has saved her most precious thing she had: love. She has defeated Rasheed to keep the only love she has alive. The struggle and bravery which have been put forward by Mariam and Laila in determining their life proclaim the power of feminism. Women like Mariam give us hope and are among those who strive to make the world a better place for those they truly love. Literature reflects life, and it is indeed true that women can move mountains if they join forces.



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**The Saga of Kilvenmani in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**ROSARY S.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN18)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**



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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **The Saga of Kilvenmani in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

Rosary.S  
ROSARY S.

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **The Saga of Kilvenmani in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess*** submitted to St. Mary's college (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is work done by Rosary S. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **The Saga of Kilvenmani in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess*** analyses the protagonist's struggle for survival in her **Repression**.

The first chapter deals with the general characteristics and her predominant place in the realm of Dalit Literature.

The second chapter exposes the victimization of Dalits through Politics which is included in the context of Postmodernism.

The third chapter depicts India's Dark Heart through the sufferings of peasants in Kilvenmani.

The fourth chapter deals with the complications that Kandasamy overcomes through her writings.

The fifth chapter sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

India is a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. It secures all its citizens to all its citizens social, economic and political justice. It also assures liberty of thoughts, expression, equality of status, opportunity, fraternity and the dignity of the individual. Dalits are members of lowest social status group in the Hindu caste system. The word 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit language, it means 'suppressed' or 'the oppression' or 'broken to piece' and it is a self-chosen political name of caste in India they are untouchable class. Since Independence, justice, liberty and equality, which are logically the prerequisites for ensuring fraternity among the Dalits and other citizens, particularly in the villages.

Dalits were excluded from the four fold Varna system the Varnas have been known since a mantra in the Rig-Veda that portrays the Brahman, the Kshatriya are the ruling people and the Brahman are the priest and the Shudra lives in service to the other three [Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya]. Finally the fifth class 'Panchama' which includes the 'untouchable' classes and the other such a tribal groups who are outside the system and consequently Avarna ('classless') traditional Hindus believing the four Varna systems to be the fundamental to the good society. Like the 'Eta' [group of people] outcaste in Japan the work of the Avarna's are regulated to doing toiling and polluting tasks like agricultural labour, disposing dead bodies, working with leather, cleaning toilets and sewage etc. In spite of restricting them to do these trivial activities they were considered to be polluting to the individual and their pollution was considered contagious.



Dalits were commonly segregated and baned from full participation in Hindu social life. For example, they could not enter a temple or a school and were required to stay outside the village. They had a separate seat in village, council and their children are made to sit apart or denied food altogether during midday meals in government schools. Dalit families are not allowed to draw water from public wells or taps. Their dead also suffered discrimination as funerals of Dalit cannot pass through the main village. They have separate burial grounds. So also they have been prohibited from marrying other caste member and they are given separate glasses in village tea stalls.

After decades of urban growth under East India Company and British Raj, the Mumbai city's population reached half the million and the pollution density was over ten times higher than London at the time. In 1869, as with 19<sup>th</sup> century epidemics in European slums, bumbonic plague spread in Mumbai and then across most of the places in India. The epidemic killed near 2,00,000 people in Mumbai and eight million in India. In 1880s, concerned about epidemics, the British colonial government expelled polluting industries and many Indian residents of the native town, away from the peninsular part of the city, to a distant edge of the city in the north in the village of Koliwad.

Dalits were always on the marginalized 'other' side of the Indian society. So when they started voicing about themselves after centuries of silence voicing, the literature depicting assertion of human right, self-pride, revolt against social injustice, chronicles of personal and collective suffering, and hopes and aspiration for a new society devoid of discrimination sprouted.

In 1958, the term 'Dalit literature' was used at the first conference of Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sanga in Mumbai by people including Jyotiba Phyla and Bhimroo

Ambedkar. In 1993, Wardha organized the first Akhil Bharatiya Ambedkari Sahitya Sammelan in Wardha, Maharashtra to reconceptualize and transform Dalit Sahitya after the age of Dalit modern age. Hero scholar and inspiration, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar, who had successfully organized the third Akhil Bharatiya Ambedkaria Sahitya Sammelan in 1996 and become a voice of advocacy for awareness and transformation. Since then ten similar Sahitya Sammelans or literary gatherings were held in various places. The emergence of the Dalit panthers in 1972 in Maharashtra is a significant moment in the history of Dalit literature which was furthered by various literary movements across India. The primary motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of Dalits, the struggle against casteist tradition has a long history.

After a several year of independence, as a Dalit continues to bear the brunt of violence and discrimination- highlighted in recent years by the tragic suicide of Rohith Vemula, a Ph.D. student in Hyderabad Central University, who hanged himself, blaming his birth as a 'fatal accident' in a chilling final note one could not be any further away from what the constitution had demanded from a free and fair India. Rohith's is not done a tragedy. A spectre of suicide deaths by several Dalit North India and in Hyderabad since 2007, 23 were Dalits. This includes two in the prestigious All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, and 11 in Hyderabad city. Systematic data does not exist for such suicides, but the problem run far deeper than few students deciding to end their own lives after being defeated by the system. Dalit dilemma in India reads like an entire data sheet of tragedies.

According to a 2010 report by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the prevention of atrocities against scheduled castes, a crime is committed against a Dalit



for every 18 minutes. Every day, on an average, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalit murdered, and two Dalit houses burnt.

India may be a democratic republic, but justice, equality, liberty and fraternity but the four basic tenets promised in the preamble of our constitution are clearly not available to all. Dalits continue to be oppressed and discriminated against in villages, in educational institutions, in the job market and on the political battlefield, leaving them with little respite in any sphere or at any juncture of their lives. There has been no dearth of political rhetoric, or creation of laws, to pronounce that Dalits must not get a raw deal. The protection of civil Right Act, 1995, and the SC/ST (prevention of atrocities) act, 1989, prescribe the punishment from crimes against Dalits that are much more stringent than corresponding offences under the IPC. Special courts have been established in major states for speedy trial of cases registered exclusively under these Acts. In 2006, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh even equated the practice of 'Untouchability' to that of 'apartheid' and racial segregation in South Africa.

The SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, passed by the parliament in December 2015, made several critical changes. New activities were added to the list of offences some of the offences which are quite offensive. Among them were preventing SCs/STs from using common property resources, from using common property resources, from entering any places of public worship, and from entering an education or health institution. In case of any violation of the bills, the new law said the court would presume unless proved that the accused non- SC/ST person was aware of the caste or tribal identity. The violent incidents against Dalits increased, rather than decreased over the year, in spite of constitutional protection and legal safeguards. Caste is



not simply a law and order problem but a social problem. Caste violence can only be eradicated with the birth of a new social order, says Chandra Bhan Prasad, co-author of *defying the odds: the rise of Dalit Entrepreneurs*. He argues that the upward mobility of some Dalits caused by market reforms post-1991, ironically leads to higher incidence of atrocities in the form of a backlash.

Dalit politics typically takes two forms: militant movement and electoral coalitions. The democratic electoral route is ironically poised on the cups of a paradox. Dalit groups must either with mainstream political parties and risk compromising in the Dalit agenda; or fight it out alone risk getting pushed to the margins. It is a Hobson's choice. The reason is that the spread of Dalit population throughout India is such that by themselves they are always in a minority. In any electoral battle, they can only benefit if they torn an alliance either with other dominant caste groups, or main stream political parties.

Some of the important writers whose writings will find a place which can reach some extent are: Mahasweta Devi, Namdeo Dhasal, Daya Pawar, ArjunDangle, Sachi Rautray, Rabi Singh, Basudev Sunani, Bama, Abhiwani, Poomani, Imayam, Marku, Mangal Rathod, Neerave Patel, Perumal Murugan, Palamalai, Sudhakar, D.Gopi and others. Sharankumar Limbale has stated, Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrow, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief. This trend started in 1873 when Jyotirao phule, a Marathi Dalit (then known as an Untouchable), published his book *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) and dedicated the treatise to the then Negroes in America as a token of admiration for their sublime disinterestedness and self-sacrificing devotion in

the cause of Negro Slavery. Dalit literature cannot be reduced merely to concerning the discrimination against Dalits. Poets like S. Joseph, have spawned new literary canons by disturbing the usual language available in the pre-existing literary circles.

Dalit literature today has established itself a new mode of literary imagination and writing. Dalit literature is an emerging category in Indian Writing. The contributors have braved all hardships and have put their works in the forefront. The Dalits were underestimated and looked down upon for ages but through perseverance they were able to withstand the stones hurled at them. Now, they have created an identity for themselves and have also captured a space for them in Indian English literature. Some non-Dalit writers have also come forward to represent the cause of the Dalits. In an early stage of Indian Writing in English, men express their problems as it has a personal touch which can make words more authentic. When non-Dalits wrote about the Dalits, the same argument came up and this encouraged the Dalits to take their cause.

Kancha Ilaiah, shepherd, is an Indian political scientist, writer and activist for Dalit rights. He is a prolific writer in both English as well as Telugu. Baburao Bagula experienced a radical departure from the past, he is most known for his work such as, *Jevh Mi Jaat Choril*. Urmil Pawar is an Indian writer who belongs to the Dalit community, writer in Marathi, an Indian language. She also identifies herself as a feminist. Keshav Meshram short story writer from Maharashtra, India wrote about 40 books. He had pleasure in reading. Meshram was born in a poor Dalit family in Akola. Susie Tharu edited two volumes of reports on Dalit writings from south India that focus on the resurgence of Dalit politics in the 1990s. The Gandhi-Ambedkar debate on the issue of caste system and untouchability is the most important contemporary. Rajesh Vankar, he is a



member in a committee of Kabir Dalit Sahitya Award in 2012 and also serving as a security of Panchmahal Pradesh.

Dalit writers began writing in the 1960s. Dalit literature is often compared with African American literature as both of them share a common fate; Bitterness and agony are the trademarks of their writings. They raise their voice against all the forms of exploitation through their writings. Writing is their revenge. Early Dalit writings were largely in Hindi, Marathi, Kannada and Tamil but very recently they have shifted to English some of their works in vernacular languages have also been translated into English. A woman in a Dalit community is a Dalit among the Dalits. In spite of being far more sidelined than men, Dalit women also contributed sufficiently to Dalit literature one such energetic young and rebellious young woman is, Meena Kandasamy, she was born in Chennai in 1948 and she is regarded as a prominent figure in the contemporary Indian English poetry. Her writings have generated a fair share of critical acclaim as well as controversy.

Kandasamy's interest in this little known chapter of Indian history was partly inspired by her father. In 1977, he escaped rural poverty in Tanjore by moving to Chennai where he eventually completed the PhD. he have to run away from where he was born. Her father was landless, poor, orphaned and belongs to a lower community and he had no hope in life. The only thing he had was education.

Kandasamy herself began to translating books by Dalit (or "untouchable") writers and leaders into English at the age of seventeen. This awakening of her political and literary conscience took place at a time of concerted violence against India's lowest castes and when K.R Narayanan had become the nation's first Dalit president. Yet the



roots of Kandasamy's rebellious streak can also be found closer to home. She grew up in an extreme repressed Hindu family. Her failure to put on the bindhi, made her father question her doubtfully if she has Christian boy friend. The threats reinforced kandasamy's belief that violence plays a 'universal' social role in India, despite its reputation for peaceful protest.

The landlord thinks he is going to discipline the Dalits. The father thinks he is disciplining the disobedient child. The husband thinks he is disciplining the defiant wife. Violence becomes an action for the general good, to teach. It isn't an issue of anger management or power. (Meena Kandasamy interview: 'I don't know if I'm idiotic or courageous').

Apart from translating Tamil prose and poetry into English, she has also edited the Dalit, a bimonthly alternative English Magazine, in its first year of publication. Kandasamy's first poetry collection, "Touch" (2006) was subsequently translated into five other languages. The second volume of poetry, "Ms. militancy"(2010), consists of 40 poems, and it primarily attempts to retell and deconstruct traditional Hindu mythology and in the process, it reveals its inherent prejudices and violence. In an interview, Kandasamy conceives of her writing as an attempt to come to terms with her "womanness, tamilness and low/ outcasteness". (Meena Kandasamy interview: 'I don't know if I'm idiotic or courageous'). Her novels are "The Gypsy Goddess" (2014) and "when I Hit You: or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife" (2017).

Meena Kandasamy's powerful introduction casts a spotlight on the plight of Dalit agricultural workers in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, who are murdered by oppressive upper-caste landlords. Her book is based on a massacre that took place in the

village of Kilvenmani on Christmas day, 1968. At the time, Marxist ideology was gaining popularity among disenfranchised Dalits, or untouchables, who toiled away on rice paddies in brutal conditions. The Green Revolution had also begun to irrevocably alter food production, boosting harvests but at the same time forcing farmers into a dependency on toxic fertilisers sold by American corporations.

In the author's fictionalised version of this tragedy (*The Gypsy Goddess*), which draws on historical documents and survivor interviews, farm workers are on strike after landlords murder a popular communist leader. The landlords try to bully them back to work: they impose debilitating fines, use the police to intimidate them, and savagely assault Dalit women. But the hungry people of Kilvenmani village are resolute in their demands for justice. Finally, the landlords send a goon squad to attack Kilvenmani, who corner dozens of villagers into a single hut and set light to it. They end up killing at least 42 villagers, turning their bodies into charred, unrecognisable corpses, and yet most of the perpetrators are let off the hook. Meanwhile, many of the villagers who have lost their loved ones in the massacre are sent to jail.

This horrifying sequence of events is told with exquisite language, and innovative turns of phrase. Dew doesn't just fall on the ground; it begins to diamond the golden fields. The novel doesn't delve into the inner worlds of characters or possess an actual protagonist. But Kandasamy, a critically acclaimed poet, is attempting to immortalise the story of an entire community's struggle.

Kandasamy uses an array of iconoclastic narrative voices. One chapter is a breathless single sentence that evokes the massacre with lucid, haunting descriptions: facial features disappear and flesh now starts splitting and shin bones show and hair

singes with a strange smell and the flames hastily lick away at every last juicy bit as the bones learn to burst like dead wood. Other chapters take the form of a communist pamphlet denouncing inequity, or a letter from one of the landlords. A section told in the second person, about a journalist seeking to commemorate the tragedy years later, contends with the futility of documenting such tragedies at all.

Kandasamy cuts this serious and sad novel with bursts of irreverent wit. It is common knowledge, she writes, that no land would ever be found interesting until a white man arrived, befriended some locals, tried the regional cuisine, asked a lot of impertinent questions, chastises critics, and rails against unusual in Indian fiction and the pitfalls of traditional plot-driven linear novels. Kandasamy has squandered words on these gimmicky asides, especially since the second half of her novel does a fabulous job of simply being an ordinary book with an unusual structure. Readers should move slowly through this material to get to this novel's lyrical, radical core, which offers bold perspectives on the relationship between poverty and power.



## Chapter Two

### Politics Inherent in the Postmodern Dalit Novel

Post modern literature arose after World War II as a series of reactions against the perceived norms of modernist literature. As with all stylistic eras, no definite dates exist for the rise and fall of postmodernism's popularity. 1941, the year Irish novelist James Joyce and British novelist Virginia Woolf both died, is sometimes used as a rough boundary for postmodernism's start.

At the end of the Second World War, Critical Assessment of human rights in the wake of the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, The Holocaust, and Japanese American internment. It also coincides with the beginning of the Cold War, the American Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) and the beginning of movements which worked towards: the end of colonialism, the partition of India, the 1947 UN Partition plan, and the development of postcolonial literature. Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992) is an exemplar of 'cyberpunk' science fiction. While, cyberpunk represents a fast-forward vision of the present, contemporary science fiction is also the site for a peculiarly postmodern technological retrospection. William Gibson's, 1984 cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer* is widely regarded as one of the most influential futuristic vision in American literary history.

Meena Kandasamy at the beginning of the novel *The Gypsy Goddess* claims that it is not a postmodernist novel.

I was able to write a few tiny excerpts of her history, but I gave up, unable to sustain my momentum. The entire story that I was waiting to tell seemed to lie outside her. Did she have it in her to hold a village together?

Could I show everything in these snippets? Riddled with self-doubt, I stopped trying to make my story fit into this form. (33)

The novel *The Gypsy Goddess* breaks all the conventions of a typical novel. The language is ambiguous and incoherency dominates the narrative. It lacks stability long time as she keeps on reiterating,

Once upon a time, in one tiny village, there lived an old woman. Once upon a time, in another tiny village, there lived another old woman. Once upon some time, in some village of some size, there lived an old woman.  
(13- 18)

Maayi, the old woman, appears at the fag of the novel *The Gypsy Goddess*. Thus, Kandasamy is making it appear like a pulp fiction where the reader has to join the various pieces of the text in order to make it whole. Strangely enough, the author also, at somewhere around the middle of the text, starts narrating the text in a flow thus breaking the stability of the instability and bringing the stability. But this should also be seen as a postmodernist technique, Alvesson in his work said that, the stability makes the ongoing incoherent narrative coherent suddenly. The language is another issue of importance here. The use of "F\*\*\*" word and its various forms shows the shift from the sanskritised practise followed by the adherents of the Indian literary tradition where the purity of language is given more prominence.

Dalit literature is in famously known for its break from this literary practise starting mainly with Dhasal's poetry and other Dalit writings which emerged in the wake of the Dalit Panthers movement commented by Limbale at his work. The novel *The Gypsy Goddess*, does not have any main character or a hero or a protagonist in it. Hicks

focused on a postcolonialist novel that believes in focusing on a single character. An analysis of the early Dalit writers of the 1970s and 1980s Satyanarayana depicted untouchability as a symptom of structural inequalities based on caste, Kandasamy, (taking it on a different level), depicts untouchability as a form of human rights violation). In *Hindustan Times* Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* is a novel about the (real) events of the Kilvenmani Massacre of 1968, but it's also a novel about the process of narrating those events. K. Satyanarayana, in *Caste as the Baggage of the Past*, makes a distinction between the Dalit literature of the early years 1970s and 1980s and the new Dalit literature inaugurated by Outcaste after the 1990 while old Dalit literature narrated the insults and the indignities and the inequalities of the caste system with hysterical rage, Jadhav records similar experiences with more restraint.

Kandasamy has pioneered the third phase in the Dalit literature by assimilating the western theory and criticism in the Dalit literature. Kandasamy deliberately puts her novel in the sphere of western literary tradition. She compares her novel with western literature

Life is linear, I can hear you argue. It is, but it is cyclical too. If you ask a mathematician, she will tell you that life possibly exists in the  $n$ th dimension, and beyond the third, none of your fucking senses can perceive anything at all. That's where stories unravel themselves. Those of you stressed out by this haphazard storytelling, please relax. Stay, those of you who have thought too many times of wandering away. How far away from me can you stray? This is a joint venture. We collaborate on the critical condition that we do not abandon each other. (32)



Meena Kandasamy rejected her novel as a postmodernist novel then she ironically makes it a postmodern novel, as the novel through its narrative technique and style aptly proves it. Thus judging this novel according to the parameters of the western literary criticism and theory would not be an unwise act. According to Postmodernism, Hicks says that an individual is a product of his social environment and social context. Dalit literature never has a subjective tone or individual voice. It is always collective, as Limbale said in his book *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature*.

Dalit Literature has many characteristics of postmodern literature. It is, in a way, Postmodern since it challenges canon and defies Indian literary tradition. It believes in deconstructing truth, reason in order to show how the truth and reason have been constructed by the upper caste Hindus in order to dominate over the Dalits and lower castes. Similarly, in the West the truth and the reason were constructed by the white upper class males in order to suit their comfort and to exert and assert their dominance over the racial minorities and female sex and lower class. Alvesson said that, to define postmodernism is hardly possible. Yet many critics and writers have tried to define it somehow. One defines postmodernism as the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life; the collapse of the hierarchical distinction between high and mass popular culture; a stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration of the surface, depthlessness of culture; the decline of the originality genius of the artistic producer and the assumption that art can only be repetitious. If observed even if not too carefully it can be deduced that the novel in question, *The Gypsy Goddess*, has almost all the characteristics defined above in order to be aptly called as a postmodern novel.

Postmodernism exercises power for the purpose of social change. Hicks think that the political horrors are mostly there in the West. But he does not know that the horrors of caste are not just confined to social sphere but are very much part and parcel of the political arena as well in the Indian context. Kandasamy uses the postmodern technique to expose the presence of such political horrors at the grass root level in rural India. Deconstruction of myths was taken in hand by Mahatma Jyotibharao Phule, who challenged the truth, manufactured by the upper caste Hindus. He pioneered the construction of new epistemology. Mats Alvesson in his book *Postmodernism* said that, postmodernism represents an effort to integrate a number of diverse, in themselves ambiguous, themes. *The Gypsy Goddess*, being a postmodernist novel, tries to, and very successfully, integrates diverse themes.

Do you suspect a murder merely because of this fancy prose style? Do you want a puppet-show in place of all this meandering prose? Do you rue the fact that modernism and postmodernism have killed our storytelling tradition? I am willing to try everything to get this story across. So, here I am, pitching a tent under a tree, propping up a blank screen, pulling out my puppets. Come, take a peek. Authority is easy to caricature. (29)

Meena Kandasamy uses language ironically. According to postmodernist the use and stress on the use of reason by the western civilization has brought havoc on the world in the form of wars and oppression. Thus, postmodernists employ the idea of going against reason. They believe in deconstructing truth and not adhering to any particular rules and laws. In the Indian context, Brahminical texts emphasised on following a particular literary tradition. Those who tried to break that literary tradition were forced to



sanskritise their works. Dalit literature, in this sense, has broken the rules and laws of the Hindu literary tradition. The rules, like that of western civilization, were used by the caste Hindus in order to keep the Dalits and marginalised away from gaining or producing knowledge.

Kandasamy challenges the dominant caste Hindu literary tradition by mixing the western literary technique with the eastern Dalit sentiments in order to forge a new kind of work of art in the Dalit literature. Her use of so called vulgar language is a shift away from the sanskritised pure language of the caste Hindus. Thus, it challenges their linguistic purity and the hypocrisy inherent in its use. Kandasamy also explores the failure of the Nehruvian model. The aura around the major political party leaders has been shattered to the core and their hypocrisy has been exposed. Only a Dalit political leader fights for the cause of the Dalits till the end. This justifies in a way why Dalits need a separate electorate. Had it not been for reservation of the Dalits in the parliament and state assemblies it would have been close to impossible to imagine the presence of any Dalit representative in the political sphere. The author also exposes the loopholes in Communism. In India, Communism emerged with the goal of working for and helping the working class. But it did not lend its helping hand to the cause of the Dalit masses, in a substantial manner. Even in the novel the failure of the communism in the wake of the Dalit atrocities is exposed. It is not able to provide any concrete solutions to help the Dalits.

To avenge her husband's death, Sannasi's widow stepped out on the communist party circuit. Asked to describe her, a comrade in kilvenmani said, 'she knows what to say when, how to say what, when to start a why,



where to cease the talk'. Similarly pressed, a landlord said, 'oh! The old woman? That troublemaking communist cunt? That untouchable whore? Get out of here'. (35-36)

The landlords use the enmity with the communists as a tool to save their heads in court by putting false allegations on the members of the communists party.

We come back to the letter.

His command is straightforward:

'This letter should read like my suicide note'. (137)

Kandasamy's novel is another major issue of the use of English language. Chinua Achebe uses English language to write back to empire in order to show the rich culture and tradition of the African people. Kandasamy's purpose for using English language seems to convey the harsh realities, pertaining to the caste atrocities in the local villages of South India, to not only to the Indian people but also to reach out to the readers at the global level. She does not seek empathy or sympathy from the readers. But she wants to unsettle them and to compel them to think and become agents of change. Bertolt Brecht invented the concept of epic theatre in order to make the passive audience into active agents of change after watching a play. We can see the same method applied by Kandasamy where she uses the act of reading as a catalyst or a stimulus to provoke the readers to think for the solutions to the problem in the caste ridden society of India. As Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste: A Memoir* focuses on the global audience similarly, Kandasamy is also writing in English keeping global readership in mind. A shift is emerging in the sphere of Dalit literature. With Narendra Jadhav, in post-Durban discourse, the appeal has shifted towards an appeal for a cosmopolitan identity. Jadhav in

satyanarayana constructs a new hierarchy of identities the national as inhuman" and the cosmopolitan one as human. From his perspective caste somehow just melts away when it is looked at in the context of global citizenship. In the same vein, thus it can be said that Kandasamy, by using the postmodernist style of writing, which has a global appeal, wants to break out of the national barrier and move towards the global arena to proclaim, over and above all, the dignity and identity of Dalits as 'human'. She also wants to prove the proximity between the lives of Dalits and the postmodernism. They are not much different.

According to postmodernists, as stated in the book by Hicks objectivity and neutrality of legal reasoning are frauds. All decisions are inherently subjective and driven by preference and politics. Kandasamy exposes this truth in her novel where the legal institutions are politically motivated and are in the controls of the upper caste Hindus. Since there is a huge nexus between the feudal lords and the state machinery land reforms measures remain on the paper and could not be brought into praxis. Even the judicial authorities and legal institutions are casteist in their approach towards the lower caste and Dalits. The charred bodies of the dead are counted mercilessly by the policemen. The way these burnt dead bodies of the Dalits are thrown mercilessly reminds one of the gruesome realities of the Nazi regime where the dead bodies, of the Jews, were treated in the similar fashion by the Nazis. The narrator reminds us, the readers, constantly about the two dead bodies which remain uncounted. The dead ones are transformed into mere numbers kept for the official record. Though it is inappropriate to do so but one compare the number of dead people from either side (Upper castes and Dalits) the ratio is 1:44



He doubtless grieves that their 'causing grievous harm' resulted in the loss of forty-two (plus two, silent) innocent lives and decides, in the circumstances of the present case, to impose a fitting punishment. He has a full meal in mind, but he skips the salt. He frees fifteen landlords. Eight of them get a token punishment of ten years in jail. No one is sentenced for life; no one is sentenced to death. (247)

Kandasamy's use of dark humour becomes apparent when she equates the value of one dead body of an upper caste person with forty four dead bodies of Dalits. The inequality mocks the Dalits even in death. Caste remains an important aspect of one's identity even after death. Judiciary wants to portray the landlords, mirasdars', as incapable of avenging or perpetrating crime on Dalits by themselves, as if by doing so they would fall down in caste and class hierarchy. The High court associates the sense of honour with landlords but never see the Dalits through the same lens. The implicit play of caste is in order here in the court where justice is served only to the upper caste people by the upper caste judges. This exposes the lack of representation of Dalits in the state machinery, despite the efforts by the forefathers of the Constitution of India.

The language has been distorted by the court to make the case bend in favour of the mirasdars. The peasants show their astonishment on the play with the language. There is no truth. The meanings are deconstructed as has been iterated by Derrida when he talks about the idea of deconstruction. There has been constant play with the words. Sometimes the novel takes a dialogic turn in the sense that the narrator gives an interview to an imaginary person (supposedly representing readers). She tries to answers the questions by raising the questions herself. She tries to understand our psyche by making



us confused. R Raja Rao in *Kanthapura* makes a grand old woman the narrator of the story.

At the end of *The Gypsy Goddess*, the author is trying to make Maayi, the grand old woman, the narrator of the story in the similar fashion. Here, the narrative style is a mixture of postmodern narrative style of the twentieth century and the traditional oral narrative style where the old woman of the Sthalam tells the tale. Reader reception theory fails in this text. As a director guides the viewer or audience through various scenes and angles in a movie similarly the reader, here it seems, is being constantly guided by the narrator throughout the novel. The response of the reader is evoked and provoked like the epic theatre but is not allowed to come to its fruition in the sense of its active engagement with the text till the end. Despite that the view is not confined to one point of view. Since the author is constantly breaking the conventional understanding of the meaning of novel the sense of the text or the coherence is not achieved till the end.

The epilogue sounds like a prologue where a new narrator in the form of old woman Maayi is introduced. The ending is almost similar to some extent to the technique employed by the author of *The Grip of Change* P. Sivakami. Though Sivakami visits the place depicted in the novel herself here Kandasamy sends an imaginary person representing all the readers to the place where the novel is set. Thus bringing alive the fictional characters in this novel. The author employs journalistic technique trying to make it a "non-fictional fiction". The report of the deaths is cold and lacks any emotion or sympathy with the victims. One sees the violation of the body of women from the perspective of gender. In the Indian context, the issue of caste, class and gender are inseparable. Rapes become a form of assertion of power over not only the women but

also over the caste and class to which women belong. The women are objectified and are seen as the tools to assert power over a particular community. This point has also been discussed in the introduction to D. R. Nagaraja's book *The Flaming Feet*. Rape becomes not only a form of gender violence but it is also a dominant form of caste violence. Gopalakrishna Naidu, in *The Gypsy Goddess*, sexually exploits the Dalit women, to preserve his dominance over the lower castes.

One of the postmodernists said that idea of education is that education makes an individual aware about his/her racial, sexual and class identity. In the contexts of the Dalits the education was seen almost in the same light. When Ambedkar strongly suggests the people of Dalit community to gain education he wanted them to become aware about their social position and social reality. Thus the role of education in the context of Dalit community is same to that conceived by the postmodernists. One argues that postmodern education should emphasise works that are not in the canon. So is the case with Dalit literature. It rejects canon. And it focuses on the achievements of the marginalised. It highlights the historical crimes of the caste Hindus. It also shows the other side of the truth, which postmodernist also advocated for when it asks us to explore alternative ways of learning about society. Dalit literature is very much in postmodernist literary tradition. Dalit literature is always blamed for lacking aesthetic literary sense. Kandasamy, through her novel *The Gypsy Goddess*, situates her novel once and for all in the postmodernist literary tradition of the west. It should be seen not only as a challenge to the Hindu literary tradition but should also be seen as a turning point in the history of Dalit literature. Postmodernists are of the view that our current social context is characterized by oppression that benefits, in the Indian context, upper castes Hindus, at



the expense of Dalit community. Depicting truths via the medium of novels (books) has its own limitation. The full truth remains hidden somewhere. Even though that being the case Kandasamy has tried her best to portray this one dark day in as picturesque manner as possible.

In *The Gypsy Goddess* instead of the fall of the Bastille the third estate is burnt to death and mocked at by the representatives of the so called Democratic institutions. The country is enslaved in its own chains of traditions and religions. Here the fight is not only for bread and butter but also for, that every human has a fundamental right to it, human dignity. It seems that the panacea of this millennia old caste system is a revolution in the lines of French Revolution. The extremist position taken by Kalyan Rao in *Untouchable Spring* seems the only light guiding us out of this dark tunnel. The lack of space and attention given to this gruesome event makes the presence of this novel even more pertinent and important to convey what would otherwise have been buried under the sands of time. The text becomes the potent tool in the hands of the writer especially when it has to awaken the sleeping masses. It has been proved time and again, that the pen is mightier than the sword, especially during the French Revolution when Robespierre along with others used the power of the ink to make their voices heard to the otherwise deaf people sitting in the position of authority and privilege.

In *The Gypsy Goddess* the voice of the author and the narrator is not meek and subdued but potent and powerful, even condemning in tone. The reader is not spared for being passive. The fourth wall has been broken time and again. Obama is still called a colored President and K.R. Narayan a Dalit President. It seems economics and politics failed to provide the solution for the heinous problems called caste and race. The true



democracy has not been achieved till yet. One can only wonder how much more aboriginal blood of the Dalits will flow under the bridge before the dream of Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule will see the light of the day.

### Chapter Three

#### Exposure of India's Dark Heart

Society is always composed of classes. It may be economic or intellectual or social, but an individual in a society is always a member of a class. Hindu society could not have been an exception to this rule, and, as a matter of fact, we know it was not. If one bear this generalization in mind, the genesis of caste would be very much facilitated, for one have only to determine which was the class that first made itself into a case, for class and caste. If one cannot control our fondness for the word 'origin', we should better use the plural form, origins of caste. The creation and preservation of the caste in India, naturally arises. Thing as the origin of caste and suggest that

Castes exist only in plural number. There is no such thing as a caste: there are always castes. (Abedi 78)

There was no caste system, in the beginning period of the Aryans. Persons engaged in religion and priestly duties were known as Brahmins. The persons who were required to fight and devote to the duties of running the government formed a class were called Kshatriyas. The rest of the Aryans engaged in trade, industry, agriculture, craft etc., were called the Vaishyas. The fourth class of men who formed the bulk of population was called the Shudras. They were the menial workers whose duty was to serve the other three classes. Below the Shudras were the degraded races called the Mlecchas. They were outside the caste system.

The origin of the caste system is based on the division of labour. So in the beginning it was class system rather than caste system. In the beginning it was class system rather than caste system. In the beginning the caste system was flexible. Social

and religious taboos had not developed round the concepts of caste. A man's caste was decided by his profession and conduct, not by birth.

Neither the family nor the birth but action alone make a man Brahmana...Parshuram was a Brahmana by birth but he became a Kshatriya by profession. Vyasa the author of the Mahabharatha was the son of a fisher woman. But later on, the caste system became rigid.  
(Indian society and culture 69)

A man can change his class by initiative and enterprise but it is impossible to change one's caste and status. The feeling of class consciousness is necessary to constitute a class but there is no need for any subjective consciousness in the member of a caste. The choice of life partner in caste system is endogamous (members have to marry in their own castes). But no such restrictions exist in class system. The caste system is believed to have divinely ordained. But classes are secular in origin.

In Meena Kandaswamy poem *Becoming a Brahmin*, she renders a form of exploitation which can be termed as ideological exploitation. This poem describes the chronological steps to convert an untouchable into Brahmin, propagated by the national leaders and more reportedly by Gandhi through the institution of marriage. This poem is actually based on documentation prepared by one of the Dalit intellectuals Periyar on the speech of Gandhiji at Tirupur on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1947. There he propagated that if a beautiful shudra girl marries a Brahmin and gives birth to girl and again if that girl in future marries a Brahman and if this step is repeated for another three to four times then it will only engender Brahmin.

Step 1: Take a beautiful Shudra girl.



Step 2: Make her marry a Brahmin.

Step 3: Let her give birth to his Female child.

Step 4: Let this child marry a Brahman

Step 5: Repeat steps 3-4 six times.

Step 6: Display the end product. It is a Brahman.

(Becoming a Brahmin, 3-8)

Kandasamy attempts to satirize the very project of nationalism and nationalist movement is clearly echoed through the lines in the form of algorithm method

Algorithm advocated by father of nation at tirupur.

Documented by Periyar on 20.09.1947.

Algorithm for converting a Pariah into Brahmin

Awaiting another father of nation

To produce algorithm. (Becoming a Brahmin, 10-14)

*Becoming a Brahmin* brings back the age old traditions of Indian society, where the women lack their freedom to choose their own companions and are in a way forced to marry the person, choose their own companions and are in a way forced to marry the person, chosen by others, which is even patronized by the nationalist leaders like Gandhi and others and in nationalist narratives which propounded and promised secularism equal rights to all. It is reported that Gandhi is one of his processions comes up with this controversial remarks of the marriage of a 'Shudra girl' to a Brahmin man to convert her into a Brahmin. This clearly unmasks the hypocrisy and the patriarchal base of their nationalist agenda, which tends to silence and subjugate women by maintaining a façade of norms and values of Indian tradition.

The caste system with its peculiarities is a unique feature of the Indian society. But class is a universal phenomenon. In caste the system status is determined by caste but in a class system, one earns his status through achievement. The caste system is conservative based on customs, traditions and beliefs. The class system is progressive. The caste system is very complex, whereas the class system is simple. The caste system became rigid. It came to determine by birth. As the time passed the four principal castes are divided into innumerable sub castes.

After such class based classification, the reader will encounter many intermediary castes: *Vellalar, Naidu or Naicker, Agamudaiyar, Mudaliar, Chettiar, Reddiyar, Konar, Kallar, Vanniyar, Nadar*. She will be plagued by the plight of the untouchable castes: *pallar, Parayar, Chakkiliyar*. (69)

In Tamilnadu, the demon of untouchability became increasingly dominant in the Pallava, Chola and later periods. There was an ever growing adoption of untouchability became increasingly dominant in the Pallava, Chola and later periods. There was a ever growing adoption of untouchability and unapproachability all through succeeding epochs, right down to the present time. In fact, the disabilities in which were imposed on the depressed classes and on the untouchables assumed abominable forms with the lapse of time. For centuries, Hindus have been taught that the lowest among them have been born to serve their betters and that, to aspire to the rightful privileges of another caste is to sin against the basic tenet of their religion. "Since the issue of funeral processions of the untouchables not being allowed to pass through the caste-Hindu streets" (121)

Meena kandasamy starts her poem *Maariamma* as 'we understand' here the word 'we' is much important because it tells about the division. The keen observation makes us

to analyse the caste discrimination among the so called upper class people and the marginalized people.

We understand

Why upper caste gods

And their 'good-girl' mucech married, father-fucked?

Virgin, vegetarian oh-so-pure goddesses

Borne in their golden chariots

Don't come to our streets. (Maariamamma 1-6)

Kandasamy explains about the fame and purity of goddess Maari then raising question to the goddess Maariamamma.

But Maariamamma,

When you ate still getting

Those roosters and goats,

Why have you stopped coming to our doors? (Maariamamma 10-13)

Even the gods do not prefer to come to three place where Dalits are surviving. People of the so called upper caste are not coming to our slums because of being inhabited by Dalits but Maariamamma is still getting their roosters and goats. They are optimistically sacrificing those things to Maariamamma but the goddess coming to their doors. This shows the discrimination and also poem blames goddess Maari as a brutal tormented, oppressor who is suppressing the Dalits. Goddess is getting space goats and roosters from the Dalits but of no use. The portrayal of the poem about the goddess Maariamamma is very rational that she is a blood warmer. Poet crushes the goddess and



tears her image into pieces which is worth to be in trash. The tone of the poem changes, symbolically the poet mocks the goddess by raising a Question.

Maari, our girl

Since when did you join their gang? (Maariamamma 14-15)

The poet Kandasamy satires God that Gods are made only for upper caste. The poet is taking severe objection towards Maariamamma for joining the gang of upper class and discarding the lower caste, Dalits. As a consequence, various kinds of disabilities and harassments were imposed on the lower sections of the community. The disabilities varied to some extent from region to region and from subcaste to subcaste among the lower groups. Apart from the social tradition, the economic position of the lower classes contributed to their miserable plight of the untouchables.

In Tanjore district, the area known as the granary of south India, Vadapathimangalam thiagaraja Mudaliar owns 15,000 acres of land; Kunniyar Subramania Iyer and Sambasiva iyer own 5,000 acres each; Rao Bahadur Subburathana Mudaliar owns 2,500 acres; KG Estates owns 4,000 acres and K C Desikar owns 15,000 acres. This is not a communist party statistic; it is extracted from a report prepared by world Bank, that crony of the imperialist powers. It is evident to everybody that land in Tanjore is monopolized by a few individuals. The Working people have no lands; those who till the soil have no rights. Peasants are being treated worse than slaves. (88)

Caste politics plays major role at local and regional levels. It is marginal at all Indian level. Caste politics has been of maximum intensity in south of Vindhya

mountains where is post independent era struggle took place to dispossess Brahmins of power and position. However that phase has now come to an end and a struggle between newly dominant middle classes and the submerged mass of lower castes and untouchable has just begun. A birds eye view of the role of caste in state politics will be evident after making an appraisal of the state politics in some of the leading states of India.

V.B. Kulkarni, writing in the Indian Express of August 22, 1973, stated that 'not a day passes without reports about the persecution of Harijans including physical assaults, murder, looting and burning of their property. (K.K. Pillay 120)

In Pre independence era the Dravidans organized justice party and there commonweal and toilers party. Most of them forget a front under the banner of Dravida Kazhagam of Naickeran anti- Hindi anti- hindi and anti- Hindustan organization. A large section of the party under the leadership of c.annaduraj joined the Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam. In the recent past another faction get separate from the DmK and became Anna DMK under the leadership of M.G Ramachandran. All the Dravidan Organisations drew sustenance from caste. The extremists amongst them demanded a separate sovereign state Dravidisthan. The Moderates amongst the demanded a autonomous province of their own, now existing as Tamilnadu.

Our cadres- no, indeed, the whole of Nagapatinam- lost all respect for the DMK When chief Minister Annadurai came to unveil the statue of Vengadanal Naidu, a landlord infamous for his atrocities against women and the 'untouchable' castes. (94)



The relationship between the higher castes and lower castes once has always been very hostile in Tamil Nadu, particularly between the middle-level castes and the Dalits. And in such a relationship, the losers are often those at the bottom of the caste ladder and the gainers are those above due to unjust and unequal distribution of power and status. A few middle level caste such as Ahamudayar, Maravar and Kallar, together known as Mukkulathor (three castes), are relatively more visible, particularly in Ramanathapuram district as they are not only owners of cultivable land, large in number and more assertive, but also known for committing atrocities on the scheduled castes.

One Karuppayi of Thiruchuli village in the Ramnad district recounts that, during the great famine, she lost her husband and her three little sons. She managed to stay alive eating handfuls of mud. Taking pity on her because of her pregnant condition, a relief worker fed her congee every day. (33)

The lower castes to alter the given power positions is met with dire consequences. These include the murder of the scheduled caste leader Thiyahi Imanual at Paramakkudi town and forty-two scheduled caste persons at Mudukulathur in 1957, of forty-four belonging to the scheduled castes at keelavenmani in Tanjore district in 1968, five at Unjanai in pasumpon Muthuramalingam district in 1979, and sixteen at Vilupuram in Chengalpat district in 1983. Besides, there were a number of murders of Scheduled Caste people at cuddalore and Vilupuram in Chengalpat district in 1987 and at Podi in Madurai district in 1988. In 1992, two persons were killed at Paramakkudi in Ramanathapuram district.

Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* that eventually and unflinchingly reveals how 44 disenfranchised Dalit labourers, including women and children, came to



be burned alive by their landlords, and what retribution followed it, the single biggest caste atrocity in India. At the time, Marxist ideology was gaining popularity among disenfranchised Dalits, or untouchables, who toiled away on rice paddies in brutal conditions.

Some versions go on to add that there were seventeen women. Every version agrees that all of them had children with them. Some version says these women and children were forced to drink poison. Some versions says that these women were locked in a tiny hut and burnt to death along with their children. Some versions says that these women were ordered to run and they had their heads chopped off with flying discs and their children died of fright at seeing their mothers' be headed torsos run. (44)

Kandasamy's fictionalised version of the novel *The Gypsy Goddess* is tragedy, which draws on historical documents and survivor interviews, farm workers are on strike after landlords murder a popular communist leader. The landlords try to bully them back to work. They impose debilitating fines, use the police to intimidate them, and savagely assault Dalit women. But the hungry people of Kilvenmani village are resolute in their demands for justice.

Finally, the landlords send a goon squad to attack Kilvenmani, who corner dozens of villagers into a single hut and set light to it. They end up killing many villagers, turning their bodies into charred, unrecognisable corpses, and yet most of the perpetrators are let off the hook. Meanwhile, many of the villagers who have lost loved ones in the massacre are sent to jail. *The Gypsy Goddess* is equally animated, bristling with ideas and powered by black humour and righteous anger. Stylistically, it breaks many rules.

The puppets with the overgrown handlebar moustaches are landlords. The puppet with a stoop worked into their backs and a seueal stamped into their voices are the landless. The stiff-necked puppets who march as a park are the police. (30)

The narrative is stubbornly non-linear. Instead of a central character we get an assortment of busy voices. This single mindedness seems to have been there from the outset. One of the standout passages in *The Gypsy Goddess* is the description of the slaughter that unfolds over five pages in a single unflagging and unpunctuated sentence.

Meena Kandasamy knows that to convey the full force of the horror means keeping a foot on the pedal and intensifying, not abating. Meena portrays the extremity of violence by cataloguing the fate of every victim, especially the children. The death of children is a huge cultural thing. Children are never one's defined enemy, they are without any views, and so the killing of children is a very particular brutality and one has to talk about it. But Meena's novel is more than a fictionalised account of a national tragedy. The novel in our hands is

Tamil in taste,

English on the tongue,

free of all poetry and prosody,

dished out in dandy prose. (12)

The stark and brutal imagery is perfectly explored in this novel. The horrifying sequence of events is told with exquisite language, and innovative turns of phrase. Dew doesn't just fall on the ground, it "begins to diamond the golden fields". The novel doesn't delve into the inner worlds of characters or possess an actual protagonist. But Meena, a

critically acclaimed poet, is attempting to immortalise the story of an entire community's struggle, and perhaps a more traditionally character-driven novel would have undermined this ambition. Meena uses an array of iconoclastic narrative voices.

In one stroke, he elevates the seven condemned women and their children into one cult goddess. He divines that unless these dead women are worshiped, the village shall suffer ceaselessly. Overnight, the villagers build a statue of mud of Kurathiamman, the Gypsy Goddess, and say their first prayer. (44)

The chapter Seasons of Violence gives a breathless single sentence that evokes the massacre with lucid, haunting descriptions. It takes the form of a communist pamphlet denouncing inequity, or a letter from one of the landlords. A section told in the second person, about a journalist seeking to commemorate the tragedy years later, contends with the futility of documenting such tragedies at all. She cuts this serious and sad novel with bursts of irreverent wit. Besides squandering words on these gimmicky, especially since the second half of her novel does a fabulous job of simply being an unexotic book with an unusual structure. One should trudge through this material to get to this novel's lyrical, radical core, which offers bold perspectives on the relationship between poverty and power.

The rice-growing region at the frontline of conflicts between agricultural labourers (backed by the Communist Party of India) demanding a higher share of crops and rich landlords, Caste is woven into this fabric of strife, with the landless agricultural labourers being mostly Dalits and the big landlords all caste Hindus and Brahmins. Literary references and allusions are used in plenty to picture the violence perpetrated on



the poor landless workers directly by the landlords henchmen or by using the police force. They are also being subject to social boycott and other oppressive tactics.

The landlords build a cement shelter for their cows, but these people have to huddle under a blanket of night sky because they are considered untouchable. (92)

The epilogue employs the persuasive cadence of second person narrative, placing the reader at the centre of the stories of the villagers of Kilvenmani. But the reader hardly needs to be persuaded. Throughout the book she tries to grip with the tragedy as it also relates allied developments. There is a place where language falters and police records and bulleted lists have to be pressed into service. In the aftermath of this brutal massacre, justice takes its slow meandering course and finally all the landlords are acquitted. Meanwhile some of the villagers who escaped the fire are accused of murdering a landlord's agent and thrown into jail. All these incidents portrayed in the novel show the intensity of the caste violence that prevails in India for a long time.

She shows how it looks, *a serattai*,

the coconut-shell that the untouchables had to carry to the tea stall because they were not served in tumblers. (263)

The author's outrage is evident in this novel and taking issue with deconstructionists she exhorts us to occupy the novel. There are some rough patches but the author's spontaneity, coupled with a radiant wit makes this a memorable novel. Beyond the hard-hitting storyline, the variety of experiments with form would keep one engaged.

## Chapter Four

### The Odyssean Evolution

Meena Kandasamy as a poet, activist, and first-time novelist approaches this difficult question in *The Gypsy Goddess*. A fractured narrative that takes place in Kilvenmani, Tamil Nadu, the novel centers on the real-life 1968 massacre of 44 Dalit agricultural laborers. Very simply, it portrays the fatal results of abused workers convinced by Marxist Party leaders to strike for better working conditions from their landlord. More complexly, the novel takes on tangled questions of caste, class, and the churning machine of the Green Revolution and global capitalism in mid-century India. Kandasamy follows in the footsteps of Bengali author Mahasweta Devi. Devi, who has been translated and theorized by the formidable scholar of comparative literature and Subaltern Studies, representing and giving voice to a brutalized Dalit population.

The voices of the oppressed and terrorized workers of their beatings and burnings, Kandasamy gives the voices of the landlords and Marxist party leaders who equally subject this group of workers to unimaginable exploitation and violence, Kandasamy presents us with the strong voice of the narrator herself. Self reflective to the point of exhaustion, the first sections of the book position the author and novel among every possible sort of readership and reception. This lends *The Gypsy Goddess* a distinct tone of anxiousness, if not defensiveness or full-on combativeness.

Are you still hunting around for the one-line synopsis and the sixty-second sound bite? the narrator questions archly. Do you want me to compress this tragedy to fit into Twitter? How does one even enter this heart of darkness? (21)

The narrator seems to have arrived in her own novel spoiling for a fight. But with the reader or the publishing industry or Social media. Often in this first chapter, entitled "Background," she takes on the academy directly, expounding on the efforts of a "left-leaning Professor" who did fieldwork in Tamil Nadu.

If only I could get all of you to read her work, familiarize yourself with Marxist theory and take in all the information tucked away in the footnotes, I would have no need to write this novel. Sadly, you are too lazy for research papers. (22)

Slavoj Žižek, dismisses "Derrida-Schmerrida," and compares herself to Zora Neale Hurston and Nicki Minaj. Needless to say, a dedicated reader of *The Gypsy Goddess* must have a thick skin and a patient eye. Kandasamy's writing seems to follow the Marxist methodology of early twentieth-century playwright Bertolt Brecht, in which efforts to alienate readers shake us out of our complicity and whip us into alertness, and hopefully, action. In the whirl of her prose, we are never able to gain sure footing, and this is deliberate on Kandasamy's part.

In the second part of the novel, Kandasamy's rhetorical grandstanding and throat-clearing give way to breathtaking and disturbing passages that depict the gruesomeness of the event itself. In the whirl of her prose, we are never able to gain sure footing, and this is deliberate on Kandasamy's part. *The Gypsy Goddess* is a novel about the difficulty of storytelling. It is a work that meditates on the impossibility of rendering into words the atrocity of a brutal massacre. The seeming hostility of Kandasamy's opening chapters belies the sheer exertion of the task she takes on, which is the problem of how to write ethically about an unspeakable act of human violence. The constant negotiation between



academic writing, journalism, tweeting, and poetry is a way of circling around this question: the best way to tell the story of 44 wretched souls who were hacked and charred alive for merely striking in the name of humane working conditions. It is more ethical to make this a news story, a scholarly text, or a work of art. Is there any way to represent this disaster, the explosive intersection of caste, class, capitalist, and environmental oppression, without doing the solemnness of the horrific tragedy itself a disservice.

*The Gypsy Goddess* proceeds, the loud and hostile voice of the narrator breaks apart into the many fragmented perspectives of the workers and landlords. Marxist party leaders in a disorienting procession that mimics, perhaps, the confusing regulations, empty promises, and harsh working conditions forced upon the Kilvenmani laborers. The narration changes from a first person singular, to a first person plural, to a second person there is an "I", there is a "we," there is a "you," but we are never quite sure who these pronouns address. At the very center of *The Gypsy Goddess* is a scene of an inspector walking through the field of incinerated bodies. His task is to

Comment on the expression of countenance and the position of limbs, and report the presence of blood (liquid or clotted), saliva, froth, vomit, or semen at the scene of the crime. (150)

This chapter Expression of Countenance there is a numbered list that spares no details of the individual remains of the victims, in precise police-procedural diction. It is the best way to tell the story of 44 wretched souls who were hacked and charred alive for merely striking in the name of humane working conditions. Contrasting the coldness of this litany is the spectacular violence of the massacre itself. In a section entitled, "Burial Ground," the novel moves into the nightmarish (yet still dreamlike) perspective of the

burning victims. Kandasamy's poetic writing takes flight here as she shakes off the restraints and hang ups of her academic and publishing-house interlocutors.

Women carelessly wind the fire around their hips and across their bare breasts. Girls carry fire in the ends of their curling hair and they pretend not to notice at all. Men swallow the fire as if their stomachs were stoves. Children catch fire when they run because the wind shaves their skin and sets them alight. The air is full of golden fire-dust. Everything is ablaze. Everyone is glowing. (203)

The surreal scenes from the chapter A Survival Guide the answers to Kandasamy's many combative questions about medium, form, audience, and ethics in storytelling become clear. Far from alienating, these gorgeous, gut-and-heart wrenching paragraphs captivate and devastate. The Gypsy Goddess is a novel that vehemently resists the novelistic form (as well as the scholastic, journalistic, and tweeting form). But in these profoundly poetic passages, Kandasamy's language shines and the urgency of the Kilvenmani massacre roils in the blood of her reader. One cannot look away, and indeed we should not. Kandasamy's language borders on the sublime when she transitions into a perspective that is impossible to imagine on a human scale: that of the immolated. This is writing from outside the human experience, a tale no one lives to tell the very substance of inhumanity. And it is here that Kandasamy, with the full force of her poetic skill, "enters the heart of darkness."

The ochre sparrows are on fire. The pigeons in white flight are on fire. The sun is on fire. The clouds are burning at the edges. The flaming yellow of the moon is on fire. The stars pour with sparks that will scorch



the earth on touchdown. The gold of the paddy fields is on fire. The burning brown mounds of grain and mountains of hay are on fire. The red flag at noon is on fire. The gutted huts have roofs on fire. The ponds are bright and burning as they splice up the sunlight. The roads catch fire whenever a stray vehicle kicks up dust. The sand is speckled with fire sparkles. The gods have blackened into death and the camphor only lights up their charred corpses. Women carelessly wind the fire around their hips and across their breasts. Girls carry fire in the ends of their curling hair and they pretend not to notice at all... (203)

As a non-participant, separated from the events by the gulf of time, class and lived experiences, Kandasamy authentically represent her chosen set of events. To put it another way, she use the method used by Jean Genet to tell someone else's story (Let us bracket, for this purpose, postmodernist arguments, and assume that "authenticity", as a concept, makes sense). One poignant method of dealing with the problem is Jean Genet's. In *Prisoner of Love*, which is his account of his two years among the Palestinian fedayeen, Genet is acutely alive to his outsider status, and the risk that in the very act of writing about the Palestinians, he is performing an act of appropriation. That understanding haunts him throughout the book, and he goes out of his way to clarify that he is telling his story, and not Palestine's. This is about my time spent among the Palestinians, not with them, he says. Later, he writes:

I'll have looked on at the Palestinians' revolt as if from a window or a box in a theatre, and as if through a pearl-handled lorgnette, and affirms that



you used to be in the audience and now you're backstage. But you'll never be an actor. (Genet 36)

Genet deals with the problem by expressing his unease with his project, while affirming its necessity. Ali isn't a voice, unless he's a faint, pale voice contained in mine. Kandasamy addresses it by deliberately parodying all accepted conventions of the novel (such, as for instance, character construction and show-tell, to name just two), conventions that are designed to gloss over the problem of authenticity. Throughout the story, the authorial voice alternates with the narrative voice, never letting us forget that what we're reading is a conscious reconstruction.

One has to understand the importance of poetic licence. I am just spreading out the mattress on the riverside, setting up the landscape, inviting you, dear reader, to join me and look beyond the trauma, with the aid of such romantic imagery. (19)

And subsequently,

I am willing to try everything to get this story across. So, here I am, pitching a tent under a tree, propping up a blank screen, pulling out my puppets. Come, take a peek. Authority is easy to caricature (29)

This imagery device takes on a particularly fascinating form in the middle of the book, when Gopalkrishna Naidu, caste-Hindu, head of the Paddy Producers' Association and ultimately responsible for the massacre, is dictating a petition to the government, pleading for action against the "communist agitators". Here, the author re-imagines the scene by putting herself in the place of Naidu's legal consultant and secretary, and

intersperses the narration of the event with her own reflections about it, not as a disembodied, third-person narrative voice, but in the first person present:

Every Communist gospel is deliberately reworked until it sounds as though it were a part of a sinister agenda to murder him. It sets him at ease. (137)

In *Prisoner of Love*, it is a rather unique and brilliant interpretation of Thucydides' confession to his readers at the beginning of The Peloponnesian War that the speeches he will describe represent not what the speakers actually said, but what in the author's opinion speakers of that sort, in those circumstances, ought to have said. Somewhere between invention and reconstruction. And that is the point. The intriguing similarities with Genet do not end here. Like him, Kandasamy is ambivalent about the act of writing itself. But what if it were true that writing is a lie, Genet wonders in *Prisoner of Love*.

What if it merely enabled us to conceal what was, and any account is, only eyewash? Without actually saying the opposite of what was, writing presents only its visible, acceptable and, so to speak, silent face, because it is incapable of really showing the other one. (Genet 75)

The same idea is prevalent in *The Gypsy Goddess* (at one point, Kandasamy presents it as the only alternative to immersion, albeit a deeply unsatisfying one), although it comes out with particular force in the Epilogue:

Twelve years on, Kilvenmani is a season-ticket for journalists who want to make a pilgrimage into people's memory, that writing an annual one-page article salves not only your conscience, but also everyone else's. You are allowed the privilege of being seen as progressive. (266)



This is closely linked to another important point: that writing about an event especially a revolution entails obedience to a set of imposed conventions. Genet writes that

the Palestinians were admired  
so long as their struggle  
stayed within the limits set by the West. (Genet 89)

And subsequently,

they take photographs of us, they film us, they write about us, and thanks to them we exist. And then suddenly they may stop, and for the West and all the rest of the world the Palestinian problem will be solved simply because no one sees its picture anymore. (Genet 101)

Similarly, Kandasamy observes that it is common knowledge that no land would be found ever be found interesting until a white man arrived, befriended some locals, tried the regional cuisine, asked a lot of impertinent questions, took copious notes in his Moleskin notebook and then went back home and wrote something about it. Both *Prisoner of Love* and *The Gypsy Goddess* are attempts, in their different ways, to break free of such constraints.

The theme in *The Gypsy Goddess* involves the role of the Courts and the judicial system in dealing with violence in particular, violence that embodies and exemplifies structures of domination and subordination that are upheld by the same system of law and government that creates and maintains the courts themselves. Ultimately, the perpetrators of the massacre are acquitted in Court because the formal rules of evidence and trial are particularly susceptible to manipulation against the kind of oral narrative and testimony



that the survivors are most suited to convey. Shahid Amin's *Event, Metaphor, Memory* which also deals with the Chauri Chaura violence, and its judicial aftermath. Amin contrasts the judicial reconstruction of the event, predicated upon a set of assumptions about the nature and character of the (peasant) participants, with the participants own understanding. In illustrating the vast gulf between the two, he shows us how the Courts view of an event especially an event of violence invariably reflects the view of the dominant, and the Court's power and authority then makes that not only the dominant view, but the legitimate view or the "truth", if you would have it so. Amin writes, for instance: While the [Chauri Chaura] judgment seeks corroboration of Shikari's testimony, it also engrafts its own meanings onto the approver's episodic recall. The links within the testimony are picked out and strung together into quite a different chain, an ornament befitting the stately requirements of magisterial rule.

The High Court judges were prepared at most to grant a political backdrop to the crimes; any political foregrounding of the event would have cast them, so the judges thought, into 'apologists for the lawlessness of the crowd. At the highest level of the provincial judiciary, Chauri Chaura remained a series of criminal acts rather than a violent instance of mass peasant politics. If a plausible case could be made for the reduction of death sentences it could only be by characterizing the accused as in the main ignorant peasants, the 'great majority of whom' were drawn into the business by misrepresentation of fact and preposterous promises concerning the millennium of Swaraj the difficulty of her approach to generate an entirely alternative narrative of the event, I might even say its failure, illustrates, rather, the hegemonic power of judicial and nationalist discourse. The subalterns make their own memories, but they do not make

them just as they please. The gallows and the prison ensure that, decades later, judicial pronouncements live to be heard even in the familial recall of an event. And so it is with Chauri Chaura. Peasant narratives that was collected were inescapably tainted or vitiated or coloured in varying degrees by the hegemonic master narrative.

The Madras High Court judge's affirmation that caste-Hindus who own a car would be too scared (of the law?) to directly unleash violence, but would use agents to do it and a language that attributes the death of the villagers to a "fire", and not to the deliberate human agency that locked them into the house and then set fire to it. The "hegemonic master narrative", to use Amin's language, decides whether the ultimate cause of death was fire, or men – and decides, for all time, the moral quality of the incident accordingly with Event, Metaphor, Memory and The Gypsy Goddess, again in their separate ways, are thus acts of "writing back" against words that speak only for some, and in Kandasamy's language reduce others to a charred silence.

Kandasamy wouldn't want to ignore the seriousness of the themes themselves: the acute observation and descriptions of how caste-based violence is not only physical, but operates through social ostracism and boycott; the strikingly accurate portrayal of government and judicial petitions, and their role in casting the veil of legitimacy over naked domination; and of course, the wretched role of the police in the willful misuse of the Indian Penal Code. Kandasamy want to ignore the writing itself, although of course, that is best experienced by reading the book cover to cover. Here is a preliminary whetting of the appetite, though:

he linked love to life and life to livelihood and livelihood to the land and the land to the local river and then, with a smiling simile he likened the



lazy white river to a pearl necklace on the bosom of the earth, and in his picture-perfect poetry that sang of the River Cauvery, the bleeding, blinded breasts of slave labourers in this delta district were forgotten. (19)

And subsequently,

as the bones learn to burst like dead wood and some of the singing bones spring to life and crack along the grain as if maintaining the beats of a long-forgotten dirge... it was Margazhi, the month of morning mist and the month of rain and slippery soil. (184)

In form and method, *The Gypsy Goddess* is, in many ways, an experiment. Like all experiments, it doesn't always work out, and there are patches where the authorial voice seems overcooked, the conscious dissolution of show-tell becomes unbalanced but these are minor quibbles. One would unhesitatingly recommend putting this book somewhere high up on the ever-expanding reading list. "Words on paper have a life only on the page..." (124)



## Chapter Five

### Summation

The novel *The Gypsy Goddess* tells the story of the massacre of 44 laborers in meager form. The Dalit peasants passages are some of the books most revealing. This is not an easy novel to read. There is no intention to entertain. It is as the blurb tells us a novel about the impossibility of writing a novel about a real-life massacre.

The massacre took place in Kilvenmani village, in the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu, South India when 44 landless Dalit agricultural labourers, including women and children, were locked in a hut by a group of landowners and burnt alive. This reluctant novel fictionalises the events that led up to the attack a long standing battle between powerful landlords and the Communist party, who organised resistance against landowners, demanding better wages and working conditions. It was over the demand for an additional half-portion of rice that the labourers in Kilvenmani were crushed so brutally.

There is the battle for justice, an impossible fight when the police are on the side of the landlords, when the political and legal system is disconnected from the lives of those at the very bottom. The long trial in a language (English) used by the politicians are not understood by villagers, is like an absurd play for the villagers who seek justice:

How can they sit for so long in one place and silently listen?

Asked Raman, and then he said, see,

Even my buttocks have fallen asleep on this bench. (249)

The novel *The Gypsy Goddess* depicts this narrative from various angles a Memorandum of the Paddy Producers Association, a group formed by landowners to

protect their interests against the organising communists, a Marxist Party Pamphlet, police reports, eye-witness accounts, slices of the lives of the Dalit peasants, and a witty author/narrator who frames the story.

Kandasamy directly addresses the reader, making clear her refusal to make it an easy ride, to tell a linear tale, to explain, to exoticise, to give the reader what they expect from an Indian English-language novel. At the same time, she points out that the Communists will be outraged to be glorified in such an archetypal bourgeois literary form such as the novel produced for the global market. Kandasamy anticipates much of the potential criticism of the novel in a way that is disarming and clever, but also, at times, irritating, in particular in the extended opening. The 'background' where we feel impatient for the story to start. Indeed, throughout the novel, it is almost with guilt that the reader wishes for more story, for an anchor, for characters who draw us in.

The importance of this narrative voice, however, is in laying out the impossibility of the task at hand of the need to create a separation between author and story. Kandasamy has the sensitivity to recognise her limitations (and power) in an attempt at representation. The Facebook using, urban, educated, middle-class author/narrator is a world away from the villagers who inhabit the novel, as is the form and language into which she is fitting them.

Despite the narrator's claims to defy conventions of form and language, the text inevitably simplifies these lives and struggles. For example, while touched upon in the beginning, little is made in the novel of the complex relationship between caste and class in the resistance against the landowners, an ongoing issue between communists and Dalit activists. Nevertheless, it is refreshing to read an Indian English language novel that

wears its politics and ideology on its sleeve that is about collective resistance rather than individuals.

Meena Kandasamy's novel *The Gypsy Goddess* has some rough patches but the author's spontaneity, coupled with a radiant wit makes this a memorable novel. Beyond the hard-hitting storyline, the variety of experiments with form would keep one engaged, marking out this book as an important debut of the year, says Rajat Chaudhuri.

The incident torching of a house resulting in the deaths of 23 children, 16 women and 3 men Kandasamy takes the reader through a quirky background chapter titled Notes on Storytelling, where she plays many parts. Sometimes she is a critic chastising the exotic novel with a dash of humour while making it plain that she will resist exoticising impulses. Then she revels in postmodern playfulness while repeatedly attempting to put down the first sentence of the story beginning with

Once upon a time, in one tiny village, there lived an old woman followed by

Once upon some time, in some village of some size, there lived an old woman

(13-15)

or invoking and morphing into a rap singer as she talks about the genesis of protests against a landlord.

Kandasamy touching upon some legends and plunges into the history of the Nagapattinam district (where Kilvenmani is located) right from the Greeks with their nomenclatural instincts, next introducing the Danes who set up shop in nearby Tranquebar, on to the usual suspects the Dutch, the Portuguese and finally the British, before painting the present with snapshots of socio political history.



The rice-growing region Kilvenmani has been at the frontline of conflicts between agricultural labourers (backed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)) demanding a higher share of crops and rich landlords. The caste is woven into this fabric of strife, with the landless agricultural labourers being mostly Dalits ('untouchables') and the *mirasdars* or big landlords all caste Hindus and Brahmins. At this point we are introduced to some of the important characters of her story, among them Maayi the Old Woman and Gopalkrishna Naidu the landlord and brain behind the Kilvenmani massacre.

In the extensive background section, the author introduces us to Kurathi Amman, the Gypsy Goddess after dwelling on the difficulties of naming her novel and pondering if Derrida might have been of any help. And to sum up the mood she asks the reader quiet early in the book,

Are you still hunting around for the one-line synopsis and the sixty-second sound bite? Do you want me to compress this tragedy to fit into Twitter? How does one even enter this heart of darkness? (21)

Literary references and allusions are plenty in Kandasamy's prose. One have a whisper from Conrad, there pops up old Dostoevsky, now one smell the ghost of a Kundera, while the epigraph features a quote from Steinbeck, not to mention the Vonnegut and refrain so it goes. It is as if the author is conjuring up spirits of past authors to help her approach the difficult matter at hand. Then when literature serves her no more she switches to cold bullet point lists as in describing the post mortem reports of the charred corpses, some burnt beyond recognition or the language of petition and officials.

The story begins and builds up on legends and history, quickly transporting us to the decade of the sixties. Tensions between the Paddy Producers Association headed by

the devious Gopalkrishna Naidu of Irinjyur leader of *mitrasdars*, and the Communist party, fighting for the rights of agricultural labourers, are at its peak. The labourers of Nagapattinam had been demanding a little more paddy in exchange for their work infuriating the landlords. Violence is being perpetrated on the poor landless workers directly by the landlords henchmen or by using the police force. They are also being subject to social boycott and other oppressive tactics.

The winter harvest season of 1968 draws near, the labourers have gone on strike and imported labour has not been able to fill the gap because the peasant struggle has spread. Meanwhile, to teach the communists a lesson, a politician in collusion with Gopalkrishna Naidu gets local communist leader Sikkal Pakkirisamy murdered. This is the 15th of November. Huge demonstrations are held to pay homage to the slain grassroots leader following which the villagers of Kilvenmani continue with the strike while being fined by the landlords for these actions. Then on the night of Christmas, 1968, landlords and goons attack the villagers with guns and other weapons. Forty two people including 16 women and 23 children who had taken shelter from the marauding force in Paappa and Ramayya's hut are burnt alive.

The centre of all darkness has arrived in a place where language falters and police records and bulleted lists have to be pressed into service. In the aftermath of this brutal massacre, justice takes its slow meandering course and finally all the landlords are acquitted. Meanwhile some of the villagers who escaped the fire are accused of murdering a landlord's agent and thrown into jail. The rest of the book tries to come to grips with the tragedy as it also relates allied developments. The language in one of the closing chapters is brooding, lyrical:



The gods have blackened into death and the camphor only lights up their charred corpses. Women carelessly wind the fire around their hips and across their breasts. Girls carry fire in the ends of their curling hair and they pretend not to notice at all. Men swallow the fire as if their stomachs were stoves. Children catch fire when they run because the wind shaves their skin and sets them alight. The air is full of golden fire-dust. (203)

The epilogue employs the persuasive cadence of second person narrative, placing the reader at the centre of the stories of the villagers of Kilvenmani. But the reader hardly needs to be persuaded. The old woman Maayi talks with you, they show you the martyr's memoir and the ferocious Gypsy Goddess weaves her way back into the story. The villagers offer rice:

The fields are golden and ripe for harvest, the women entreat you to taste the rice. They pull the ears of paddy, peel the husk, and the grains of rice they give you are milky in the mouth. (199)

Kandasamy's outrage is evident with the issue of deconstructionists. She exhorts us to occupy the novel. There are some rough patches but the author's spontaneity, coupled with a radiant wit makes *The Gypsy Goddess* a memorable novel. Beyond the hard-hitting storyline, the variety of experiments keep one engaged, marking out this book as an important debut of the year. The story offer some sort of closure for the villagers of Kilvenmani, will the landless labourers finally sigh and whisper *Mudivu kandachu* which means It has been completed or the people have seen the end. This novel gives an intriguing to know, Kandasamy gives many reasons of thirst for knowledge of the historical event which occurred in Kilvenmani.



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**Mystic Blend of Eastern and Western Thought: A Study of Kahlil Gibran's**

***The Prophet and Broken Wings***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

**RUFINA MARY M.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN19)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Mystic Blend of Eastern and Western Thought: A Study of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

*M. Rufina Mary*  
**RUFINA MARY M.**



## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Mystic Blend of Eastern and Western Thought: A Study of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Rufina Mary M. during the year 2018– 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Mystic Blend of Eastern and Western Thought: A Study of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings*** gives a detailed analysis about the hidden aspects of love, life and death by discovering the attachment of the soul with God which is expressed in both the prose poems through the characters. It shows how the knowledge concerning such aspects leads to deeper understanding of life.

The first chapter **Introduction** gives a short biography of Kahlil Gibran and his stand on America as an immigrant writer. It also states the contribution of Gibran to the development of Arab American literature, his mystic temperament and his influences.

The second chapter **Sublimation of Love** shows how love is raised to a higher status by giving its constant presence in human relations. It also shows how love inspires the minds of people and shows its primacy over all other aspects of life.

The third chapter **Celebration of Life and Death** glorifies life and death. It also grants Gibran's philosophic insights which show death as a freedom which makes the spirit to get united with God, the source of life.

The fourth chapter **Art as Thought** records the style of Gibran by elucidating his experiments with prose poems. It also list outs his usage of figurative language his literary influences and some biblical allusions.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters by finding Gibran as a poet, philosopher and reformer who blended the Eastern and Western thought.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Art is a step from what is obvious and well-known toward what is arcane and concealed. Literature upholds the human spirit. It gives intellectual enlightenment and aesthetic pleasure. The relation between aesthetic and literature is intimate, at the same time very complex. Philosophy adds richness to this relationship. Literature is a form of human expression. It is a creative expression that addresses the emotional, spiritual and intellectual concerns of humanity. Literary work expresses a series of events in human life. It provides growth, strengthens our minds and gives us the ability to think.

Arab American literature was rooted in the late 1800s. It began when the Arab immigrants first began to arrive in North America in significant numbers from the Syrian province of Ottoman Empire, present Lebanon. Arabs immigration to the United States is characteristically divided into three phases: the first one extends from the 1880s to 1925; it was later in this period the Immigration Quota Act was passed, which limited the number of immigrants to the United States on the basis of their nationality. The second wave of Arabs immigration started with the end of World War II in 1945 and lasted till 1967, a year marked by the Six-day War between, Israel and several Arab countries. The last phase, facilitated by the passing of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, extends from the late 1960s into the current period. The immigrants hail mostly from the Levant area, which encompasses Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.

The early immigrants settled in colonies in cities like New York and Boston and they were fully intended to return to their homeland. They voiced mainly diasporan

consciousness. This is a fact which is evident in their newspapers, which were often sectarian, political and geared towards events in the Middle East. However, they found themselves living in a heavy assimilationist U.S context. The question of how to respond to such pressures while also maintaining Arab identity was a matter of great importance to the early immigrant community. Even newspapers and journals published debates about how to preserve Arab-Identity in America.

There are some recurring themes in the art of Arab Americans, particularly displacement, diaspora and cross-cultural identity. One theme that is shared with other immigrant groups in the United States is the feeling of isolation and the yearning to find a place in U.S Society. Arab Americans have created a few ethnically based organizations that bring together Arab-American writers, thespians, and visual artists. 'Mizna' is the only literary journal devoted wholly to Arab American issues, but other journals published in the United States, such as Al Jadid and Jusoor, which focus on Arabic literature, often include Arab American issues, writers, and themes. New York City is particularly rich in Arab American cultural organizations.

The Radius of Arab-American Writers, Inc. (RAWI), a national organization, brings together Arab American creative and prose writers, including novelists, poets, and journalists in a national organization. Other Arab-American writers' conferences have included the 1999 Professional Conference on Arab-American and ethnic writing, organized by journalist Ray Hanania. Ziryab, also based in New York City, holds a monthly reading series geared to Arab American writers, poets, and playwrights who read to the audience from their own writings. The arts organization 'Diwan' also promotes Arab music, storytelling, films and book parties as well as art exhibitions in New York.



Arab-American literature began in the late nineteenth century when the Arab American newspapers began publishing articles and literary pieces by Arab Americans. Arab-American writers such as Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) and Ameen Rihani (1876-1940) were recognized as the founders of Arab-American literature. In 1920 the literary organization Al Rabita al Qalamaiyya (Pen League) was established by Kahlil Gibran in New York. The Pen League included writers such as Elia Abu Madi, Mikhail Naimy, and Ameen Rihany. These authors wrote both in Arabic as well as in English. They were known as the Mahjar (immigrant) writers and their writing belongs to the Mahjar school of Arab-American writing. The first English-language Arab American novel, *The Book of Khalid* (1911), traces the journey of an immigrant from Lebanon to the United States and back home again.

Although these writers had their greatest impact on Arabic literature, they were conscious of serving as bridges between East and West and sought to establish a philosophical connection between Arab and American ideologies and contexts. After Mahjar literature entered a period of quiescence as the 1924 Johnson-Reed Quota Act had drastically limited numbers of new immigrants. Although there was not a complete dearth of literary production, Arab – American writers wrote about their Arab background with hesitation and self – distancing narrative strategies. Novelist Vance Bourjaily expressed his Lebanese identity only marginally as Evelyn Shakir calls it to be a kind of role-playing.

After 1960s things began to change, the civil rights movement opened new pages for immigrants and movements opened new spaces for immigrant and ethnic literary voices more generally. This demographic changes resulted in more Arab-Americans'



turning to literature and arts as a form of self-expression. Contemporary Arab American writers generally tend to be more critical of the U.S role in the world as well as more focused on domestic issues, such as poverty, racism, and injustice. There was a shift in the use of language; post -1965 Arab American writers composed their poetry, short stories and novels almost exclusively in English. Critic and translator Salma Khadra Jayysi points that there is a very clear discontinuity between the Mahjar writers and contemporary Arab-American writers, as the early Mahjar writers focused on the enrichment of Arabic literature. Some Lebanese American authors who belong to Mahjar Literature were Ameen Rihani, Elia Abu Madi, Mikhail Naimy and Kahlil Gibran.

Kahlil Gibran was born in the shadow of the holy cedars of Lebanon but spent the mature years of his life within the shadows of the skyscrapers of New York. Gibran was born in the Maronite Christian mountain village of Bisharri, in north Lebanon. He received no formal schooling in his youth. However, priests visited him regularly and taught him about the Bible and the Arabic language. The people of Mount Lebanon had struggled for several years to gain independence from the Ottoman rule, a cause Gibran was later to adopt and become an active member in. The Mount Lebanon area was a troubled region, due to various outside and foreign interferences that fostered religious hatred between the Christian, especially the Maronite sect, and Moselm populations. Later in his life, Gibran desired to unite various religious sects to abolish religious snobbery, persecution and atrocities witnessed at his time. Gibran immigrated with most of his family to the States in 1895 and settled in Boston for a while, before returning for a few years to his native country to complete his education. Throughout his childhood, he had been attracted equally to both the writer's pen and the artist's pencil.

Gibran has been described as the mystic, the philosopher, the religious, the heretic, the serene, the rebellious and the ageless. Some consider his works as dangerous, revolutionary and poisonous to youth, while others praise him for his Biblical majesty of phrase. He imitated the principles of Jesus and values of *The Bible* in his works. Biographies of Gibran have been written by his personal friends and acquaintances. His personal life cannot be separated from his works. Gibran revolted against law, religion, and custom. He advocated a society peaceful and mystical.

Gibran was one of the leading members of the Syro-American school, an organizer, leader and active member of the Pen League. Lebanese by birth, Christian by creed, he was the inheritor and bearer of two cultures: Western and Arab. As a man of many gifts both refined and emotional, a painter and a musician, he was most famed as a major figure of literature. He penned short stories, parables, prose poems, essays, fables, poems, and criticism. Early in his career, Gibran wrote books, poetry, and articles in Arabic. He created a new era in style, influenced by Western thought and revolution in the minds of the younger generation of his country. Though Gibran did not write treatises about philosophy in his great prose poem *The Prophet* which deals with the question of birth and death, he placed himself within the Socratic views on Ancient Greek maxim: "Know Thyself".

Robin Waterfield on his introduction to the prose poem *The Prophet* states that the book was originally intended to be a trilogy (viii). The first book of this trilogy covered large topics of human life like religion, birth, death, love and marriage. The second book was to cover man's relation to nature and third book is of man's relation to divine. After the publication of *The Prophet*, Gibran's interest in completing the trilogy



waned. The second book *The Garden of the Prophet* was incomplete as Gibran died while he was working on it. Later this book was completed by Barbara Young, one of the biographers of Gibran. The third book *The Death of the Prophet* was expected to be about the death of the prophet Almustafa.

Kahlil Gibran was a bilingual writer. He wrote both in Arabic and in English. His best Arabic works were *Al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira*, *Ara'is al-Muruj*, and *Al-'Awasif*. These works were later translated into English namely *Broken Wings* (1912), *Spirit Brides* (1906) and *The Tempests* (1920). His English works consist of *The Madman* (1918), *The Prophet* (1923), *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928) and *The Garden of the Prophet* (1933). By writing to both East and West Gibran essentially focused on what they lacked. He preached rationality to the East and Mysticism to the West. His works bear the flavor of ancient wisdom and mysticism of the East as well as scientific inclination of the West. The West closed doors to the inwardness of human experience; the East rebuffed the objective matters. But Gibran through his works aligned them both.

Gibran's poetry has been translated into more than twenty languages and his drawings and paintings have been exhibited all over the world. Even though the religion of Islam prohibited the use of images and Idols, Gibran showed his interest in paintings. In childhood he imagined the appearances of authors from the works he read. Gibran as a painter was not influenced by particular man or school of painters. His drawings consist of naked bodies, shadows drawn in gray and black. Their movements and settings were a clear attempt to relate the known to the unknown, to depict love, sorrow and life in their relation to man and God. Gibran was influenced not only by his own religion but also by Islam. Many of his writings deal with Christianity and on spiritual love. His mysticism is



a convergence of several different influences. He was influenced by Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and theosophy. He believed in the fundamental unity of religions as Gibran believed all people irrespective of their religion comes under one common spirit as they are equal and same before God. He was also influenced by Islamic art, European classicism and Romanticism, Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and Modern symbolism and Surrealism.

Gibran's reputation in America is imminent. His works were popular making him the best selling American poet of the twentieth century. But he was criticized for his paintings and drawings which belong to symbolism and art nouveau which was rejected by American realists and European abstractionists. His English works notably *The Prophet* with its didactic romanticism found no favor with critics. These critics admired only the intellectualism and realism of James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Ernest Hemingway. As Robin Waterfield points out that the prose poem *The Prophet* has been criticized as "platitudinous, over- sentimental and trite. Such arrogant criticisms were passed by hard-hearted intellectuals (ix).

Kahlil Gibran has introduced various mystical aspects throughout his works. The mystical element conceived by Gibran is a unifying thread that ties together his literary output in two totally different cultural environments. It grants his works a distinctive flare amidst the apprehension of modernity. It roots them in the human psyche with reverberations of ancient mysticism and spirituality. The success of Gibran could be attributed to the fact that Gibran has gracefully given voice to the deep human need for spiritual answers to pressing questions on the meaning of existence. Gibran's writing established a mystical union with nature, a relationship of love and harmony.

Generally, the term mysticism is related to spirituality. They both have played an indomitable role in shaping human life and history. Gibran accepted the spiritual aspect of religion which emphasizes on man's personal relationship with the Divine and rejected the formal authority of organized religion. After immigrating to the United States, Gibran rejected religious materialism and rather endorsed European Romanticism which played an important role in the growth of his spirituality. Later, Gibran readily exhibited Christian or Islamic influences in presenting his mystically inclined literary themes. The vision of Gibran penetrates through the veils of materialism and it connects the human consciousness to the soul of the universe.

Gibran was influenced by the mysticism of Sufis. Also, Gibran's works were closely connected with Blake's poetry as well as compared with the theological ideas of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Gibran's style and philosophy are characteristic of the East and of the Arab in particular. His words went beyond the mere evocation of the mysterious East. However, it endeavored to communicate the necessity of reconciliation between Christianity and Islam, spirituality and materialism, East and West. In the Arab world, he was considered to be the genius of his age, while in the West his work has been compared to Blake, Dante, Tagore, Nietzsche, Michelangelo, Rodin, Rumi, Emerson, and Shelley.

Gibran admired Friedrich Nietzsche, a writer whose breathless blasphemy and ecstatic propose matched his own deepest needs for artistic authenticity. According to Waterfield, the form of the work *The Prophet* is taken from Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in which the character Zarathustra was similar to that of Almustafa. In Paris Gibran also met Rodin who introduced him the art and poetry of William Blake. Gibran



immediately felt a kinship with the visionary Englishman, and the benign shadow of Blake was to fall on virtually all of his English writings as well as many of his works. Similarities between Blake and Gibran more at spiritual level transcend dissimilar literary backgrounds. They share a common way of contemplation and communication that binds them in an exceptional relationship. In terms of social rebellion, social reform, spirituality, mysticism, romanticism and also their style of writing. The philosophy, thoughts, insights, and visions of William Blake and Kahlil Gibran are distinctly similar in varied ways.

Gibran read Blake and was greatly influenced by his thought and style. He was overwhelmed by his poetic philosophy, his visions and the prophetic charge of both his poetry and paintings. However, he did not imitate him blindly. Gibran presented the ideas of Blake in an innovative way. Blake and Gibran lived in different political and religious environments and yet both were rebels and mystics in spite of their differences. Though they wrote in different countries and their literary tradition vary greatly, yet both made prolific use of symbols.

The worlds of Blake and Gibran inherited many similarities outnumbering their differences. Both poets considered themselves as one with the bard and the prophet. More so they viewed themselves as the witness of the absolute truth, the spectators of all time and existence. Blake and Gibran through their writings fought for the rights of women and criticized the patriarchy and religious institutions for suppressing the weak. The ideas expressed in Gibran's poem '*Yesterday and Today*' correlate with Blake's poem '*Songs of Innocence*'. The former is a story of an innocent priest who turned greedy after his wealth. According to Blake innocence is a blissful state whereas, experience is a state



where man grows greedy ambitious and restless. Innocence is allied with truth, sincerity, and honesty; experience is related to falsehood, duplicity, and corruption.

Other than Blake, some relations can be found between Gibran and William Butler Yeats. Yeats and Gibran were greatly inspired by their own homelands. For Yeats it was the sands of Sligo Bay, the emerald boughs, the rivers of Western Ireland and the Legendary Mountains of Ben Bulbin and Knocknarea that provided an inexhaustible store of symbol and sparked his poetic imagination. As for Gibran it was the sacred groves of Lebanon, its hills, streams, waterfall, copses, ethnic groups, the lofty snow capped mountains, the mighty cedars, and the blue Mediterranean that stimulated his dreams and reveries.

Kahlil Gibran just like Yeats was shaped by his surroundings and in particular he was greatly inspired by nature. The natural beauty of Gibran's home village Bisharri was a strong source of inspiration and nature inspired his imagination. His poetry is nostalgic of the magnificent scenery of his childhood. It portrays Gibran rejoicing in peace and freedom among the immortal cedars of Lebanon, the famous holy valley of Qadisha, and the mountains of Sannin and Famm al-mizab.

Jean Gibran, one of the biographers of Gibran, points out that it was after the publication of *The Madman*, Gibran got fame in America as a mysterious hero and many considered him to be a counterpart to Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore who was a great literary figure in India was known for his mystic writings. He got fame in the English speaking world only after his publications of his own English translations of his Bengali poems. Tagore's self-oriented translations of his poetry were responsible for his success

in the West. This influence of Hinduism on American Unitarians created a favorable atmosphere for the reception of Gibran's message. It was after Tagore, Gibran established himself as an English writer and he developed into a great Eastern poet.

In Britain, Tagore was popular after his publication of *Gitanjali* for which Yeats himself had written an introduction. By winning Nobel Prize in literature in 1913 Tagore toured into the USA. Tagore was the pioneer of Eastern romantic's writers and he paved the path for East romantic's writers to set foot on American literary cycle. In his letter to Mary Haskell, Gibran tells about his encounters with Rabindranath Tagore. Gibran on a letter written on January 3, 1917 says that Tagore "is an Indian with all the beauty and charms of India. God is, to Tagore, a perfect Being." (283) Tagore's ideas were also expressed in Gibran's work *The Madman*. In general, the concepts of Gibran had a close resemblance to that of Tagore. It is said "The parables collected in *The Madman* are more reminiscent... of the long rising rhythms of Tagore." (16)

Yet Gibran is a different kind of oriental sage from Tagore, a more familiar and a cosmopolitan prophet, who blended Eastern and Western wisdom and fused biblical, Sufi, Hindu, Romantic and Nietzsche's influences. Gibran's unique poetic expression, characterized by beauty and spirituality was termed as 'Gibranism'. Gibran, the people's prophet died of cirrhosis, due to prolonged serious alcoholism. According to his wish he was buried in Lebanon. The place since then became Gibran museum. The words scribed on his grave as he asked to be written "I am alive like you, and I am standing beside you. Close your eyes and look around, you will see me in front of you".



*The Prophet* by Gibran is a mystical philosophy of life in simple poetic verse which presents the farewell observations of the beloved prophet Almustafa who came to Orphalese as a foreigner and had lived among the inhabitants for twelve years, observing their daily life and speaking to them the words of God. Also, it is evident that when *The Prophet* was published, Gibran had been living in New York in exile from Lebanon, for twelve years. Through Almustafa's character Gibran portrayed his wish to return to his homeland. In *The Prophet*, the real identity of Almustafa and also the purpose of his arrival to Orphalese were not told which adds an even more mystic quality to the work. Also, Almustafa believed that it is not him who is speaking, but "the guardian of the night shall fill (my lantern) with oil and he shall light it also" (8). This acts as a common invocation for God or spirit to speak through him.

Almustafa around whom the story revolves served as people's harp, flame, seeker of silence and guardian of the night. Much of his time has been spent on hills and watching and listening to their lives. The plot opens as a ship arrives to take him back to the island of his birth. Sadden by his departure, people gather around and ask him for his final words of wisdom on love, joy, work, sorrow, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, freedom, beauty, pleasure, reason and passion, religion and many others concluding with death. He obliged to their request and his lucubration occupies most of this prose poem. His final words are a promise that he will return to Orphalese. There are twenty-six questions regarding various aspects of life. Addressing each question individually, Almustafa exhibits a general tendency to show, through allusions to nature and everyday activities, the interrelatedness of life. Almustafa speaks of each of the themes in sober, sonorous aphorisms grouped into twenty-six short chapters. Also,



Almustafa urges the people to see even in life's negative aspects some spark of good and he urges the people young, old and middle-aged, rich and poor, male and female, to appreciate the unity of life under God and behave accordingly.

Robert Waterfield affirms that Mary Haskell had been an invisible hand behind the work *The Prophet*. Earliest references to a mysterious prophet counseling his people before returning to his island home can be found in Haskell's journal from 1912. She refers it as *Counsels*, *The Commonwealth* and *Mustafa*. But Gibran claimed later, that he dreamt of the book when he was a child in Lebanon (vi-vii). Gibran worked on it from time to time and had finished much of it by 1919. Many critics dismissed the work as sentimental, overwritten, artificial and affected and they failed to appreciate an Arabic aesthetic work *The Prophet*. As a Middle Eastern work it stands closer to eastern didactic classics, such as the *Book of Job* and the works of the twelfth- and thirteenth- century Persian poet Rumi than to anything in the modern American canon. Gibran knew that he would never surpass *The Prophet*, and for the most part, his later works do not come close to measuring up to it.

*The Broken Wings* is considered to be Gibran's best writing in Arabic. This prose poem which was set in Lebanon was written in the first person and skillfully used everyday words. Gibran effectively engages the reader in the work's depiction of emotion, alienation and the longing for connections. The prose poem highlights many of the social issues of the time in the East Mediterranean including religious corruption, the rights of women and the weighing up of wealth and happiness. The prose poem is comprised of various chapters. Each has a different philosophy and theme connected with

love and life. Gibran's poetic novel portrays the autobiographical life of his first and last love.

In *Broken Wings*, Gibran who is the narrator of the story meets Farris Effandi, a friend of his father. He falls in love with the daughter of Effandi, Selma Karamy. From the first meeting Kahlil and Selma fell in love with one another feeling that their souls happen to understand each other without having to talk. Their true love turned fruitless as Selma is forced to marry bishop's nephew without her father's genuine approval. Her life turns into a misery after her marriage, while the young man suffers the loss of his beloved girl. Selma hopes to die and she sees death as a salvation from her marriage, but suddenly she is front of a new dilemma which is her father's sickness. When Selma reveals the conditions of her unhappy marriage, Effandi asks the young man to be Selma's brother and friend.

Later after Effandi's death, Selma continues to struggle against reality and her dreams. Defying social customs they two met secretly and regularly in a secluded temple to talk and share their thoughts. These bittersweet hours spent together cannot heal Selma's failing health, which is caused by unhappiness. She begins to see death as her rescuer until she gets pregnant, but as soon as delivers her baby the baby dies and she dies right afterwards, getting the salvation she always dreamed of.

Kahlil Gibran could not marry the love of his life because of her parent's refusal and this was highly reflected in this prose poem. Kahlil Gibran saw man-made rules as silly, ridiculous and restricting thoughts that people follow and keep. The story is truly sad and tragic and paints endlessly a pure love between two. Gibran with all his

metaphors and figures of speech in this prose poem shows the reader what he thinks and how he feels about the genuine love between a man and women and the union of two souls regardless of whether they end up being together. This prose poem was written in 1912 and Gibran dedicated the prose poem to Mary Haskell a woman he loved. The story is not real but it expresses what Gibran thinks of unfruitful pure love. According to Gibran himself, the *Broken Wings* was welcomed as "a wonderful work of art" and as "a tragedy of subtlest simplicity" (Gibran to Mary Haskell, May 6, 1912). The second chapter deals with the sublimation of love and Gibran shows how love is superior to everything and also how it is interrelated with all spheres of life. He gives three forms of love that is the love between parent and child, man and woman, and God and human.



## Chapter Two

### Sublimation of Love

Kahlil Gibran a prophetic writer was influenced not only by the works of other writers but also by his surroundings. The beauty of Lebanon, the Arabic culture, Maronite church, the beautiful women, sultans and corrupted religion turned out to be the major themes through which Gibran praised as well as criticized the society. His writings too adopted an autobiographical tone and embraced such themes. By his imagination, he connected the spirit of man to the spirit of nature which freed itself from norms and established rules. He established through his works a mystical union with nature and oneness with God which is formed by the relation of love and harmony. Mysticism deals with the inner emotional life of man. As a mystic writer Gibran expressed his inner self, therefore many of his works have an autobiographical tone.

In *The Prophet*, it is evident that Almustafa is a replica of Gibran and Almitra was recognized as Mary Haskell and City of Orphalese to be New York. In regard to Almustafa's departure for the land of his birth and his gratefulness to the people who have given him a "deeper thirsting after life" (100) reflects Gibran's everlasting dream to go back to his homeland and his gratefulness to the country which he made his home for some twenty years of his life.

While creating the prophecy of Almustafa, Gibran undoubtedly considered his own experience as an 'Easterner' living in America and his interest in teaching Eastern spirituality to the West. Also, *The Prophet* seems to reflect Gibran's efforts to unite various faiths and religions. Behind Almustafa's global vision of a harmonious universe

healed by the power of love and unity. There is an underlying theme of unity of all religions and essential oneness of humanity. Gibran communicates a universal humanist message and truths relevant to all cultures and times.

While the *Broken Wings*, a bitter love novel which was dedicated to M.E.H also contains some autobiographical elements in it. Some considered Selma Karamy in *Broken Wings* to be Mary Haskell. While biographers and Gibran's neighbors insist that Gibran's first love was called Hala El-dasher and the events of the story took place in Bisharri instead of Beirut.

Gibran gave importance to the emotions and feelings of oriental women who were crushed by the patriarchal society. However, he did not fail to appreciate the beauty and virtues of women. Gibran recognized the influence of women in his life as he says that he feels indebted to them. In *Mirrors of the soul* he states, "Women opened windows of my eyes and the doors of my spirit. Had it not been for the woman-mother, the woman-sister and the women-friends, I would have been sleeping among those who disturb the serenity of the world with their snores." (73)

Gibran's mother was especially important in his life. The religious bent of Gibran's mother, her beautiful voice and the religious atmosphere of Gibran molded his character. In *Broken Wings*, Gibran eloquently expresses his love for his mother. As he says "the most beautiful word on the lips of mankind is the word 'Mother,' and the most beautiful call is the call of 'My Mother'." (69) Gibran praises mother to be everything and he looks upon them as a source of love and comfort. Whenever her child is troubled she becomes the child's healer. In *Broken Wings* Gibran says, "She is our consolation in



sorrow, our hope in misery, and our strength in weakness." (69) Gibran connects nature to motherhood and he finds the love of Mother in nature too. Gibran calls sun to be the mother of earth and earth to be the mother of trees and flowers and trees and flowers to be the mother of fruits and seeds. The sun nourishes the earth and it pampers earth as a mother and it never leaves the child and it puts the earth "to sleep to the song of the sea and the hymn of birds and brooks." (69) Mother acts a prototype of all existence and a mother's love for her child is boundless and equal to God. So the major themes which are common in all of Gibran's works were God, Life, Love, Beauty and Earth.

Gibran also brings out the child's relation with its mother. In *Broken Wings*, Selma's child is a rescuer and messenger of death who saves Selma from his father's clutches. As a bystander whispers: "It seems as if the child had come to rescue his mother from her pitiless husband." (95) The child rescues his mother at last. Through this Gibran brings out the maternal bond between them. The love between a mother and the child in her womb is immeasurable and infinite. In *The Prophet* too Gibran brings out the relation between the mother and her child. As Almustafa says, "You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth." (23)

*Broken Wings* is one of Gibran's early experimental works through which he sought to reform the Arabic literature and culture as it debates the issue of the oppressed Arab woman in the Middle Eastern society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It also portrays a young man's pure love for Selma and his understanding of love which is soon crushed by the society. In *Broken Wings*, Gibran gives the taste of bitter sweetness of the beauty and pain of young love. It is a tale of passion as it exposes the



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wild passion of a young poet doomed by the restrictions of society and the power and greed of the clergy.

Gibran compares himself to be Adam and Selma as Eve who led him into the paradise of love and virtue by her sweetness and love but he says that he was chased out of that paradise "without having disobeyed any order or tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree." (100) Gibran at the beginning of the story depicts himself to be afflicted by solitude which made him refrain himself from outer world finding no outlet to the world of knowledge and wisdom. In his weakness love acted as his companion as he says "Love provided me with tongue and tears." (13) Selma awakened his spirit and led him into the garden of high affection and he calls her to be his "column of light." After facing the harsh realities the love of Gibran and Selma turns powerless and their wings are also broken. In her misery, Selma asks Gibran the reason for their ill fate "Did we fly swiftly toward the stars until our wings tired, and are we descending now into the abyss?" (51)

From another romantic perspective, Gibran once again describes the beautiful nature in North Lebanon which fired his imagination. He appears to be rejoiced in spiritual exaltation from remembering "those valleys full of magic and dignity", and "those mountains covered with glory and greatness trying to reach the sky." (18) Nature acts as a medium through which Gibran outpours his thoughts and his feelings of both joy and sorrow. When Gibran's narrator rejoices in lovely bliss nature appears to him "like houris or brides sent by nature to inspire poets and excite the imagination" and "like the bride in the spring, or like a mermaid sitting by the side of a brook drying her smooth skin in the rays of the sun." (17) However when he becomes a victim of fate beautiful Lebanon looks like an old man "whose eyes were a haven for insomnia, watching the

dark and waiting for dawn, like sitting on the ashes of his throne in the debris of his palace." (58)

While in *Broken Wings* Gibran presents himself to be a young lover, In *The Prophet* Gibran presents himself as a writer of prophetic vision who shares his spiritual sensitiveness. Here Almustafa appears to be a wise sage and a man of great vision who teaches moral values, the mysteries of life and timeless wisdom about the human experience like marriage, children, friendship, pleasure and death. Almustafa describes the yearning of the soul for spiritual regeneration and self-fulfillment. According to him the greatest quest of a man is to seek the love of God who is infinite. Gibran also companies his romantic thoughts of nature with God in his teachings as he says "Among the hills, when you sit in the cool shade of the white poplars, sharing the peace and serenity 'God rests in reason' and when the storm comes, and the mighty wind shakes the forest, and thunder and lightning proclaim the majesty of the sky 'God moves in passion'." (57)

*The Prophet* as a work of profound philosophy also lays the bare concept of love being ingrained with pain. Almustafa gives a long sermon about love. As Almustafa says

When you love you should not say, 'God is in my heart,' but rather, 'I am in the heart of God.'

And think not you can direct the course of love, for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course. (14)

Gibran believes in the Prophet's role as a dispenser of social wisdom. He acts as an orator who wants to teach people, moral, wise and humanistic lessons. Almustafa speaks to



them and gives them his experiences to build a better future. While in the *Broken Wings* the narrator used by Gibran tells about his own experiments regarding love.

The most prominent universal theme in both *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings* is its persistent faith in love and its relationship to life and to most human activities that are dealt with. While dealing with love as a discrete topic it is also closely related to the appreciation of life. In *Broken Wings*, Gibran delicately paints his feelings when describing the blossoming of his love. He talks about Selma's unparalleled beauty and virtue, her sweetness and nobility of spirit. She lives inside him as a "supreme thought, a beautiful dream, an overpowering emotion." (46) Gibran believes in the transcendental power of romantic love and in its ascendancy over tradition. For him, true love is a supreme way of achieving self-realization and it is the noblest of human attainment. It becomes a spiritual accord that brings him heavenly inspiration for through Selma's eyes he sees the angels of heaven looking at him. "Real beauty lies in the spiritual accord that his called love which can exist between a man and a woman." (23)

Selma, however, tells her beloved that the true nature's of a woman's soul is a mixture of love and sorrow, affection and sacrifice. As she says,

A woman's desires and secrets of her soul, moving between love and sorrow-between affection and sacrifice, between Ishtar sitting on the throne and Mary stands by the cross. (78)

Here Ishtar represents the goddess of love and beauty while Mother Mary near the cross symbolizes sorrow. Selma's understanding of the situation is deeper and more complicated. As a typical oriental woman, she feared to overcome the society. She chose



a commitment to her father and loving husband over running away to Gibran's love and so she sacrifices true love for social customs. As Selma says "to sacrifice a great thing in order to obtain a greater one; it is the sacrifice of my happiness so that you may remain virtuous and honorable in the eyes of the people and be far away from their treachery and persecution." (87)

Similarly in *The Prophet* love is related to other aspects of human life. In marriage, the text praises the sharing of togetherness with that of keeping space and love. Love is also required in dealing with children. As Almustafa says, "You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts." (20) It is also paired with work "Work is love made visible" (33) which has been defined as the noble love that fulfils life and love and love also acts as a bind with God. Love teaches one to appreciate life, gratitude and happiness.

Love frees and purifies the soul as it is self-sufficient. True love does not mean seeking peace and pleasure only, it is self-sufficient as well. "Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself." (14) The same concept of love can be seen in *Broken Wings* where Selma says "Limited love asks for possession of the beloved, but the unlimited asks only for itself." (85)

In *The Prophet* Almustafa recommends his audiences to follow love even it is painful. Love is sacred; it envelops completely to satisfy the desire to enjoy it in peaceful tenderness.

When his wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among  
his pinions may wound you.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.

Then he (love) assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast. (13)

Gibran uses the parallel of wings as a tender example of an embrace, an embrace which may lead to stabbing. Furthermore, the promises that love makes and through the voice he speaks will be of pretence as the truth may devastate one. For every encouragement that yields to love, Gibran reminds of its dangers and potential pain and suffering. At the same time, Gibran makes it clear that these fears should not deter one from loving. Love shows the way to enlightenment and helps to learn the lessons of life. Gibran mentions the role of love in all human's life. It is love which chooses one's destiny and it acts as a guide through whom one can reach the goal of merging with God through our knowledge and experience on love.

From his universal theme love, Gibran creates his view on marriage and he says that togetherness of marriage requires keeping both love and space in balance and it must not be a bondage to possessive domineering. In *The Prophet* he says "Love one another, but make not a bond of love." (16) According to Gibran, the couple should not depend on each other for everything, but instead, they should let there be space in their togetherness. He uses personification to link his feelings about spaces in togetherness in marriage to dancing, a human action. "And let the winds of heaven dance between you." (16)

Gibran talks about the parents' love for their child. Gibran statement was that children require parents' love, but they should not impose their thoughts upon them as



children cannot be a replica of their own parents. As Gibran states that the parent's love must not be an obstacle for child's development. The parents must allow their children to have their independence. As Gibran says,

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. (20)

In *Broken Wings*, Gibran portrays marriage as a mockery where women are treated as a commodity. Through Selma Gibran pictures all oriental women who in spite of their knowledge and virtue subjugated by male chauvinistic society. Gibran states that "the woman is looked upon as commodity, purchased and delivered from one house to another." (61) Selma turns helpless in front of patriarchal norms and values and remains a prisoner of social expectation. Her function as imposed by others is to take her father's riches to the husband who treated her like another possession. The marriage which is expressed in *Broken Wings* is entirely contrasted with Almustafa's ideals of marriage in *The Prophet*. Almustafa explains the relation between man and woman. Unlike *Broken Wings*, in *The Prophet* marriage is not seen as a commodity. As Gibran says,

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:

Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.

Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. (16)



Selma who is praised for her intelligence and pride obeyed her father's will. In *The Prophet*, Gibran told of destiny which is decided by love. In *Broken Wings*, such destiny seizes Selma and turns her to be a slave in the procession of a miserable oriental woman. Selma symbolizes all women who accept their doomed fate as she replies to Gibran.

My father's wealth has placed me in the slave market, and this man has bought me. I neither know nor love him, but I shall learn to love him, and I shall obey him, serve him, and make him happy. I shall give all that a weak woman can give a strong man. (50)

Selma's marriage with Mansour bey was not made of love. Selma turned as a victim to the greediness of money-minded people like Bishop Bulos and his nephew. The bishop was described as the head of religions and is greatly praised and worshipped by the people. Gibran says that "He (Bishop) leads them like a flock of lambs to the slaughterhouse." (19) However, the people of oriental nations trust such people blindly.

Powerless and resigned, she is convinced that "a bird with broken wings cannot fly in the spacious sky" and at last she begs to God to have mercy on her "Oh, Lord God, have mercy on me and mend my broken wings!" (58). According to Waterfield, the title *Broken Wings* is "the wings of love on which the young couple first explore the exalted domain of love, only to find themselves brought abruptly down to earth by harsh realities." (60) Gibran too sees himself as a wounded bird but takes a stronger stance against convention, male chauvinism and corruption of the Lebanese aristocracy. His criticism is especially harsh when it comes to the heads of religion whom

he accuses of maintaining the oppression of women. Gibran calls "the Christian bishop and the Moslem imam and the Brahman Priest" who were seemed "like sea reptiles who clutch their prey with many tentacles and suck their blood with numerous mouths." (44)

Gibran urges Selma to liberate herself from the chains of social norms and to run away with him from a world of suffering. But Selma who was deeply afflicted by her suffering compared herself to a bird whose wings were broken" I am not worthy of a new life of love and peace; I am not strong enough for life's pleasure and sweetness, because a bird with *Broken Wings* cannot fly in spacious sky." (85) Selma searches for freedom throughout her life but at the end, she accepts death to be her freedom. The third chapter deals with the celebration of both life and death. Gibran shows how life and death are mingled with one another and also the role of death in one's life. He also gives the meaning of life and death and shows how life as well as death must be celebrated and accepted as gifts from heaven.

## Chapter Three

### Celebration of Life and Death

There is a relationship between life and death. They are the two sides of the same coin. Death cannot exist without life and neither life without death. Death is perhaps the most striking event in one's life. Although it is true that one may never comprehend physical death in its full force, the thought of death has always intrigued human beings. Death presents itself as an idea that underlines the end of every possible presence or existence. The concept of death has been dealt by philosophers since time immemorial. The subject of death was initially approached from the perspective of mind-body dualism. Later it was undertaken from the viewpoint of existence, belief, faith, values and hope. Death was no more than mere death of the body and the release of the soul but death was philosophized as the end of one's faith, hope, beliefs and values.

However, for most of the people, death is not nearly as bleak as that. Rather than being the end of existence, it is an experience that will instantly or ultimately survive. Despite the ardent denials of humanists and rationalists, many believe that there is some form of ongoing existence beyond death. But the understanding about such things varies. Some think of such an afterlife in terms of reincarnation or the transmigration of souls, a successive series of rebirths eventually leading to some form of liberation or enlightenment or transcendence. Others think in terms of migration to a supernatural or metaphysical realm, from where the dearly departed can still communicate with or even manifest themselves to the living.



The core of Christian belief about death is that there is an afterlife, where all are placed in hell or heaven which depends upon one's conduct on earth. Also, the Catholic churches claim there is an afterlife state which is between heaven and hell called it the purgatory. The theological teaching is that after a time of purgation, the spirit will eventually progress and will go to heaven. While Buddhists, like Hindus, accepted the doctrines of reincarnation and karma. Also, they believed the notion that the ultimate goal of the religious life is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth. In Buddhism as well as in Hinduism, life in a corporeal body is viewed negatively, as the source of all suffering. Hence the goal is to obtain release. Traditional Judaism firmly believes that death is not the end of human existence. However, Judaism is primarily focused on life here on Earth rather than on the afterlife. Jews believed that after death their souls will be resurrected by the arrival of Messiah. Muslims believes death to be the end of physical life and the beginning of a period of rest until the day of resurrection when Allah judges the living and the dead.

Death is the only certainty, yet also the ultimate unknown. As the saying goes, death is the great leveler and nowhere is it better expressed than in the world of literature. Due to its universal nature, the subject of death has appealed to many great authors. Death can be approached in many different ways and some writers provide highly personalized emotional accounts of the death of close relatives, friends and fictional characters, whilst others merely use deaths as a means to strengthen narrative as a symbolic device or to provide meaning. Although it may seem morbid and depressing, writing about death is not really about death at all, it is about life. Death has been

varyingly described as deep sleep, an awakening, a climax, a void, a door, a gift, a wall, a judgment or merely as the end.

The inevitability or tragedy of death is a literary theme found in all manner of novels whether as the main focus or through the demise of a major character. This is approached from many different angles, exploring the mystery of death, a futile attempt to escape it, characters faced with their own mortality or dealing with grief and loss. Death was still an inescapable matter that perturbs poets and all humans in general. Since the earlier time, Arabic poetry had touched on the theme of death. Arab poets of the pre-Islamic era had a pagan and materialistic vision of life and death, however, most of them dealt with the inevitability of death. In *Journals of Arabic literature*, Michael A. Sells mentions some Arabic poets and their wisdom regarding death. According to him Kab Ibn Zuhair in his poem "Al -Burdah" (The Mantle) says, "Every woman's son, / long safe, / will one day be carried off / on a curve-backed bier." (48)

Pre-Islamic poets dealt with two kinds of death the concrete and the abstract death. For the concrete death or the real death, these poets display two different attitudes towards it. The first attitude represented the existentialist trend of the poets who aspired to achieve and obtain all their pleasures before death coming. While the poets of this trend fear death, they, in reality, fear to lose their pleasures. The second attitude represents the poet's eagerness towards death due to boredom and alienation that control their feelings. As for the abstract death, poets meant death as a death of dignity and honor for humanity.



Unlike the pre-Islamic poets, Muslim poets viewed death as the next stage of life called Barzakh life, which precedes resurrection. Islam presents a positive outlook on death and answers all the metaphysical questions of life after death. However, Muslim traditional poets display two different attitudes towards death. The first attitude is represented by Muslim religious poets who perpetually engross with Allah. Such poets are content with death whenever it comes because they believe that this worldly life was created to test human beings while the afterlife is the true life that is a reward. The second attitude poets wrote poems which display their fear of death because of the sins which they have perpetrated. These poets fear about the future after death, therefore their ascetic poems deal with death, grave, judgment. Generally, Arabic modernist poetry is imbued with the theme of death. These poets view death as a path for a better life.

As for the western poets, death was still a complicated matter. The attitude of the modernist poets towards the matter of death differs from one poet to another. For some, death is a dreadful ghost and in the eyes of other poets, it is a savior, a gift from God and the greatest blessing to human beings. Kahlil Gibran touches upon the concept of death in a philosophical way. Gibran views regarding death parallel with all the doctrines and principles that were discussed above. Gibran accepted the inevitability of death and his views regarding death shows his adherence to the Christian and Muslim doctrines. According to Gibran, death is a medium through which the spirit of human gets once again reunited with God.

In his prose poem *The Prophet* which consists of all greatest values in every human life, Almustafa explains the relationship between life and death. Gibran shows how life and love are intermingled with one another. It was through love Gibran explains



about life and about being, that is existence. Life does not mean only to be alive, Gibran brings out that life is a mixture of love, work, pleasure and pain. Above all Gibran focuses on the individual in relation with God. Rather than using such themes in a literary perspective, Gibran brings out the realities and necessities of human being born on earth. As Gibran points out that, the secrets regarding death can only be found in the hearts of life. "You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?" (89)

Life, as expressed in *The Prophet*, deals with the identification and glorification of one's self. Through this prose poem, Gibran brings out that death unites the spirit of man as one with God and also throughout his life man is related as one with God. The idea of man as the image of God is persuasive in the prose poem. So the life's purpose is to glorify humanity and emphasizes trust in all humans. Death is the predominant theme throughout the prose poem *The Prophet* and Almustafa's departure on a ship symbolically represents his death.

Some consider life a journey which eventually ends in death. Here the journey of Almustafa is about to embark on the vehicle ship denoting his journey towards death. Through this Gibran brings out the uncertainty of death. From the beginning of the narrative, Almustafa states that he is returning to the place of his birth. In a philosophical way, it can be understood that life ends where it began. The spirit or soul comes from God and it eventually returns to him. So Almustafa's departure denotes both his death and his reunion with God. Even the final line in the prose poem, "A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me" (108) denotes

returning to earth. Also, death acts as an assistant who helps the traveler to reach his destination of being one with God.

Gibran views on death shows the relationship between life and death and he advises people not to fear death and to accept it. As Almustafa says,

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one

Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honor

Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king?

Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling? (89-90).

Gibran compares life with that of river and death with the sea. The river and sea are one but not the same. Here through the river, Gibran denotes the short lifespan of the human. As the river, human soul flows freely but at the end, it mingles or unites with the sea, by which Gibran differentiates the understanding of life and death. Like river the depth of life can at least be explored to some extents but it is impossible to know about the mystic nature of death. Death is similar to the sea which is only visible until the horizon but it is unknown. Certainly are the origins of life and its ends are unknown to humans.



Gibran uses owl imagery to implore the importance of understanding one's life in relation with God for better understanding about death. According to Gibran the answers regarding death is found only in life and life is understood only through the relationship with God. He says, "And if you would know God, be not, therefore, a solver of riddles." (88) He accounts on the fear of death and relates humans fear regarding death, to a shepherd who trembles before the king. Though the shepherd is to be honored by the king he fears the king and this shows the common nature of all ordinary humans. Like the shepherd, humans fear things which were mightier than them. Here the king represents God and the honor which is offered is death. Though death raises the soul of human to God they fear death. But such fear for God is great as the fear is bound along by the joy of freedom.

In Gibran's *Broken Wings* the concept of death and life is present. Unlike *The Prophet* in the *Broken Wings*, Gibran juxtaposes life and death side by side. *The Prophet* ends with death but the *Broken Wings* the prose poem begins with death and Gibran narrates the entire story standing before the grave of Selma. His past life with Selma is the only happiness which Gibran calls as a beautiful dream.

I have nothing left out of that beautiful dream except painful memories flapping like invisible wings around me, filling the depths of my heart with sorrow, and bringing tears to my eyes and my beloved, beautiful Selma, is dead and nothing is left to commemorate her except my broken heart and tomb surrounded by cypress trees. That tomb and this heart are all that is left to bear witness of Selma. (10)



In *Broken Wings*, Gibran's motive is neither to reveal the mystic quality of death nor to reveal the humans' affinity with God but he presents his sorrow at losing her beloved. Gibran finds himself entangled in a complex web of emotions and reactions. The death of Selma is a frightening painful experience and Gibran shares about his grief in the story. In his foreword, Gibran addresses the young comrades and asks them to remember Selma's grave as "here, all the hopes of Gibran, who is living as prisoner of love beyond the seas, were buried. On this spot he lost his happiness, drained his tears, and forgot his smile."(11)

The silence that guards the tomb does not reveal God's secret in the obscurity of the coffin, and the rustling of the branches whose roots suck the body's elements do not tell the mysteries of the grave, by the agonized sighs of my heart announce to the living the drama which love, beauty, and death have performed. (10)

In *Broken Wings*, Selma represents both life and death. Gibran's empty life changes after the appearance of Selma whom Gibran calls as "spring of life". He calls Selma as a beautiful tune on the lips of life that turns out to be a silent secret in the bosom of the earth. As discussed in the previous chapter Selma is the source of Gibran's life and her love revealed to Gibran all about the bliss of love and life. It is from the love of Selma Gibran "awakened from the slumber of youth and solitude and set on the stage where life and death played their parts."(35) The first part of the prose poem centers on the treatment of life in relation with life and the second part of the prose poem deals with death. Gibran connects life with nature and also touches upon God's function in human life. He expresses the general philosophy that life begins not on the womb nor does it

ends on the grave. "Man's life does not commence in the womb and never ends in the grave." (38)

After enjoying the pleasures of life, Gibran was approached by death by means of Selma's marriage to the bishop's nephew Mansour Bey. Farris Effandi says about the betrothal of Selma which destroys Gibran's happiness forever and he says that he is born again to see death's face. "That night, in which I had been born again, I felt that I saw death's face for the first time." (41) Gibran remembers his past where he says "I saw the beauty of life and the splendor of humanity in the appearance of passers-by and movements of workers" his spirit of life changed into misery as "Those days passed like ghosts and disappeared like clouds, and soon nothing was left for me but sorrowful memories." (46)

Through Selma's marriage, Gibran tells about a prison which bonds Selma and all other women. The chains of this bond are not easily broken and these women were forced to suffer until death comes to them as a freedom. Gibran uses freedom by means of death as the only way through which Selma escapes from the chains of sufferings. However, the concept of referring death as a freedom is also expressed in *The Prophet* where Almustafa talks about death as freedom, "And when the shadow fades and is no more, the light that lingers becomes a shadow to another light. And thus your freedom when it loses its fetters becomes itself the fetter of a greater freedom." (55)

Death is seen as freedom, but life is also seen as freedom, though it is restricted. When the fetter of life breaks, when one dies, the bigger fetter of death takes over. So both life and death is like a prison which captures the soul of human and God acts as a



savior. The death as freedom further appears in *The Prophet*, first in the beginning as he says,

And you, vast sea, sleeping mother, who alone are peace and freedom to the river and the stream, Only another winding will this stream make, only another murmur in this glade, And then I shall come to you, a boundless drop to a boundless ocean. (7)

Here he assigns death the characteristics of peace and freedom. Also, Gibran tells about his departure to the sea which represents death and he says that death is the only thing which offers peace and freedom to the river which symbolically represents life. So Gibran mentions death as a freedom which releases man from the prison of life. Also at the end when Almustafa speaks of death he says, "And what is to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?" (90)

At one place in *Broken Wings*, Selma considers love superior to all other things as she says, "There is something higher than heaven and deeper than the ocean and stranger than life and death and time." (37) But as expressed in the prose poem her love turned powerless before death and sorrow imprisoned her. As she remains as a prisoner of sorrow and eagerly Selma awaits death as it is the only rescuer of Selma. Sometimes people who were devoid of feelings experience death even when they were alive. In this prose poem, both Gibran and Selma experience it. Without Selma, Gibran experiences death as he says to her, "You will enter the gate of life, while I shall enter the gate of death." (53)



Selma too experiences death and she waits patiently for death to cure and heal her. "Selma's misery was an internal malady that nothing but death could cure." (63) Death began to play its part as Gibran mentions earlier "set me on the stage where life and death play their parts." (35) Farris Effandi's death frightens the lovers and Selma confronts about their state. "In this place, spring united us in a bond of love, and in this place has brought us together before the throne of death. How beautiful was spring and how terrible is the winter!" (66). Gibran through the dying process of Farris Effandi shows the power of death and how it shatters the life of common people and these three Selma, Gibran and Effandi turn as puppets in the hands of destiny soon to be crushed by death.

We were three people, gathered and crushed by the hands of destiny; an old man like a dwelling ruined by flood, a young woman whose symbol was a lily beheaded by the sharp edge of a sickle, and a young man who was a weak sapling, bent by a snowfall; and all of us were toys in the hands of fate. (67)

Gibran gives a strong imagery to differentiate the relation between life and death for which he gives two pictures one representing Ishtar, the goddess of love and other representing Christ which represents death and sorrow. The two pictures symbolically represent the state of Gibran and Selma. They both were driven between life and death.

At the east side an old Phoenician picture, carved in the rock depicting Ishtar, goddess of love and beauty, sitting on her throne, surrounded by seven nude virgins standing in different poses. And all of them look at

Ishtar reverently. On the second wall there is another picture, symbolizing Christ nailed to the cross, and at His side stand His sorrowful mother and Mary Magdalene and two other women weeping. (76)

The pictures represented the desires of man as people will worship only the beauty of life and not death. Selma who desires life could not break the prison of slavery. Gibran calls Selma as "innocent and oppressed prisoner" and Selma voluntarily submitted before Christ which shows her acceptance of death. Selma knelt before the Cross and kissed the feet of Christ and she says, "Oh, Christ, I have chosen Thy Cross and deserted Ishtar's world of pleasure and happiness; I have worn the wreath of thorns and discarded the wreath of laurel and washed myself with blood and tears instead of perfume and scent." (88) Selma accepts death over life and she longs to be united with God. Finally, she surrenders herself before God as his follower. Selma who first regarded life and love to be everything resolves herself and prefers death over life: Selma patiently waits for death to arrive.

At last, death arrives as the rescuer which saved Selma from her sorrows in the form of her child. Selma's child at the beginning appeared to a source of life and the child birth as Gibran expresses, "where life and death were wrestling". The child's cry gave hope to Selma to have a purpose in living itself,

...a cry of life's partition from life...a cry of continuance in the firmament of nothingness...a cry of weak force before the stillness of great forces...the cry of poor Selma who was lying down in despair under the feet of life and death. (92)

However, the child acts as a messenger of death who dies as soon as it is born. Selma realizes the arrival of death through the death of her child, "You have come to take me away my child; you have come to show me the way that leads to the coast. Here I am my child; lead me and let us leave this dark cave." (95) Selma's child rescued his mother from her state. Selma is buried along with her child as "two corpses in one coffin." (95) The prose poem ends in the grave and in this prose poem life and death are portrayed as two different entities and death acts as the rescuer of life. In *The Prophet* as well as in *Broken Wings* death stands as the ultimate end of existence and the souls reach heaven to God. Gibran gives both death and life as a cycle that turns around in every human's lives. The fourth chapter deals with the innovative style of Gibran, his experiment with prose poems and also the various narrative techniques employed by Gibran.



## Chapter Four

### Art as Thought

Language when conveyed in a creative manner is literature. Literature represents a language, culture and tradition of people. Style depicts how the author describes events, objects and ideas. Style acts as a medium through which the fact presented by the author is made clear for further interpretation. It is by means of words one can understand the setting, scene and the characters. Language employs various figures of speech. By using figurative language the author makes imaginative description which adds beauty to the texture of work of art.

Gibran was an extraordinary man in his ability to penetrate into language and shatter its borders. He probed into the Arabic language with novelty and innovative style, a style that was simple yet characterized with emotion. It was Gibran's style and language that secured his writing a lasting fame. Further, Gibran's English works were marked with unprecedented character, which attracted readers from across the world. Gibran adopted prose poem as his genre. The works *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings* were some of Gibran's prose poems. Gibran's prose poems are simple but to understand the meaning of his work is so difficult because it used implicit meaning or indirect expression.

Gibran showed the Arabs how to break away from classical rhymed poetry and to feel free with the prose poems. Out of other literary genres he confined himself to rhymed metrical verse the narrative, the prose poem, the essay, the parables and the epigram. The prose poem is a poem written in prose rather than verse. On the page it look like a

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paragraph or fragmented short story but it acts like a poem. It works in sentences rather than lines with the exception of the line break. It can make use of all strategies and tactics of the poetry. It uses the means of prose towards the ends of poetry.

The words poetry and prose seem to be natural antagonists. In France, the prose poem quickly became a genre. Prose represented freedom from the alexandrine, the tyrannical twelve-syllable line that ruled over French poetry with an inflexibility that made English blank verse seem positively debauched in comparison. In the English-speaking world, the prose poem never quite graduated to the status of a genre. The American prose poem owes much to the French but veers off decisively to accommodate the sui generis work that transcends category. In 1959, the French scholar Suzanne Bernard could stipulate that there were four requirements that every prose poem had to fulfill. It had to employ the poet's intention, it had to have an organic unity, it had to have an organic unity, and it had to be its own best excuse for being and it had to brief.

In his narratives, as in *Broken Wings* Gibran constantly uses the poetical prose, for all the characters utterances which are either lyrical rhapsodies or rhetorical sermons. He regarded poetical-prose as an element of beauty which would soften his explicit didacticism and make it more acceptable. He wrote most of his Arabic poems in the early years of his life. Arab poets prided themselves in using words that could be understood only after consulting dictionary. Gibran's Arabic poems opened a new era and new horizons by using short and simple words. Gibran's contribution to Arabic literature in terms of style and language is simple and melodies.



In regard to language Gibran prefers the ordinary level of language. Gibran's contributions lay in the determination and consistency with which he applied his opinions about language to his actual usage. The words and the orders which he uses are all archaic and the highly classical. Gibran belongs to the Christian literary tradition and owes a great deal to the language of the protestant version of the Bible and the artistic part of Marrash's language. The basic characteristics of the rhythm and construction of his style are typical of the Biblical style in Arabic. His lavish quotations from the Bible prove Gibran's debt to the language of it. *Broken Wings* have many biblical allusions and throughout the story Gibran considered himself to be Adam and Selma as Eve.

Gibran himself was able to extend the scope of Arabic simply by means of familiar words, which were unknown to regions before. His choice of familiar speech was based on principle and was not as critics have thought due to carelessness and lack of proficiency in the creation of language. Gibran had an unusual gift for language and a painter's eye for the secrets of light and shade. Many of his images are simply constructed out of sharp oppositions and painted in black and white. He could endow the art of word painting with a sense of mystery. Influenced by the romantic narrative form and the Christian literary tradition, Gibran introduced a new literary form in a new diction and a captivating style which became known as the Gibran style.

In *Wings of Thought* Ghougassain tells about the innovation made by Gibran in Arabic literature.

Gibran was able to revolutionize Arabic poetry through his prose poem. During his time he set the example as how to combine prose with poetry



and vice versa. In depth his writings are poetical, though the verses are prose. The strophes have rhythms and rhymes. It is Nietzsche, the Psalms, and the Bible filled with parables that gave a definite literary direction to Gibran's style of expression. From Nietzsche not only he borrowed Zarathustra's form of expression which is similar to Christian Gospel, but also acquired from Nietzsche the flair for mingling emotions and thoughts, sorrow and happiness. As from the Bible he learned the old Semitic literary figure of parables, metaphors, anthropomorphism. (50)

The poets and creative writers of his generation were greatly influenced by his style and most of the Arabic writers from the East accepted and followed his style. Gibran was the most daring among the writer who liberate Arabic from its sterile form. His shading of prose with sound effect makes it very close to the poetry. He displays a complete new sensibility and a new kind of creativity and opened windows to different kinds of world. All forms of innovation and creativity introduced by the Mahjar poets into Arabic literature were faced with scathing criticism and intense emotional opposition from the traditionalists. Gibran however is aware of the fact that the major poets before him in Arabic literature had defied the rules of syntax and grammar in their brilliant innovative experimentation with poetic techniques.

In the introduction to *Man and Poet*, Bushrui and Jenkins tell about the experimentation of Gibran and his prose poems,

His experimentation in prose rather than poetry allowed him to perfect the prose poem as a new genre, freeing him from the established diction of the

decadent period in Arabic literature. He was therefore able to create a totally new rhythm with a life of its own, emanating from within the syntactical framework, and as such, his poetic prose, or prose poetry, constitutes a unique contribution to modern Arabic literature. (III)

In *The Prophet* east and west meet in a mystic union, unparalleled in modern literature. It was inspired by the vision of Blake, Buddhism, Hinduism, the Romantics, popular American schools of thought, Ralph Emerson, Walt Whitman, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ameen Rihani and Christian and Sufi mysticism. Gibran's masterpiece is often judged unjustly as a romanticized version of universal, philosophical and religious teachings. The reality is that it is a work of remarkable compassion, insight, hope and inspiration with a timeless message. It combines the dignity of the Christian Bible and wisdom of the Sufis of Islam, phrased with a simplicity and rhythmical quality that makes it accessible to a wide readership.

There is an extraordinary diversity of critical opinion about the literary and philosophical worth of Gibran's works, particularly the English ones. On one hand, there are those who criticize him for being effusive, sentimental and melodramatic. Gibran's masterpiece occupies an ambiguous place in the field of English literature. It is neither pure literature nor pure philosophy. Gibran frequently uses himself and his homeland as the basis for his literary characters and settings. As in *Broken wings* it is set in Lebanon and it is considered to be autobiographical. Also in *The Prophet*, Almustafa is considered to be Gibran. His works are known for their mysticism, simplicity, imagery, metrical beauty, wisdom and lofty vision. Gibran's writings spark the imagination and the readers are drawn into the work and become a part of it. There are two key characteristics to



Gibran's style. First there is parallelism, repetition and refrain. The second characteristic is a rhythm such as that found in biblical and other sacred writings.

In *The Prophet* he uses figurative languages like paradox metaphors, simile, personification, imagery and parallelisms. The most noticeable style found in his writing is a series of constant parallelisms and antithetical statements. In *The Prophet* Gibran creates many paradoxical statements like freedom is slavery, joy is pain, and death is life. Such paradoxes became his favorite literary device. They appeal not only by their seeming correction of conventional wisdom but also by their hypnotic power, their negation of rational processes. Those paradoxes of him come partly from the Sermon on the Mount from the Bible. In *The Prophet* Gibran creates another paradox that "Your children are not your children" and "They come through you but not from you." (20) Gibran makes a point here that a parent can guide their children towards the goodness which God provides, but the decision on whether or not to take the final step toward God is up to the children and not to the parents. Gibran uses such paradoxical statements to describe the relationship between a child and the parent.

In this prose poem *The Prophet* an archer plays a parallelism to God. Likewise, arrows become children and the bow becomes the parent in the lines, "You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth." (23) Gibran uses this method to express that God does not only love the children who move in the direction of his kingdom. He also loves the ones who were the support behind the children. Other literary devices employed in *The Prophet* are personification, similes and imagery. Personification is significant in *The Prophet* of Gibran. Here he focuses on the aspects of love and he uses it to explain his opinion on yielding love. Gibran relates the acts of love



to human aspects. As he says, "When love beckons to you, follow him." (13) Gibran personified love and attributed to it the human aspects and therefore he addressed it as 'him'. Further Gibran says, "When he speaks believe in him". Gibran gave human aspects like talking to an abstract term love. Personification is also seen in the marriage, where he says that couples should not depend on each other for everything, but instead they should let there be spaces in their togetherness. He uses personification to link his feelings about spaces in togetherness in marriage to dancing which represents a human action. "But there be spaces in your togetherness. And let the winds of the heavens dance between you." (16)

Gibran also uses similes while describing about love, Gibran compares two creative ideas to make the simile effective. "Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself." (13) Gibran also uses a simile to create connections and to provide imagery for the readers "To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night." (14) Gibran also uses the aspects of imagery in these works. Imagery is used efficiently in both the prose poems, *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings*. In *The Prophet*, Gibran uses Imagery to create a picture in the reader's mind of what he is talking about, "Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth." (13) Here he uses tree to represent humans. Likewise he uses metaphors to describe about love, life and death. First he describes love as a journey and also as a guide. "When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep." (13)

The roads that love leads are difficult and painful. It acts as a guide as it is love which decides one's destiny. There is a destination and goal to reach which is the purpose

of one's relationship with love, to present one's knowledge and experience of love to God. All these metaphors are conventional ways of describing love. However, Gibran adds an extra element and he portrays love as a king or emperor, who has the power to both crown and crucify people. "For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you." (13) He also shows love as a gardener, farmer and baker. "Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning" and "he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast." (13)

The gardener grows plants but also prunes them as well, and a baker who makes bread out of the harvest for God. Similarly Gibran portrays death as ecstasy, and he says, "And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb." (90) Gibran too compares life and death with river and sea. By using such metaphors Gibran brings together his Eastern culture and Western thinking.

The prose poem *Broken Wings* has an autobiographical tone in it. As the narrator of the story narrates the story using first person singular "I was eighteen years of age when love opened my eyes." (9) Also Gibran directly addresses the readers as "My neighbors" and "Comrades of my youth". The whole story is narrated by Gibran from Selma's grave and it ends in her grave itself. Also like *The Prophet*, the prose poem *Broken Wings* too have many figurative languages employed in it. Some of them were simile, personification, imagery, biblical and literary allusions and metaphor.

Simile is the simplest figure of speech. In *Broken wings*, Gibran uses Simile throughout the story. In *Broken Wings* one can find simile in each single page. Gibran uses similes mainly to describe Selma's beauty. Other than that in the sentence "My life

was a coma, empty like that of Adam's in paradise, when I saw Selma standing before me like a column of light." (10) He compares his life with Adam in Paradise. Adam has no similarity or connection with the narrator. Yet they both were compared to show the emptiness in their lives. Similarly, Gibran says, "The boy's soul, undergoing the buffeting of sorrow is like a white lily just unfolding it." (14) Here the soul of the young boy is compared to the white lily and unfolding of petals before blossom is related with sorrows.

Likewise there were many instances where simile is used as for describing the evil nature of the priest he says, "He leads them like a flock of lambs to the slaughter house." (18) Here Gibran uses the flock of lambs as an imagery in relation to dimwitted people who believes the priest blindly. Simile is largely used by Gibran to describe the beauty of Selma, "She looked like a carpet of green grass by the breeze of dawn." (33)

In *Broken Wings*, Gibran personifies love as he says, "I heard love whispered into my ears through Selma's lips." (9) Love an abstract entity is attributed with human nature. Also at one place he says, "Solitude has soft silky hands, but with strong fingers it grasps the heart and makes it ache with sorrow." (14) Here Gibran describes solitude as a person with silky hands. Also Gibran portrayed love as a human being as he says "Love and I will go to the vineyard and sit by the wine press and watch the grape vines." (54)

Metaphor is more complicated than simile. When a sentence uses metaphor there is always a comparison in the sentence. As in *Broken Wings* Gibran refers Selma as "she became a book whose pages I could understand." (27) Here he refers Selma as a book, but it does not have any coordinating words 'as' and 'like'. Also in another place Selma



calls Gibran as nightingale she says, "This nightingale should remain alive and sing until dark comes." (49)

One aspect of Gibran's Arabic style is the excessive use of adjectives as in *Broken Wings* he describes eyes of Effandi as "two deep, dark valleys haunted by the ghosts of pain." (65) The marked style of Gibran's writing is imagery. In *Broken Wings* he describes Selma's sorrow by describing her eyes as "I saw that those eyes which a few days ago were smiling like lips and moving like the wings of a nightingale, eyes were already sunken and glazed with sorrow and pain." (47) Gibran uses imagery to describe his thoughts and he also uses many symbols as in the title 'Broken Wings'. It is a strong symbol which Gibran has used throughout the story. It symbolizes the broken love, broken dream, broken hope of Selma and Gibran. Often this symbol is used by Selma and she imagines herself to be a bird. As Selma says "The bishop had demanded me from you and has prepared a cage for this bird with broken wings." (40)

In another place Selma says, "Oh, Lord God, have mercy on me and mend my broken wings!" (58) Another strong symbol used in the *Broken Wings* is Ishtar and Christ. The Ishtar symbolizes love and beauty and Gibran uses it to portray beauty of Selma. As discussed in the third chapter this symbol also represents life and death. Gibran presents two pictures which symbolize life and death and when voluntarily kneels before Christ, it symbolizes her acceptance of death over life. As Selma says, "Oh, Christ, I have chosen Thy cross and deserted Ishtar's world of pleasure and happiness." (88) Also Gibran uses nature and animals as imagery in "The butterfly that hovers around the lamp until the lamp until it dies is more admirable than the mole that

lives in the tunnel." (66) Here Gibran uses this imagery to show the difference between bravery and cowardice.

Gibran uses the imagery of nightingale and tree to symbolize the state of Selma without child. "The nightingale does not make his nest in a cage lest slavery be the lots of its chicks" and "A tree grown in a cave does not bear fruit." (91) Besides figurative languages the prose poem the *Broken Wings* has many biblical and literary allusions which mark his narrative style. At first Gibran called himself as Adam and Selma as his Eve. "She was the Eve of my heart who filled it with wonders" and Gibran further says that he is chased out of Paradise without having disobeyed any order or tasted the forbidden fruit.

In the *Broken Wings* there are many biblical and literary references made by Gibran which shows his influences on *The Bible* and also on other common works of literature. For describing his sorrow Gibran uses such allusions and says,

The Book of Job was more fascinating to me than the Psalms and I preferred the Elegies of Jeremiah to the Song of Solomon. Hamlet was closer to my heart than all others dramas of western writers. (74)

Here Gibran uses Biblical books like Job, Jeremiah, Psalms and Song of Solomon to depict his mood. The story of Job functions as an allusion which represents having patience and also facing problems. Gibran uses these tragic stories as allusions to show his mood.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is one of the best tragedies in English literature. The fundamental meanings represented by both Job and Hamlet are miseries and failures in

human's life. By using such allusions Gibran relates his misery with them by reading their works. Songs of Solomon and Psalms have nothing tragic in it. Gibran uses these allusions to show both his interest in Bible and Literature and also his sorrowful mind which consolidates his mind. Other biblical allusions employed in this prose poem "A hungry man in a desert will not refuse to eat dry bread if Heaven does not shower him with manna and quails." (28) Gibran uses this allusion to show his inability to describe Selma. Manna and quails represented symbolically the miracle of God who made to rain Manna and quails on desert to feed his people of Israel. Gibran uses this allusion to say that he is like those people who were hungry and he intends to have dry bread if heaven didn't gave him its blessing through manna. Manna represents the words as he says "Does pride prevent me from describing Selma in plain words since I cannot draw her truthfully with luminous colors?" (28).

Yet another biblical allusion which is seen in the *Broken Wings* is when Selma says to Gibran "We disobeyed no commandment, nor did we taste the forbidden fruit, so what is making us leave this paradise?" (51) The Ten Commandments are set of rules or laws, God gave to the people of Israel. This can be found in the Exodus of the Bible and forbidden fruit leaded Adam and Eve to sin against God. Selma refers these two biblical allusions to show that they were getting punished without even disobeying or doing nothing wrong. As in the story of Adam and Eve they both disobeyed God after tempted by Satan and ate the forbidden fruit and they both were punished by expulsion from Garden of Eden or Paradise. Similarly in Christian belief it is believed that humans will be punished if they did not follow those Ten Commandments. Paradise symbolically represents the lovely bliss of Gibran and Selma.



Kahlil Gibran has thus used prose poem as his genre for his narratives and has used many literary devices and figurative languages to enrich his language. He has also used many biblical as well as literary allusions. Gibran's style deeply moves the readers and it also gives his intention perfectly. These prose poems are lyrical and simple. The fifth chapter sums up the entire preceding chapter and shows Kahlil Gibran as a prophet, philosopher, poet and reformer from the East.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Kahlil Gibran was known to the world as the Prophet of Lebanon. He spent a greater part of his life in America, but he never forgot his native land. He was highly impressed by the technological achievements of America and mindful of the material well-being of its citizens. He viewed his adapted home from the vantage point of his own cultural heritage. Also, Gibran tried to infuse Eastern mysticism into Western materialism, believing that humanity is best served by a man who is capable of bridging these two cultures acknowledging the virtues of each. Gibran combined prose with the art of painting, sculpting, music and poetry. According to Orientals the merging of different arts appeared for the first time in Arabic in Gibran's writings. His writings are characterized by a strong sense of bitterness and disillusionment. His main aim was to reform society. He criticized injustice inflicted upon women. He also critically attacked the clergymen and their obsession on money.

Gibran wrote in Arabic and English while living in New York. He first wrote in Arabic, a major literary tradition in its own right. Even though he wrote outside of its conventional genres and style he quickly helped to revolutionize them and assumed an important place within that tradition. He wrote in Arabic with little formal education in Arabic but by that he was able to change literary Arabic and revolutionize it. Gibran wrote in English but placed him outside of any literary tradition. Gibran carefully constructed his own legend in the light of the expectations and tastes of his mentors and benefactors at first and later of his publishers, readers and followers.

As an oriental who wrote his most celebrated work *The Prophet* in the major language of the western world. His style and philosophy is characteristic of East and of the Arab in particular. His constant inspiration was his own heritage which colored his English and exercised an inescapable hold over his mind, its insistence being upon the wholeness of visionary experience and the perpetual availability of another realm of being. In his work *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings* he expressed the deep felt desire of men and women for a kind of spiritual life that renders the material world meaningful and imbues it with dignity.

Gibran was one of those rare writers who actually transcend the barrier between East and West and could justifiably call himself a citizen of the world. His words went beyond the mere evocation of the mysterious East but endeavored to communicate the necessity of reconciliation between Christianity and Islam, spirituality and materialism, East and West. During his life, he is considered to be the genius of his age and in the West his work has been compared to Blake, Tagore, Nietzsche and Rodin.

Gibran's writings establish a mystical union with nature, a relationship of love and harmony. For Gibran, source was his only source of inspiration. Generally in all of his poetry he brings the magnificent scenery of his childhood. It is in nature he finds solitude and inner peace. Gibran is also a rebellious writer who rebelled against society and he tried to reform injustice in it. As an Oriental writer he criticizes the people of his nation in *The Prophet* who "trust in such wolves and butchers who ruin their country through covetousness and crush their neighbors with an iron hand." (64)



From an early age Gibran although brought up as a Maronite Christian was conscious of the exalted place of the Quran in Arabic literature and its simultaneous potency as a spiritual, social and literary source of inspiration. He kept Jesus and Muhammad in his heart and consequently expressed his belief in the fundamental unity of religion. His dream to unite religion never bore fruit but it is highly reflected in his work *The Prophet* by his portrayal of Almustafa, the eponymous prophet, both a Christ figure and the universal man of Muslim civilization. He was held as representing the literary and philosophical meeting point between the spiritual traditions of East and West.

As a founder president of the Pen League, Gibran through his innovative ideas liberated Arabic poetry from stupor and decadence, transformed the literary art in every sphere of its activities and instigated a renaissance in Arabic creativity. For Gibran liberation in artistic terms meant challenging the authority and ideals of classicism. Unable to harness himself to the yoke of traditional meter, he was rarely able to translate his poetic vision into the outworn forms of traditional verse. His experimentation in prose rather than poetry allowed him to perfect the prose poem as a new genre freeing him from the established poetic diction of the decadent period in Arabic literature.

Gibran created a new rhythm with a life of its own emanating from within the syntactical framework and his prose poem constitutes a unique contribution to Modern Arabic literature. Gibran's work *The Prophet* shows the quintessence of his universalism. Gibran took more than eleven years to perfect the unity of the message he mirrored through text and pictorial medium. Mary Haskell's role is so crucial to Gibran's development. Their love is expressed by Gibran in tender love stories as in *Broken Wings*

in which he tells the story of a love that beats desperately against the taboos of oriental tradition.

The disparities between the linguistic consciousness of East and West should have created the problem of 'root words' but Gibran's sensibility is influenced and tempered by the language of *The Bible* a book belonging to East and West. Unlike his contemporaries Gibran had no wish to refine the English language to meet the realities of the age, but yearned to inject into it the priceless values of the mysticism of the East.

Gibran's imagery, the metaphors and similes are closely interwoven like colored dyes. All of his writings express a passionate urge to improve the exploited humanity. He waged along ferocious and sometimes a bitter battle against the inequalities that exist between men and women. He highly raised voice for the oppressed people in all of his works. In *Broken Wings* he says,

Why do I occupy these pages with words about the betrayers of poor nations instead of reserving all the space of the story of a miserable woman with a broken heart? Why do I shed tears for the memory of a weak woman whose life was snatched by the teeth of death? But my dear readers, don't you think that such a woman is like a nation that is oppressed by priests and rulers? Don't you believe that thwarted love which leads a woman to the grave is like the despair which pervades the people of the earth? A woman is to a nation as light is to a lamp. Will not the light be dim if the oil in the lamp is low? (64)

Gibran became the most successful and famous Arab writer in the world. His message is a healing one and his quest to understand the tensions between spirit and exile anticipated the needs of an age witnessing the spiritual and intellectual impasse of modernity itself. His works set forth in the form of a simple lyrical beauty and a profound depth of meaning.

The preceding chapters deal with the creative innovation and philosophical insights of Kahlil Gibran. The prose poems *Broken Wings* and *The Prophet* are the two most celebrated works of Kahlil Gibran. *Broken Wings* is originally written in Arabic and later it was translated to English. *The Prophet* was written in English and it is considered to be one of the best prose poems of Gibran in English. Through his works Gibran promotes to assimilate and reconcile the East with the West. Gibran belongs to the group of early immigrant writers. The experience of the early Arab immigrants that span from 1871 up to 1940 is showed with much turmoil and agony.

The Arab immigrants mingled one along with Americans and by this they had an opportunity of learning about another culture that enjoyed freedom and progress. But the early immigrants encountered a tough and humiliating society. Therefore the Arabic-American poets embarked on a mission of recording these miseries in their poems and at times attempted to offer some form of encouragement to the early Arab-Americans. The poets reflected and translated the miseries of those people through their works and magazines. It was only after the establishment of Post-Colonial theory, the East is looked differently.



Gibran separated himself from the materialistic view of Existence. He united spirituality with mysticism. His themes touch upon the insights and questions about the existence. Gibran concerned with the voice of every individual and their life. His works reveals some greatest truth about mankind. He answers spiritually to some tough questions regarding the purpose of existence. Gibran's works show his idealist view of a utopian society and how he blended Eastern Mysticism and Western wisdom in his works. He fused *The Bible and Quran*, Sufi and Hindu, Romantic as well as spiritual unity in his works.

Gibran was a man who felt deeply about his country and pursued it with enormous vigor. He did not write just for the sake of writing. As a poet he had two roles to be played as a philosopher and reformer. His writings portray him as a reformer as well as a philosopher. One can find that in his writings these roles intermingled with one another. At times each dominating the other, the best example for this interchanging of roles can be seen in *Broken Wings* where he acts more as a reformer and criticizes poets through Selma he says,

The poets and writers are trying to understand the reality of woman, but up to this day they have not understood the hidden secrets of her heart, because they look upon her from behind the sexual veil and see nothing but externals: they look upon her through the magnifying glass of hatefulness and find nothing except weakness and submission. (78)

In both the prose poems *The Prophet* and *Broken Wings*, Gibran tries to communicate something mysterious like the purpose of existence and death. According to

him death is a journey and it prepares one to get united with God. He calls death as a freedom which relieves man from mortal world. At the same time he shows the connection between life and death. Hence Gibran should be described as a philosopher as much as a poet. As a poet he communicates the mysterious by means of feelings and emotions which arouses his readers. As Gibran himself says, "I wanted to be very sure that every word of it was the very best I had to offer."(vii)

The mysterious which is perceived by Gibran is something which alleviate from the material world. As human beings are bound in an utterly degrading fashion to the world by its man-made laws and so called civilization. Gibran escapes this world and reveals the ecstatic moments which are attained through love and it is equal to divinity. As Waterfield says, "The freedom to live with perfect virtue in the actual realization that life is one and infinite are the gifts of the mysterious to the person who has attained self-realization."(xii) Gibran is gifted with such understanding which he reveals through his writings.

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**Intersection of Time and Timelessness in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***

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by

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Intersection of Time and Timelessness in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

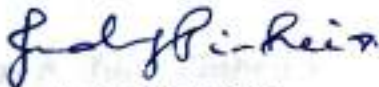
**OCTOBER 2018**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

*P. Sahaya Preethi*  
**SAHAYA PREETHI P.**

## CERTIFICATE

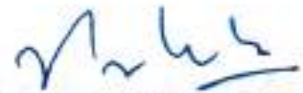
This is to certify that the project entitled **Intersection of Time and Timelessness** in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Agnes S. during the year 2018 – 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

Adeline Virginia Woolf, an English author, feminist, essayist, publisher, and critic was considered as one of the foremost modernists of the twentieth century, through her nonlinear approaches to narrative has exerted a major influence on the 20th century novels. In *Mrs. Dalloway* she endeavoured to highlight through the depiction of the physically as well as mentally scarred characters who are embroiled in traumatic experiences of life, either shaped by the character's personal choices or as a repercussion of the Great War 1914. She, through the characters of Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, highlights the reality of life and death and the significance of the flow of consciousness on which human beings are borne from birth to death. The novel is in part a critique of the shallowness and superficial conventionality of upper-class society.

The project entitled **Intersection of Time and Timelessness in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*** analyses the two intertwined line of development, first having *Mrs. Dalloway* as outwardly the perfect London hostess and secondly Septimius Warren Smith as shell shocked ex-soldier. The two, the characters and the incidents develop alternately coinciding momentarily at different points in space and time made concert by objects, people and scenes which flash across the consciousness of the principal characters.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with the short biography of Virginia Woolf discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in the realm of British Literature and the review of the novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The second chapter **Post War Trauma** portrays the power of the modernist literary form to delineate the psyche of a trauma survivor. Virginia Woolf's narrative

form preserves the psychological chaos caused by trauma instead of reordering it as more traditional narratives do.

The third chapter **Intersection of Time and Timelessness** highlights the efficient use of time in *Mrs. Dalloway* by exploring the subconscious life of the mind Woolf fastens between the extremes of isolation and domination and with the need of love as well as keeping the spirit inviolate.

The fourth chapter **Hegemonic Masculinity** depicts how the male supremacy that prevails over the female refracts the real situations of the twentieth century through the different aspects of feminine psyche and its effect on the human relationships.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Virginia Woolf is recognized as a major twentieth century author, a great novelist and essayist and a key figure in literary history as a feminist and a modernist. There are only a few authors who are as renowned as Virginia Woolf. For she was one of the first authors of her time to try to break the "Victorian grasp" on literary works and put imagination in almost every aspect of literature. She also was one of the few feminists who stood up for the rights she should have through her work. Yet in no way was Virginia Woolf only inspired by feminism. On the contrary many of her works were also influenced by the detrimental results of conventionality that was troubling England at that time period. It was through these concepts that Woolf talked of, at one point or another, almost every social or political problem occurring in her time.

The germ of the novel lay in the medieval romance, a fantastic tale of love and adventure, itself derived from the ballads and fragments of epic poems sung by the wandering minstrel. The anti-Romantic, anti-Victorian attitudes that provided an impetus to the modern movement in poetry had an equally energizing effect on fiction. The early decades of the century were years of experimental pioneering which led to a redefinition of the novel form. In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the novel has been a public instrument focusing on what was significant to society as whole. The early decades of the century were years of experimental pioneering which led to a redefinition of the novel form. The quest for ways of recreating the novel was also a response to the pressures of the times and arose out of a conviction that the old method of novel writing.

What characteristically differentiates the twentieth century novel from its predecessors is the stress on the loneliness of the individual as a necessary condition of man. The demands of a new epoch and the fresh thinking on the condition of man caused writers to reject the old, deliberate way of telling a story. The exciting innovations following the direction of thought set



by the new philosophy ensured that the modern novel in the first phase between 1910 and 1945 reached an unprecedented level of achievement. The new terms in which the old concepts of plot, character and narration were expressed shattered forever the conventional idea of the novel as just a story.

A novel, like a play, has a plot, and a great extent its characters reveal themselves and their intentions is dialogue. It is nonetheless a very effective medium of the portrayal of human thoughts and actions. The novel has, in fact, no rigid frame work, and English authors have taken full advantage of the freedom this achieved them.

One peculiar modernist way of constructing a novel – depicting a single day – is in British Modernist writing exemplified at its best by James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. The use of stream-of-consciousness technique, both authors used were, despite the limitation of time being that of one day, able to make their characters emerge more complete and profound than much of the traditional fiction of the 18th or 19th century. This thesis deals with *Mrs. Dalloway* particularly in terms of Woolf's peculiarly sensitive vision of human beings, for which Woolf had to abandon the traditional method of characterization, in order to express the world as she saw it.

This new way of constructing fiction accepts that the view of "what is significant in human affairs" both for the writer and the reader is completely redefined a way that the most real part of the character's behaviour does not necessarily have to be the one which changes or determines in some way their position in the world (Daiches, NMW 2). This breakdown of the publicly shared view on significance opened the way for Virginia Woolf to free herself from the tyranny of the chronologically ordered conventional novel and introduce "a new concept of time as a continuous flow" which is captured as it consistently flows in the human mind (Daiches, NMW 7).

The English novelist, essayist, critic and a central figure of the Bloomsbury group, Virginia Woolf was born in London on January 25, 1882, as a daughter of the famous scholar and literary critic Sir Leslie Stephen. Virginia received an informal yet unusually rich education. Her youth was shattered by a series of emotional shocks and subsequent mental breakdowns, which continued to dominate her life until her death. After her father's death, Woolf settled with her siblings at 46, Gordon Square, Bloomsbury and this district became central to the activities of the so-called Bloomsbury Group, of which Woolf was also an important member. In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf, who was very supportive, cared for Woolf in the times of her long-term depression and bouts of mental illness, and encouraged her in her writing career. Together in 1917 they founded the Hogarth Press, which gradually developed into a successful publishing house and contributed greatly to the success of Virginia Woolf's own novels and greatly supported new talented writers.

Even though she was very lively and sociable, enjoyed meeting her friends, and led an extremely intellectually active life, her periodic fits of acute depression caused her to take on March 28, 1941 her own life, drowning herself in a river near her home. By that time, Virginia Woolf had gained a prominent position in the world of British literature, as a great novelist, essayist, critic and modernist.

Woolf's difficult childhood experiences, her very frequent illnesses and depression often resulting from her overt sensitivity to the mystical, profound experiences of life, have also contributed to her great literary strengths reflected in her work. In her Diary she writes: "I believe these illnesses are in my case – how shall I express it – partly mystical. Something happens in my mind. It shuts itself up...Then something springs...I have a tremendous sense of life beginning, mixed with that emotion which is the essence of my feeling, but escapes description. (AWD 154). Her Diary is great evidence of how intense her keen sense of observation and perception of the things around us was, and it also gives the reader an idea of the



direct impact upon her mind, which she often reflected in her works in some transcendent experiences endowed with a deeper meaning. She seems to have seen things and people from perspectives which probably escape the vision of ordinary people and indeed this terrific capacity she possessed for "feeling with intensity" has made her novels aesthetically satisfying, subtle and fragile (Woolf, AWD 180). Her death culminated in a symbolic ending if we consider the motifs of flowing water and flow of time by which she had been so fascinated during all her life. "When she united herself with the flux of experience by disappearing into the flowing waters of an English river, anyone who had read and appreciated her books must have felt a sense of shock and of almost personal grief, but he would have understood why she chose to end her life in that way" (Daiches, VW 146). Similarly, to Mrs. Dalloway, who despite the fact she never meets Septimius Smith, can intuitively understand why he killed himself.

Over the course of her many illnesses, however, Woolf had remained productive. Her intense powers of concentration had allowed her to spend ten to twelve hours at a time writing. Her most notable publications include *Night and Day*, *The Mark on the Wall*, *Jacob's Room*, *Monday or Tuesday*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*, *The Waves*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts*. In total, her work comprises five volumes of collected essays and reviews, two biographies *Flush* and *Roger Fry*, two libertarian books, a volume of selections from her diary, nine novels, and a volume of short stories.

*Night and Day* is a novel by Virginia Woolf first published on 20 October 1919. Set in Edwardian London, *Night and Day* contrasts the daily lives and romantic attachments of two acquaintances, Katharine Hilbery and Mary Datchet. The novel examines the relationships between love, marriage, happiness, and success. Dialogue and descriptions of thought and actions are used in equal amount, unlike in Woolf's later book, *To the Lighthouse*. *Night and Day* deals with issues concerning women's suffrage, if love and marriage can coexist, and if marriage is necessary for happiness. Motifs throughout the book includes the stars and sky,



the River Thames, and walks. Also, Woolf makes many references to the works of William Shakespeare, especially *As You Like It*.

*The Mark on the Wall* is the first published story by Virginia Woolf.<sup>[1]</sup> It was published in 1917 as part of the first collection of short stories written by Virginia Woolf and her husband, Leonard Woolf, called *Two Stories*.<sup>[2]</sup> It was later published in New York in 1921 as part of another collection entitled *Monday or Tuesday*.

*Jacob's Room* is the third novel by Virginia Woolf, first published on 26 October 1922. The novel centres, in a very ambiguous way, around the life story of the protagonist Jacob Flanders and is presented almost entirely through the impressions other characters have of Jacob. Thus, although it could be said that the book is primarily a character study and has little in the way of plot or background, the narrative is constructed with a void in place of the central character if, indeed, the novel can be said to have a 'protagonist' in conventional terms.

Motifs of emptiness and absence haunt the novel and establish its elegiac feel. Jacob is described to us, but in such indirect terms that it would seem better to view him as an amalgam of the different perceptions of the characters and narrator. He does not exist as a concrete reality, but rather as a collection of memories and sensations.

*The Waves* is a 1931 novel by Virginia Woolf. It is considered her most experimental work, and consists of soliloquies spoken by the book's six characters: Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny, and Louis. Also important is Percival, the seventh character, though readers never hear him speak in his own voice. The soliloquies that span the characters' lives are broken up by nine brief third-person interludes detailing a coastal scene at varying stages in a day from sunrise to sunset. As the six characters or "voices" speak Woolf explores concepts of individuality, self and community. Each character is distinct, yet together they compose a gestalt about a silent central consciousness. In a 2015 poll conducted by BBC, *The Waves* was voted the 16th greatest British novel ever written.

*Mrs Dalloway* was published on 14 May 1925 is a novel by Virginia Woolf that details a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, a fictional high-society woman in post-First World War England. It is one of Woolf's best-known novels. Created from two short stories, "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street" and the unfinished "The Prime Minister," the novel addresses Clarissa's preparations for a party she will host that evening. With an interior perspective, the story travels forwards and back in time and in and out of the characters' minds to construct an image of Clarissa's life and of the inter-war social structure. In October 2005, *Mrs Dalloway* was included on *Time*'s list of the 100 best English-language novels written since 1923.

*To the Lighthouse* is a 1927 novel by Virginia Woolf. The novel centres on the Ramsay family and their visits to the Isle of Skye in Scotland between 1910 and 1920.

Following and extending the tradition of modernist novelists like Marcel Proust and James Joyce, the plot of *To the Lighthouse* is secondary to its philosophical introspection. Cited as a key example of the literary technique of multiple focalization, the novel includes little dialogue and almost no action; most of it is written as thoughts and observations. The novel recalls childhood emotions and highlights adult relationships. Among the book's many tropes and themes are those of loss, subjectivity, the nature of art and the problem of perception. In 1998, the Modern Library named *To the Lighthouse* No. 15 on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century. In 2005, the novel was chosen by *TIME* magazine as one of the one hundred best English-language novels since 1923.

*Monday or Tuesday* is a 1921 short story collection by Virginia Woolf published by The Hogarth Press. 1000 copies were printed with four full-page woodcuts by Vanessa Bell.<sup>[1]</sup> Leonard Woolf called it one of the worst printed books ever published because of the typographical mistakes in it. Most mistakes were corrected for the US edition published by Harcourt Brace. It contained eight stories. Six of the stories were later published by Leonard



Woolf in the posthumous collection *A Haunted House*, those excluded were "A Society" and "Blue & Green".

Mrs. Dalloway covers one day from morning to night in one day woman's life. Clarissa Dalloway, an upper-class housewife, walks through her London neighborhood to prepare for the party she will host that evening, when she returns from flower shopping, an old suitor and friend, Peter Walsh, drops by her house unexpectedly. The two have always judged each other harshly, and their meeting in the present intertwines with their thoughts of the past. Years earlier, Clarissa refused Peter's marriage proposal, and Peter has never quite gotten over it. Peter asks

Clarissa if she is happy with her husband, Richard, but before she can answer, her daughter, Elizabeth, enters the room Peter leaves and goes to Regent's park. He thinks about Clarissa's refusal. Which still obsesses him.

The point of view then shifts to Septimus, a veteran of World War I who was injured in trench warfare and now suffers from shell shock. Septimus and his Italian wife, Lucrezia, pass time in Regent's park. They are waiting for Septimus' appointment with Sir William Bradshaw. A celebrated psychiatrist, Before the war, Septimus was a budding young poet and lover of Shakespeare; When the war broke out, he enlisted immediately for Romantic patriotic reasons. He became numb to the horrors of war and its aftermath; when his friend Evans died, he felt little sadness. Now Septimus sees nothing of worth in the England he fought for, and he has lost the desire to preserve either his society or himself. Suicidal, he believes his lack of feeling is a crime. Clearly Septimus's experiences in the war have permanently scarred him, and he has serious mental problems. However, Sir William does not listen to what Septimus says and diagnoses, "Sir William plans to separate Septimus from Lucrezia and send him to a mental institution in the country."

Richard Dalloway eats lunch with Hugh Whitbread and Lady Bruton members of high society. The men help Lady Bruton write a letter to the Times, London's largest newspaper. After lunch, Richard returns home to Clarissa with a large bunch of roses. He intends to tell her that he



loves her but finds that he cannot, because it has been so long since he last said it Clarissa considers the void that exists between people, even between husband and wife explains that one of his patients, the young veteran, has committed suicide. Clarissa retreats to the privacy of a small room to consider Septimus's death. She understands that he was overwhelmed by life and that men like Sir William make life intolerable. She identifies with Septimus, admiring him for having taken the plunge and for not compromising his soul. She feels, with her comfortable position as a society hostess, responsible for his death. The party nears its close as guests begin to leave. Clarissa enters the room, and her presence fills Peter with a great excitement.

The study of Virginia Woolf's essays and critical works enable one to acquire a clear picture of her conception of reading and writing, and to deduce from this her aesthetic theory, a solidly organized set of ideas and precepts. This led eventually to a precise definition of a work of literature and an analysis of the creative process.

Virginia Woolf's novels are a monument to excessive delicacy of that kind. She created a fictional world which was not a reflection of the actual world, but only a world, maybe, but a bodiless world. Whereas Arnold Bennett and novelist of his sort create characters outside themselves, all Virginia Woolf's characters are aspects of herself. She could put her characters into interesting situations.

Virginia Woolf is a prose writer of genius. Her style tells that she is a cultured woman. Her style is richly figurative and she uses words with a keen sense of their rhythmic and musical potentialities. She chose the metaphysical style for her purpose whereby the reader could best comprehend her meaning. Her poetic and fascinating style contributes considerably to her popularity. She had succeeded in conventionalizing the gibberish of the unguided mind into a coherent grammatical English style. She is no iconoclast when we take into consideration her style and has no desire to startle her readers with verbal experiments for their own sake. Her roots are firmly fixed in the tradition style. However, her style is characterized by all the poise

and charm of the cultured woman and conscious artist who tries to exploit the rhythm and musical potentialities of words.

To approach Virginia Woolf's novels by the way she herself suggest is a natural temptation. Travelling along these brightly lit paths one should risk neglecting the hidden process of certain and reduce by the brilliance of intellect one might remain blind to the dimmer light of spontaneity. Virginia Woolf's novels seek to give fleeting glimpse into reality. She could not do it in ordinary prose. For doing it she needed the assistance of a style, which would be highly individualize and peculiar. She deals in her novels with human experience dissolved into tenuous insight, which had to be imparted a form and order into it by deft manipulation; she seeks to destroy or to transcend the dividing line, the horizons of experience, vision and understanding which isolate one individual from another, and to exhibit in its reality everything that contriutes to the making of a human personality. It was not an easy task to accomplish, and for this she needed a new style, if the experiment was to succeed. She had to evolve a style of her own and she has done it. Her is a really individual, peculiar style, in keeping with the task she had set herself to accomplish.

Critics concerned with classifying and labeling or making a somewhat over-facial application of the priceless of evaluation, have distinguished either successive periods in Virginia Woolf's works lies in unity of its inspiration the continuity of her unfailing effort in pursuit of a goal which she envisaged from the very beginning of her literary career.

The voyage out was published in 1915. The texture of incidents on which the novel is embroidered is so slack, woven with such slender threads, that if one tries to analyze it one is caught between two dangers either to see it disintegrated or to see it stiffen into a coarse, inflexible framework whose paten confusion or even destroys the essential lines of the work.

Then came night and day in the year 1919. There is a genuine conflict between the characters which, although straight forward and devoid of surprise, gives a directions to the readers curiosity and at the same time provides a framework to the novel.



Following night and day Jacobs room was published. The chief novelty is the suppression of the all that she called the scaffolding, facts, actions, events precisely situated in space and time, forming an itinerary, and a chronology without gapes and brakes, a continues milieu whose consubstantial with a continuity of life itself.

In May 1925, Mrs. Dalloway come out simultaneously in England and America. The novel with in the fame work of twenty-four hours in London consists of two interwined line of development, having for centers of interest first Mrs. Dalloway, outwardly the perfect London hostess and secondly Septimius warren smith as shell shocked ex-soldier. The two of characters and incidents and develop alternately coinciding momentarily at different points in space and time made concert by objects, people and scenes which flash across the consciousness of the principle characters in both series. F.Marion Crawford a popular American novelist described the *Mrs. Dalloway* as a "pocket theatre" containing all the accessories of drama without requiring to be staged before the audience .



## Chapter Two

### Post War Trauma

Virginia Woolf's novels reveal the power of the modernist literary form to delineate the psyche of a trauma survivor. Woolf was chiefly concerned with conveying the true nature of the devastation inflicted upon England, and *Mrs. Dalloway* is her "portrayal of individuals as victims of war...and the possible annihilation of civilization". Afflictions of life can be tormenting, surfacing as open wounds that bleed and maturing into scars so deep that serve as a grim reminder of events that necessitated them. This is precisely what Woolf endeavored to highlight in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* through the depiction of the physically as well as mentally scarred characters who are embroiled in traumatic experiences of life. *Mrs Dalloway* illuminates as a grim manifestation of trauma, either shaped by the character's personal choices or as a repercussion of the Great War 1914. The stream of consciousness narrative form also corresponds to the trauma of the survivor's perception of time.

The modernist literary works written in the decade after World War I constitute a literature of trauma: their forms often replicate the damaged psyche of a trauma survivor and their contents often portray his characteristic disorientation and despair. Imagist poetry and the experimental novels of the postwar decade reflect the fragmentation of consciousness and the disorder and confusion that a victim experiences in the wake of a traumatic event. Trauma inevitably damages the victim's faith in the assumptions he has held in the past about himself and the world and leaves him struggling to find new, more reliable ideologies to give order and meaning to his posttraumatic life.

Like trauma survivors, the modernist writers suffered a similar loss of faith in the ideologies of the past and particularly in the literary forms that emerged from those ideologies. Their works depict in both form and content a modern age severed from the traditions and values

of the past first by new discoveries in such fields as psychology, anthropology, physics, and biology, and later by the First World War's unprecedented destruction, the magnitude of which revealed the pernicious potential of technological advancements originally intended to improve and extend life.

Akin to any other writer of the Modernistic period Woolf was increasingly frustrated with the society's unawareness of the destruction created by war and the lingering psychological trauma that persisted well beyond the signing of a peace treaty. World War I forced Great Britain to rebuild not only the devastated community, but also their identity as a nation. When the war ended in 1919, the soldiers returned home, and society had to deal with their postwar reality. In the years that followed the war, "the idea of national identity was the subject of a perhaps unprecedented cultural and political discourse". Created in the aftermath of the devastation was a form of extreme nationalism, an attempt to honour the empire and its ideals, although many of the "certainties of the comforting nineteenth century had fallen apart". The result was a psychologically and emotionally damaged nation to heal themselves through denial and repression.

*Mrs. Dalloway* portrays characters, who, in some way, exhibit postwar trauma in the aftermath of World War I, but the main character of the novel is the war itself. Woolf uses the backdrop of this historical event to produce her own commentary on the reactions to the trauma of the Great War and personalize the effect on society as a whole. . Woolf similarly contracts time, intermingling the past and future with the present in a continuous flow of narrative time. The readers like the survivor contemplating the meaning of the traumatic event, cannot apprehend the text chronologically, because, as Joseph Frank observes, the meaning of the text does not emerge from temporal relationships but rather from spatial ones (10). Although *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place on one day in June, five years after the war has ended, Woolf wants to illustrate that the pain and suffering does not just disappear after the soldiers are buried.



The lasting effects of World War I are apparent in the most extreme expression of mental illness in Septimus Smith and the repressed emotional pain of Clarissa Dalloway. Her narrative form preserves the psychological chaos caused by trauma instead of reordering it as more traditional narratives do. Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay describes how traditional narratives restructure the survivor's fragmented consciousness:

... severe trauma explodes the cohesion of consciousness. When a survivor creates a fully realized narrative that brings together the shattered knowledge of what happened, the emotions that were aroused by the meanings of the events, and the bodily sensations that the physical events created, the survivor pieces back together the fragmentation of consciousness that trauma has caused.(188)

By drawing her narratives from the characters' prospect levels of consciousness, Woolf created such a pre narrative in her novels and preserved the fragmentation of consciousness that occurs in the aftermath of trauma. At the prospect level of consciousness, the character has not yet attempted to order his fragmented thoughts into a sequentially arranged, communicable narrative.

Woolf represents a society that collectively suffers, despite the individual's best efforts to uphold a "perfectly upright and stoical bearing" (Woolf 9). Clarissa denies and represses her pain, choosing instead to create beauty to mask her suffering. Septimus chooses suicide to escape the pressure of being forced to conform to the English standard of masculinity and strength as instilled by Holmes and Bradshaw. Despite Clarissa's best attempt to remain immune to the devastation and evade death, it appears at her party. Woolf's depiction of the aftermath of World War I reflects a society struggling to regain its prewar vitality, but which cannot escape the trauma of death and destruction in their everyday lives.



Woolf was increasingly frustrated with society's unawareness of the destruction created by the war and the lingering psychological trauma that persisted well beyond the signing of a peace treaty. World War I forced Great Britain to rebuild not only the devastated community, but also their identity as a nation. When the war ended in 1919, the soldiers returned home, and society had to deal with their postwar reality. In the years that followed the war, "the idea of national identity was the subject of a perhaps unprecedented cultural and political discourse" (92). Created in aftermath of the devastation was a form of extreme nationalism, an attempt to honor the empire and its ideals, although many of the "certainties of the comforting nineteenth century had fallen apart". The result was a psychologically and emotionally damaged nation to heal themselves through denial and repression.

In her novels, Virginia Woolf demonstrates the power of the modernist literary form to delineate the psyche of a trauma survivor. Her narrative form preserves the psychological chaos caused by trauma instead of reordering it as more traditional narratives do. Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay describes how traditional narratives restructure the survivor's fragmented consciousness: "severe trauma explodes the cohesion of consciousness. When a survivor creates a fully realized narrative<sup>3</sup> that brings together the shattered knowledge of what happened, the emotions that were aroused by the meanings of the events, and the bodily sensations that the physical events created, the survivor pieces back together the fragmentation of consciousness that trauma has caused" (188). By drawing her narratives from the characters' prospect levels of consciousness, Woolf created such a pre-narrative in her novels and preserved the fragmentation of consciousness that occurs in the aftermath of trauma. At the prospect level of consciousness, the character has not yet attempted to order his fragmented thoughts into a sequentially arranged, communicable narrative.

Woolf's stream of consciousness narrative form also corresponds to the trauma survivor's perception of time. The survivor's traumatized mind apprehends the traumatic events as ever-

present, and his memories of the event often exist in the present consciousness as encapsulated images and fragments of thought that are juxtaposed against other nontraumatic memories but do not meaningfully relate to them sequentially or chronologically. Consequently, he is unable to integrate the traumatic event into his personal life history and ultimately to re-envision the as a critical moment in his life but not one that must inevitably define his identity. Woolf similarly contracts time, intermingling the past and future with the present in a continuous flow of narrative time. Although *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place on one day in June, five years after the war has ended, Woolf wants to illustrate that the pain and suffering does not just disappear after the soldiers are buried. Woolf was chiefly concerned with conveying the true nature of the devastation inflicted upon England, and *Mrs. Dalloway* is her "portrayal of individuals as victims of war...and the possible annihilation of civilization" (Bazin and Lauter 14). The lasting effects of World War I are apparent in the most extreme expression of mental illness in Septimus Smith and the repressed emotional pain of Clarissa Dalloway.

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The characters in the novel represent the different ideologies of British society following World War I. At the center of the story, Clarissa Dalloway embodies the feeling of the upper class, "a blockage to change, a love of beauty and familial attachment, but also indifference to others from pride of wealth, blood or position, and a false sense of immunity"



(Larson 194). Clarissa is the epitome of repression and denial; she beautifies her world to hide the ugliness of death and pain underneath. At the opposite side of the spectrum, Septimus Smith is the personification of the collapse of the imperialistic pride and power of England after the war, exuding the pain and suffering that he is unable to keep hidden. Peter Walsh serves as a challenger to Clarissa's aristocratic viewpoint, although he maintains a naïve attachment to prewar England. Another more blatant resistance to Clarissa's ideals comes in the form of Miss Tillman, who represents the working class in opposition to the war, and Doctors Holmes and Bradshaw act as emissaries of continuity, staunch supporters of the prewar Empire.

The novel follows the lives of these characters throughout one June day, years after the war has ended. Despite the efforts of these characters to maintain the appearance of continuity and certainty, the manifestation of the trauma of the war recurs. Through these characters, Woolf reveals the way in which British society has lost its pre-war identity, particularly its sense of imperial pride and cultural superiority, as a result of lingering and disturbing manifestations of war trauma that threaten the society's sense of stability and purpose.

Clarissa, along with the other bystanders, believes that it has to be the Queen, Prime Minister, or royalty of some sort. Septimus is the only one who looks upon the car with dread and apprehension, "as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames" (15). The mass of people who gathered around the mysterious car believe that they are within "speaking distance of the majesty of England" and stand in awe of the British Empire and the idea of its former reality (Woolf 16). Only Septimus, upon seeing the car, expresses a great fear, an intense foreboding of the destructiveness of that reality.

The British Empire before the war was an enduring symbol of power and greatness, but after the war, the symbol of the country's superiority is hidden behind tinted glass. This mysterious showing of imagined royalty represents the vanishing power of England's aristocracy and loss of imperial identity after the war. When the car vanishes down the street,



there is a disturbance among the people who had witnessed the event. The appearance of royalty driving through the city creates a stir among the common people and causes them to think "of the dead; of the flag; of the Empire" (Woolf 18).

The intrigue surrounding the motorcar evokes a response of uprising in the crowd of people, for the ones who rebelled against the aristocracy and the ones who upheld the tenets of pre-war society. The House of Windsor is insulted in a bar room and a fight ensues. The car and what the power represents causes a ripple of "agitation" amongst the crowd of common people and touches upon emotions that are "very profound" (Woolf 18).

For a moment, the people in the street, with the exception of Septimus, collectively communicate their shared experience. The crowd responds with loyal veneration. That veneration is the people's "programmed response" of patriotism, what society believes is the acceptable reaction to royalty and the symbol of their imperial power. But the people seem to make no connections between the aristocracy and accountability for "feeding three million sons into the war machine" (Larson 197). Septimus appears to be the lone witness who sees this intrusion of royalty into the common streets as an omen of destruction and horror. The car, for Septimus, symbolizes an aristocracy that caused the deaths of thousands of soldiers who fought.

Woolf has the car pass through the city and out of sight again, to reveal how removed the aristocracy is from the common people's reality. The citizens are kept at a great distance from the Empire, and although society reveres their royalty, they also fear it. Woolf is portraying the disconnect that occurs between the two sides: the imperialistic views of the aristocracy that cause the destruction of society and the common experience of the individuals in that devastated society.

At the heart of the novel and the embodiment of stoic, British reserve is Clarissa Dalloway. Keeping in line with the unspoken societal rule of the English, Clarissa is determined to deny or evade anything that would disturb her. She chooses to repress the trauma by cloaking the images of death and devastation with beauty. Her attempt to "organize post-traumatic chaos" is much like Great Britain's repression of the devastation caused by World War I (DeMeester89). Her response to trauma is to create beauty around her through her artistic expressions, such as gathering flowers for her elaborate party. Although she proves that it is still possible to find beauty in every day life, "it is too ephemeral to instigate real change," much like the superficial monuments and tributes that serve as substitutes for the realities of war and death (DeMeester90).

Woolf introduces Clarissa, walking the streets of London in search of flowers for her party that night. As she waits on the curb, she contemplates all of the things that she loves: "life; London; this moment of June" (Woolf 4). Although she does mention the war, her summary glosses over the devastation and loss. When she recounts that Mrs. Foxcroft's son or Lady Bexborough's son was killed in the war, she relates it just before declaring, "but it was over; thank Heaven-over" as if the death of the soldiers indicated an end to the suffering (Woolf 5). Lady Bexborough, who opened a bazaar the night she learned of her son's death, elicits respect from Clarissa for her ability to move on from her pain. Clarissa's illusion of immunity to the devastation created by the war is due to her lack of connection to anyone who died in battle. Clarissa's only experience is through second-hand accounts through others who have been directly affected, and other than a passing sentiment, she appears to hardly acknowledge the effect of death on the survivors.

This idea of repression and denial in reaction to the trauma of war is an emotional response advocated and modeled by the aristocracy; It was taught in schools "as a mode of rule, which wartime propaganda had exploited to mobilize loyal Britons, and which was now



sustaining a post-war culture of denial" (Larson 197). Woolf uses Clarissa Dalloway to express what is considered by society as an acceptable defense mechanism.

Although Clarissa appears to the people around her to be emotionally shallow, she reveals her inner turmoil and suffering when she is alone. Clarissa is recovering from an illness in her heart, which could be the manifestation of her "buried psychic pain" (Burian 70). She has to hide how she truly feels and be her composed self in front of others, but when she is left with her own thoughts, she feels a deep "alienation caused by a traumatic shattering of her identity" (Burian 70). In this way, she represents the shattered image of superiority and power of prewar England. Although she suffers from the devastation of the war, she chooses to adopt the conventional English mode of repression to deal with it. Clarissa chooses not to confront or deal with her emotions and justifies it by claiming "that everyone was unreal in one way," to make sense of her own denial and align herself with English society's collective avoidance (Woolf 171).

Clarissa represents the vanity of British pride and the superiority of society before the war, and society's attempt to mask the devastation and destruction caused by the war. Peter Walsh refers to her as the "perfect hostess" who would "marry a Prime Minister," assigning her the same characteristics as the aristocracy (Woolf 7). Although she recognizes this about herself, she feels harshly judged by Peter when he labels her as such. She obviously adheres to the structure and superiority of her class, and even though she is obviously self-conscious of that role at times, she defends her imperialistic attitude as an expression of her artistic contribution to society. She, and her husband Richard, the "public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit" are the personification of the British aristocracy's denial (Woolf 76). Richard acknowledges the war, but retains the same level of remove from emotional connection as his wife. Before he goes to see Clarissa, he thinks to himself, "It was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them,



shoveled together, already half forgotten" (Woolf 115). Although he is aware of the death and destruction, it only appears as a fleeting thought, and he immediately returns to thoughts of his beautiful wife. At Clarissa's party that evening, the Prime Minister makes an appearance in the Dalloway's home. The arrival of royalty takes the notice of all of the guests, for they know that this is "majesty passing; this symbol of what they all stood for, English society" (Woolf 172). Woolf is using the guests at Clarissa's party to represent the upper class of English society as a whole. As the Prime Minister walks through the room, the guests, collectively, reveal their allegiance to those ideals of the aristocracy and their obliviousness to the realities of the war.

As Clarissa escorts the Prime Minister through the party, beaming with pride at the triumph, she acknowledges that "these triumphs had a hollowness...they satisfied her no longer as they used" (Woolf 174). Even though Clarissa upholds the aristocracy's view of conventional society on the outside, she knows, and has repressed, the pain that it has caused.

Near the end of her party, Dr. Bradshaw arrives and announces that Septimus has committed suicide. Clarissa's initial reaction is not an emotional display of empathy or concern, but an exclamation of inconvenience. "Oh! Thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought" (Woolf 183). She blames the Bradshaws for having the gall to talk of Septimus' suicide at her party, as if they were not allowed to mention death in the place Clarissa had created to avoid it. Clarissa leaves the room to process this information, the unwelcome intrusion of death into her party. As she thinks of Septimus' suicide, she determines that "death was [his] attempt to communicate," in an effort to deny the finality of his act (Woolf 184). If Clarissa justifies the death as an artistic expression instead of an absolute end, she can avoid having to face the "profound darkness" that she fears (Woolf 185).

Before she returns to her guests at the party, she resolves that Septimus has "made her feel the beauty," and in a matter of moments, Clarissa convinces herself that death is an expression of

beauty to be celebrated, not mourned (Woolf 186). Throughout the novel, Clarissa remains the ideal of British stoicism in her reactions to emotionally traumatic events. She "ends the day as she began it, believing the war is over" (Levenback 81). Even when death appears at his inner turmoil, even though he knows that society expects him to repress those emotions. Septimus returns from the war a broken man suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, and although his wife and doctors try to integrate him back into civilian life by forcing him to conform to the ideals and expectations of society, he realizes that he is not a part of that society any more.

Septimus recounts how he felt about England before the war and why he volunteered to serve in the military in the first place. He, like most young men, joined the army to protect and preserve his own version of idyllic England, which consisted of "Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress" (86). In the simplicity of his youth, he became a victim of the propaganda of the aristocracy which inspired him to fight for something that he could not have when the war was over.

He attempts to latch onto those memories of his past with art and literature, trying to ground himself to something that he once loved, but he feels "that the war invalidated the fundamental beliefs that had given his prewar life meaning" ( 81). He feels nothing for the things and people, including his wife, that he cared for before he suffered the experience of war, and he can no longer relate to the values and ideals of the society in which he is forced to exist. He is the living symbol of the post-war collapse of British civilization. Just as the foundation of society had been devastated by the war, Septimus' identity as a man within that society is destroyed.

Septimus exhibits the symptoms of shell shock, or post traumatic stress disorder, which contradicts the social expectations of the masculine role in society. Soldiers went to war to protect and preserve England's status as a world power, and society expected the soldier to be



the same man when he returned from battle. If there is any question or disillusionment about the system, the soldiers are not viewed as heroes, but as dissenters.

Septimus is a tragic symbol of what many men became just after the war, suffering from what was labeled "male hysteria," an illness of emotional distress usually attributed to women in the Victorian era (170). World War I and the trauma inflicted upon the soldiers led to a mass mental breakdown among the male population and created "a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal" (171). Disillusioned after the war, Septimus knows that he is a changed man and cannot revert to his pre-war identity; He cannot conform to the beliefs and tenets of British society's idea of the masculine role.

Septimus could not uphold the stoic façade that was expected of him. The war was a "psychic cave of memory and trauma" that revealed itself, often in public ( 64). He has visions of death, with hallucinations of his fallen comrade, Evans, in the bushes at the park. The fractured state of his psyche and the horrific visions he has are a result of the trauma he has experienced in the war, but the people around him do not react to his openly strange behavior with empathy or understanding. His own wife, Rezia, cannot see beyond the masculine expectations that Septimus now fails to meet, declaring that it "was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself," when her husband threatens to commit suicide ( 23).

Even his doctors tell Septimus that his behavior would give Rezia an "odd idea of English husbands," indicating that he should conform to the role of masculinity that society has established for him and that the option to do so is completely under his control (92). Feeling constricted by the conventional mold for a proper English gentleman, Septimus describes the prescription of his doctors as an act of torture. Septimus sees death as an end to his isolation and oppression; he knows there is no place in this world for him, and the laws of human nature will not allow him to stay. He demands that Rezia burn all of his papers, his drawings and scribbles, because they represent all of the illusions of the world that frustrate him. With the destruction of



his creations, he lets go of the expectations placed upon him to uphold imperialistic and archaic ideals. Septimus commits suicide, not because he wants to die, but because he feels that he has committed an "appalling crime and had been condemned to death by human nature" (96). His crime was his inability to conform, and society had condemned him for expressing his true self.

He commits suicide, not as a desperate act of sadness, but as a willful expression of his freedom from the tyrannical oppression of societal rules. Just before his death, he accepts his fate, saying, "There remained only the window...it was their idea of tragedy, not his (149). Septimus throws himself out of the window to his death as his final act, breaking out of the chains of conformity.

Septimus's neurosis is the direct result of the trauma he sustained during the first World War, and critics applying a strictly psychoanalytic reading to his character not only fail to recognize that hysteria, a disorder consistently associated with war neurosis, originates in a traumatic event rather in sexual repression. The history of the development of psychoanalysis reveals that repression is a consequence of trauma and a symptom of psychological injury rather than its cause. By 1896, Freud, in a report entitled *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, claimed that hysteria was caused by "one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience" (203), the trauma experienced as the result of childhood sexual molestation. However, within a year of publishing this report (653) Freud repudiated his theory because of its disturbing social implication.

Virginia Woolf then with her restrictive faculty and obstinate intention combined together, she is now immersed into a state of confusion and despondency. Unlike Clarissa Dalloway, Smith's relation to the war is most explicit as he participated himself in the First World War and for that he was painfully wounded. Although surviving the war, he is not ensured a felicity of the post-war life. Instead, his nearly healed physical injuries gives way to the spiritual disruption, filled merely with the memories of the wartime experience.

Unable to put up with this kind of dismantling neurosis, he stops his struggling mind by committing suicide; "'I'll give it you' and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings" (108). For Smith, the destructive influence of the war is tremendous. To make it more evident, Woolf focalizes through his mind while rendering a delineation of his acts and words, which is in close connection with his mentality. Because the nature of the words and actions are indecipherable, Smith's insanity is thus amplified, through which the immense magnitude pointed toward the negativity of the war is made evident.

Narrating Trauma in *Mrs. Dalloway* People suffering from trauma feel the loss of one's self. Clarissa's sense of emptiness about her being is repetitiously exhibited in the novel. Waking up in the morning, she exclaims that "What a lark! What a plunge!" (3) Such words of lark and plunge give the best expression of Clarissa's chaotic state of mind. The image of Lark indicates her crave for freedom whereas the word of plunge referring to a dramatic action of falling down high from above points out the taxing pressure she is going through now.

The traumatic suffering for Smith is extraordinarily torturous. As a veteran, Smith does not depart from his memories of the war. Instead, the impression of his experiences in the war upon his mind is clear and lively, mostly in the form of his nightmare dreams, and the image of his friend Evans. The past haunts him so hysterically, that his whole being is touched with horrid and consternation. Thus, "Smith Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazed eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes strangers apprehensive too." (Woolf, 1996, p. 21) In traumatic theory, suffers of trauma are spared of psychic disorder, caused by traumatic memory at the beginning stage. His reaction to traumatic events undergoes a gradual process. During the four years after the war, he is settled and peaceful, until his experiences in the war enter his dreams increasingly, and strange visions then take place. However, "Smith let himself think



about horrible things, as she could too, if she tried. He had grown stranger and stranger. He said people were talking behind the bedroom walls ...He saw things too-he had seen an old woman's head in the middle of a fern...All the little red and yellow flowers are out on the grass" (50).

Smith is exposed to paranoia schizophrenia, lingering on the blurred line of delusion and reality, confusing trees with human bodies: "The trees waved, brandished" (52). Cutting trees down implies for him the loss of human lives, making him irritated and furious. Even far away from the war, his traumatic memories are full of Evans' death, making him distressful. A large number of his delusions and ideas of references do not part from Evans' being killed in the war. Evans has turned to be an apparition perplexedly hovering Smith's mind: "He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the war was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself" (52).

The traumatic suffering depicted in the novel is pathetically diffusing. In the middle of 1921, having just finished *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf spent some two months bedridden with psychosomatic symptoms, "wearisome headache, jumping pulse, aching back, frets, fidgets, lying awake" (125). However, an exploration of trauma is not for the only sake of trauma, but to draw our attention to the external threat of the War, which is inhuman and dreadful. Nowadays, in the world of the 21th century, the potentiality for the eruption of wars has been largely reduced. Yet, owing to the historical lessons taught by the two Great Wars, all the countries in the world should consistently insist on the principle of a peaceful compatibility, so that life of bliss and felicity is ensured for human, and the integration of human's minds can thus be forged into a permanent protection.

A lack of commitment to change and a dissociation from the reality of experience plagued the modernist literary moment itself, and, in discussing the work of the writers in the 1930s, Jean-Paul Sartre attributes the change in the new generation to its realization of the gap



between "literary myth and historical reality"(174).According to sarter, the eccentricity and idiosyncrasy of the-avant-garde artist's works alienated him from contemporary society and, consequently, rendered him powerless to instigate change in that society. He claims that "their revolutionary doctrines remain purely theoretical, do not help them gain a single reader, and find no echo among the workers; they remain parasites of the class they insult. Their revolt remains on the margins of the revolution"(141). Moreover, T.S.Eliot said that the works written in the first half of the postwar decade describes death of an old age, not the beginning of new one(33). Though writers like Eliot and Woolf defined the postwar age, they seemed to contribute little to its healing. The rain never comes to revitalize the Waste Land, and even though Clarissa recommits herself to life and returns to her party, that lacks meaning and validity. However, the modernists brilliantly portrayed the effects of trauma, which psychologists were unable to do until decades later, and, as Woolf's depiction of Septimus Smith shows, revealed the potential for recovery within the very nature of the trauma.

It was the artists of the thirties who attempted to give meaning to the war in cultural terms, and it is no coincidence that many of these artist were war veterans. The narratives by authors such as Ford Madox Ford, Robert Graves, Vera Britain, and Siegfried Sassoon evidence recovery from rather than the perpetuation of trauma. They restore order to the fragmented consciousness of the postwar(667) world and reestablish chronological relationship my presenting the war story in a form of "this was my life....this is what happened....this is what I became." Moreover, these novels evidence the rebuilding of identity so essential for meaningful postwar recovery not only in the author but also in the culture. These novels, like the testimonies of all war veterans, force the reader to integrate World War I into his understanding of his culture's identity and history. Cultural identity must be revised to integrate the experience of war into our understanding of ourselves so we may learn from that experience, change, and thereby

prevent future wars. Such integration of World War I into our twentieth century identity seems to take place finally in the last decade of that century.

## Chapter Three

### Intersection of Time and Timelessness

Virginia Woolf's novels are meant for a diminishing audience of refined sensibilities, the select few who can understand what newness in fiction is all about. She rejects the realism of the Victorian novel and those "materialists" of fiction who followed that trend with its linear narrative, its realistic characters as too superficial to enable one to access the mind's experience. Woolf's goal is to move steadily away from traditional forms of fiction, to come "closer to life," to capture the moments of life, even though those times make life both terribly wonderful and completely unbearable. Woolf creates a new novelistic structure in *Mrs. Dalloway* wherein her prose has blurred the distinction between dream and reality, between the past and present. An authentic human being functions in this manner, simultaneously flowing from the conscious to the unconscious, from the fantastic to the real, and from memory to the moment which goes with time and timelessness. The novel is in part a critique of the shallowness and superficial conventionality of upper-class society.

*Mrs. Dalloway* is a rich and complex work of art. Virginia Woolf wrote *Mrs. Dalloway* about the perambulations of a middle-aged woman on a sunny June day in London, and it became one of the main Modernist classics. Woolf also strived to illustrate the vain artificiality of Clarissa's life and her involvement in it. It throws light upon the social circle examined by Woolf by portraying the sane grasping for significant and substantial connections to life, living among those who have been cut off from such connections and who suffer because of the improper treatment they, henceforth, receive.

The detail given and thought provoked in one day of a woman's preparation for a party, a simple social event exposes the flimsy life style of England's upper classes at the time of the novel. Even though Clarissa is affected by Septimus' death and is bombarded by profound



thoughts throughout the novel, she is also a woman for whom a party is her greatest offering to society. The thread of the Prime Minister throughout, the near fulfilling of Peter's prophecy concerning Clarissa's role, and the characters of the doctors, Hugh Whitbread, and Lady Bruton as compared to the tragically mishandled plight of Septimus.

The most prominent theme in *Mrs. Dalloway* is time and the distinction between two types of time. The clock measures time, but on the other hand time is represented by the duration of experiences as the human consciousness registers them. It has been interpreted by critics in different ways. The views of critics in interpreting its basic theme differ widely. David Daiches states that the theme of this novel as well as of others of Virginia Woolf is "Time, Death and Personality"(14) and the relations of these three to each other and to some ultimate truths that include them all. He goes further to say that the novel deals with "the nature of self and its relation to other people, the importance of social contact and at the same time the necessity of keeping the self inviolable. (14) The novel in other words treats of the tension between the extremes of isolation and domination, with the need of love as well as keeping the spirit inviolate.

One of the amazing things about *Mrs. Dalloway* is the creative use of time. The novel starts in an early morning in June 1923 and ends the next day at 3am; that means fewer than twenty-four hours pass during the course of the story. This compact use of time means that one has to read closely because every moment counts. Because of this, a lot happens in the course of just a few minutes, usually in thoughts more than in actions. For example, characters will flash back to the past at Bourton, and recall elaborate stories, while in present time only a few minutes have passed.

The readers are constantly reminded of time by Big Ben, London's giant clock tower, which is sounding off the hours through the entire novel. This is particularly poignant for

Clarissa whose preoccupation with time relates to her fear of death. She's deeply aware that as time passes, she gets closer to death, and she feels odd that life will go on just the same without her. Just as she knows that time existed long before her, she's aware that it will go on long after her bones have turned to dust. So Woolf, on her part, leads her readers into the inner experience of her character. It develops the time-scheme of one day in the life of middle-aged wife of an MP, who prepares to give a party at a time when an old friend whom she might have married has just come back from India.

The reader experiences the world only as it impinges on Mrs. Dalloway's consciousness, her thoughts and feelings and her memories of the past. As Harry Blamires points out, in exploring the subconscious life of the mind Woolf fastens upon "What she held to be the real stuff of life, located as it is in the secret place of the heart". The practice of Woolf certainly provokes the rethinking on what the content of a novel should be and how it should be written.

Throughout Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the main characters, most notably Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway, float in and out of their own thoughts rather than through each other's lives. Woolf originally imagined these separate streams of consciousness to depict twentieth-century England through the eyes of both the sane and the insane. However, while Clarissa Dalloway, fluttering politician's wife, and Septimus Smith, a world war I veteran who suffers from shell shock, play their respective roles well, it becomes evident that both are intrinsically damaged. The difference, however, between Clarissa and Septimus is that Septimus fully grasps the extent of the damage the society has done to them and judges the world accordingly.

The novel has two main narrative lines involving two separate characters within each narrative there is particular time and place in the past that the main characters keep returning to in their minds. For Clarissa, the "continuous present" of her charmed youth at Bourton keeps



intruding into her thoughts on this day in London. For Septimus, the "continuous present" of his time as a soldier during the great war keeps intruding especially in the form of Evans, his fallen comrade.

This compact use of time means that one has to read closely because every moment counts. Because of this, a lot happens in the course of just a few minutes. For example, characters will flashback to the past at Bourton, and recall elaborate stories, while in present time only a few minutes have passed. One is constantly reminded of time by Big Ben, London's giant clock tower, which is sounding off the hours through the entire novel. This is particularly poignant for Clarissa whose preoccupation with time relates to her fear of death. She's deeply aware that as time pass, she gets closer to death, and she feels odd that life will go on just the same without her. Just as she knows that time existed long before her, she's aware that it will go on long after her bones have turned to dust.

Time and space aren't always the same for all people and this point is clarified in Mrs. Dalloway. Like Woolf herself, Septimus Warren Smith suffered from mental illness. In *Moments of Being* in June, Adams uses Smith's actions such as having delusions of birds singing to him in Greek to make a connection with the actions and ultimately in his decision to kill himself. Since Woolf had mental problems herself, she knew first - hand how society treats with mental disease or anything that they don't understand. Therefore, she was able to use her characters to show the plight that Smith goes through and the things that lead him to the conclusion that suicide isn't only the best option, but it is in fact the only option he has.

One lives in a consumer society consuming time. Time functions smoothly but also channelises the direction of one's lives. The notion of time in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* indicates the importance of time as one of the novel's themes. By looking at Woolf's



writing style, critiquing her use of clocks, and analyzing *Clarissa's* thoughts, the reader finds a philosophical message about time, powerfully expressed.

In 1923, when *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place, the old establishment and its oppressive values are nearing their end. English citizens, including *Clarissa*, *Peter*, and *Septimus*, feel the failure of the empire as strongly as they feel their own personal failures. Those citizens who still champion English tradition, such as Aunt *Helena* and Lady *Bruton*, are old. Aunt *Helena*, with her glass eye, is turning into an artifact. Anticipating the end of the Conservative Party's reign, *Richard* plans to write the history of the great British military family, the *Burtens*, who are already part of the past. The old empire faces an imminent demise, and the loss of the traditional and familiar social order leaves the English at loose ends.

The lyrical, flowing pattern of Woolf's writing easily slides in and out of different characters' thoughts. Her ability to show the random yet patterned working of our minds gives us a realistic sense of mental time. Woolf's sentences quickly cross the boundaries of the past, present, and future. She saw the writer's task as "being able to go beyond the 'formal railway line of sentences' and to show how people feel or think or dream all over the place" (Lee 93). She wanted to express a point of view, not a plot. Her stream-of-consciousness writing allows us insight into a variety of characters. For example, within the first moments that we meet *Clarissa*, we rapidly travel between her present, her past, and her thoughts about the future. In the process, we understand pieces of her life which create the woman we come to know in a single day. We see the lifetime culmination of beautiful moments and painful moments embodied in Woolf's characters.

Woolf's style impresses upon the reader the time which exists in our minds. Mental time does not progress steadily forward, like the clock time we follow. This point is illustrated by *Clarissa's* arrival at the flower shop in the morning; her senses are effortlessly taken to evening

time as she thinks. And it was the moment between six and seven when every flower—roses, carnations, irises, lilac-glows; white, violet, red, deep orange; every flower seems to burn by itself, softly, purely in the misty beds; and how she loved the grey-white moths spinning in and out, over the cherry pie, over the evening primroses! (Woolf 13) This passage flows easily from her seeing the flowers in the present to being drawn back to memories and sensations from her past. If Woolf wrote in any other way, her layered message about time would not be as successfully or beautifully expressed. Critic Bernard Blackstone wrote that "*Mrs. Dalloway* is an experiment with time. It is a mingling of present experience and memory" (71). Essentially, Woolf's style adds emphasis to her idea of time as a constant flow—time that is the present but also the past; linear but sporadic; eternal but vanishing.

Big Ben and St. Margaret's represent different rates of time: one marching straight ahead without looking back, the other gently making its presence known. Woolf's use of Big Ben serves two purposes. First, its concise tolling indicates the time that we lose each day. It shows the constant forward movement of the hours. Second, the fame of Big Ben suggests that the mark we leave on the world be something grand, something renowned. The bell of Big Ben agitates Clarissa: "The sound of Big Ben flooded Clarissa's drawing-room where she sat, ever so annoyed, at her writing table; worried; annoyed" (Woolf 117). The clock tells her she is running out of time and reminds her of her middle-age. Its toll reminds her that she has done nothing civilization would consider impressive. She feels "a suspense before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air" (Woolf 4). Woolf's description of the bell as a "warning" and the hour as "irrevocable" (used more than once) clearly states a negative idea of Big Ben time. The strike of the clock cautions that another hour has passed—time that we will never have to live again.



While Big Ben reminds Clarissa of her mortality, St. Margaret's serves another purpose. With St. Margaret's, Woolf presents a time that appeals to the human spirit. It chimes in a little late, gliding "into the recesses of the heart and buries itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest" (Woolf 50). Although not a famous bell tower, St. Margaret's attracts the attention of those who hear it. Therefore, it contradicts the message of Big Ben—to leave behind something famous to be remembered by when we die. Instead, St. Margaret's suggests that we not be overly consumed with losing time and that we be aware of it in our own way. In comparison with Big Ben, St. Margaret's suggests that time meanders and passes subtly. The tower's bell represents an approach to life that accepts the moment. It makes the listener aware of time to appreciate it, not to fear it.

Woolf draws a clear parallel between Clarissa and St. Margaret's. In fact, the ringing of the bells makes Peter think of Clarissa:

Ah, said St. Margaret's, like a hostess who comes into her drawing room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. Yet, though she is perfectly right, her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality. Some grief for the past holds it back; some concern for the present. (Woolf 49)

The bell tower and Clarissa differ from Big Ben. They are not bold in their individuality. They prefer to make an impression on the world in a different manner—as hostesses. Clarissa feels her "only gift was knowing people almost by instinct" (Woolf 9). The hostess in Clarissa represents her gift, her art. She values the influence she has on people's lives. She feels that both Peter and Richard "criticized her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties" (Woolf 121). Clarissa feels the presence of people, separated from one another. "She felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste;...and she felt if only she could



bring them together; so she did it. And it was an offering" (Woolf 122). Her parties and her affinity for people give her a feeling of timelessness.

Through the character of Clarissa, Woolf aptly expresses her perspective on time. Clarissa pays attention to the details of the moment: "What she loved was this, here, now, in front of her" (Woolf 9). Her appreciation of the moment leads her to a consideration of death:

Did it matter then, she asked herself...did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely. (Woolf 9)

Despite her attachment to the present, another part of Clarissa wants her spirit to outlast her time on earth. She wants to remain. Her eternal connection is two-fold. First, she feels like an eternal piece of the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best. (Woolf 9) She also hopes to survive time in her offering to the world—bringing people together at parties by briefly obliterating the boundaries that create alienation among them. For an evening, she pulls together fragmented lives and creates communion.

Virginia Woolf's message about time should be heeded. Our rush to leave a dramatic mark in the world leads to further destruction. Tension abounds in our modern world as we create technology to increase our efficiency. Our civilization tends to see scientific and monumental achievements as the most valid measures of an individual's success. However, in the process, our communities disintegrate. More and more people complain of feeling alienated. The evidence surrounds us. The internal time that allows us to slow down and be involved with people finds itself dominated by external societal time. Some might find Clarissa Dalloway's gift to the world

to be trivial. However, we need individuals with the ability to pull people together-people with the ability to create community where it no longer exists.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, one is given the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of a man who has gone mad because of the war. Though one can certainly see that Septimus has been driven mad by the violence and death of combat, many characters deny the very possibility of madness. Dr Holmes in particular thinks that Septimus is just "in a funk," (100) and that gaining some weight and distracting himself will be the perfect cure. Septimus' visions are also a source of anxiety for his wife, who feels like she has to hide him from the prying eyes of the public. She dreads what people must think of her husband for the way that he behaves. By presenting Septimus as she does, Woolf suggests that war can cause profound psychological effect – something society at her time was not prepared to accept because shell-shock didn't conform with right British behaviour. In Woolf's day, people were still trying to understand the psychological effects of World War I. Septimus has to reconcile what it means to be a man who suffers when he's back in proper, post-war society.

As a commentary on inter-war society, Clarissa's character highlights the role of women as the proverbial Angel in the House and embodies sexual and economic repression and the narcissism of bourgeois women who have never known the hunger and insecurity of working women. She keeps up with and even embraces the social expectations of the wife of a particular politician but she is still able to express herself and find distinction in the parties she throws. Her friend Sally Seton, whom Clarissa admires dearly, is remembered as a great independent woman: she smoked cigars, once ran down a corridor naked to fetch her sponge-bag and made bold, unladylike statements to get a reaction from people. When Clarissa meets her in the present day, she turns out to be a perfect housewife, having married a self-made rich man and given birth to five sons. Clarissa Dalloway is strongly attracted to Sally at Bourton – 34 years later, she still



considered the kiss they shared to be the happiest moment of her life. She feels about Sally as men feel, but she does not recognize these feeling as signs of homosexuality.

Similarly, Septimus is haunted by the image of his friend Evans. Evans, his commanding officer, is described as being undemonstrative in the company of women. The narrator describes Septimus and Evan behaving together like "two dogs playing on the hearth- rug" (94) who, inseparable, "had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other...."(94) Jean E. Kennard notes that the word share could easily be read in the Forsterian manner, perhaps as in Forster's *Maurice* which shows the word is used in this period to describe homosexual relations. Kennard is one to note Septimus' increasing revulsion at the idea of heterosexual sex, abstaining from sex with Rezia and feeling that "business of copulation was filth to him before the end.

An important point about the novel is that no actual warfare takes place. All the readers see is the aftermath – the trauma and the shell-shock, the ripples of damage to those survived. The war had been over for five years when *Mrs. Dalloway* was written, yet everyone is still deeply impacted by it. Many people had championed the war as a way to uphold the ideals of the British Empire and a way make men out of boys. But with all of the life wasted, the feeling that the war was fought for all the ideals of England becomes somewhat absurd. Septimus is the most damaged, since he fought in the trenches and lost his good friend and officer, Evans. He represents what happened to these young men who fought for the queen and for abstract ideas of duty. Septimus' shell-shock is a shameful expression of how soldiers can become damaged from warfare and return as madmen instead of heroes.

In short, Woolf suggests that time exists in different forms. It exists in the external world, but also-and perhaps more importantly-in our internal world. Her description of the loud and rushing civilization suggests that we push ahead in the name of progress, without fully appreciating the



moment. Through the character of Clarissa, Woolf challenges the usual definition of success. Perhaps we need not leave some magnificent gift behind in the form of a building or a concrete art piece. Instead, maybe it is how we live our lives and our appreciation for the present that are truly more powerful and eternal. The small gifts we offer others, like bringing people together through a party, can touch people differently than a monument.

## Chapter four

### Hegemonic Masculinity

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf portrays the conventional society of the beginning of the twentieth century, incorporating some peculiar aspects that create a certain ambiguity when it comes to the standards of that period. There can be two social scopes plainly differentiated: the public sphere and the private sphere. It is clear that majority of men belong to the public sphere, as all of them possess an active role within their society. Nevertheless, most women belong to the private sphere, as they are the ones bound to take care of the household or some domestic issues such as sewing, teaching manners and taking care of their children. However, there are some characters, which have suffered a transformation and, as a consequence their role in their society has changed from active into passive or vice versa.

However Woolf's female characters perpetuate the ideological discourse of masculinity rather than only seeing women in positive lights. Woolf manifests these relationships through a variety of mediums. For example, the women's interactions with the male characters convey the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Also, Woolf satirizes the male characters' actions through narration and through other characters' perceptions of these characters. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf uses the female protagonists as archetypes of women in her society because they regulate masculinity in a way that reinforces the gender binary that in turn oppresses these women.

On the other hand, it is also noticeable about how some women hold a significant active role in their lives, rather than a passive one, even though they should still be placed within the private sphere. This is the case of Lady Bruton, Sally Seton or Doris Kilman. They are cultivated women who devote their lives to either politics, fighting for women's rights or teaching modern history, respectively. In fact, all of them have a pronounced interest in reading, what denotes that

they have a manifest concern for imbuing themselves with knowledge. Hence, Woolf is characterizing common women with concerns that are thought to be only a male hegemony, in order to emphasize her feminist point of view, which implies that women are as equally capable of performing such roles despite of their female gender.

Independently of the social sphere to which they belong, both men and women are conditioned to end up achieving a life in matrimony. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* centers on the female protagonist Clarissa and her need to uphold society's definitions of what it means to be a woman. The novel begins with her planning of a party and the novel continues with this plotline. Woolf uses simultaneity of character's thoughts as they walk past each other in London as a means of defining her characters. Often, *Mrs. Dalloway* is read as a feminist text and Clarissa's character is analyzed under this critical lens. Critic Vereen Bell writes that Clarissa is often depicted as, "the model of some human virtue-strength of character, intuitive genius, affirmation of life, transcendence of patriarchal social arrangements, empathy with the dead, unifier of society" (94). Bell sees this analogy as a misreading of the novel and critiques this idea in her piece through use of particular scenes. Clarissa's femininity deserves a close reading in text; however, in order to analyze this text as a feminist piece, masculinity is in need of exploration as well. Septimus Warren Smith, an ex-officer who fought in World War I, illustrates these circumstances. He is depicted as the prototypical man who went to war in order to defend his country. Despite the fact that he belongs to the public sphere, his active role evolves into a passive one as a result of the post-traumatic experience of war. He develops a mental illness, that is, the urge of committing suicide because he can no longer cope with his life and consequently Lucrezia Smith, who is his wife, suffers as well an evolution, as she is now bound to take some new responsibilities and power, which were previously owned by her husband. Although she keeps belonging to the private sphere due to the mentality of her society, now, she must



undertake a more active role in her matrimony because she has to take care of both her husband and her household.

In critical discussions regarding masculinity in this novel, Peter Walsh and Septimus Warren Smith are mostly the characters of focus. Virginia Richter (2010) writes:

Figures like Septimus Warren Smith and Peter Walsh in Mrs. Dalloway display a sense of insecurity, a necessity to rethink their sense of identity in response to the changing times. These men function as seismographs registering the advent of modernity; despite their relative... and catastrophic failure to come to terms with the contradictory social roles with which they are confronted, they, rather than the inflexible defenders of power, patriarchy, and empire, represent a viable although precarious embodiment of modern masculinity. (158)

It is then necessary to take a close look at the correlation between marriage and authority. There can be distinguished two main kinds of supremacy: the authority of men over women or the female authority over the male one. This connection has been dealt between three main couples of this novel, they are Dalloway's, Smith's and Whitbred's. Nevertheless, there are also some other derivations of marriage, which are peculiar as well to study such as the unmarried Lady Bruton and Doris Kilman, the unexpected marriage of Sally Seton or Peter Walsh's divorced situation.

In the case of Dalloway's couple, by means of the stream of consciousness Clarissa's thought confirm a liberal couple who does not oppress their correspondent partner by imposing useless boundaries to each other. However, they are not illustrated as a relationship based on love; instead, it seems that the mere reason why they remain together is marriage, as a social bond that inevitably joins them. In fact, it can be sensed a certain degree of hypocrisy in the

statements of Clarissa, when it comes to this presumed freedom between Richard and her, because there are produced some events in the story, which in a common liberal couple would not be problematic but, in her case, it is.

For instance, at the beginning of the novel, Clarrisa is told that her husband is going to attend a meeting with Lady Bruton. Instinctively, she feels a tremendous loneliness and disgust about it: "there was an emptiness about the heart of life: an attic room"(33). However, she does not express it openly to Richard; she rather cares for her reputation and gets nostalgic about her past. She remembers her youth, because it was the time when she was truly free and, presumably, she even had an affair with Sally Seton. Sally Seton is the only person with whom she can truly feel the prison that society has imposed on her, her lack of affection and disinterest and the convention of her life.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice that Richard somehow feels proud of Clarissa, but he also feels her distance towards him. This is depicted when Richard states that: "he never gave Clarissa presents, except a bracelet two or three years ago, which had not been a success. She never wrote it"(125). This fact deceives him and makes him feel her apathy and indifference towards him. What he does not know is that Clarissa prefers roses rather than jewelry. Consequently, this denotes the lack of communication that exists between them and the great ignorance that possess about both the delights and the opinions of the other.

Hence, in this couple, there is a clear prevalence of male authority. Although it may resemble that they are carefree on their decisions and they openly respect the way in which the other behaves, Richard is the one who always has the authority, the power to decide what is approved, and what is not. While sometimes it appears implicitly, in other cases the readers can see explicitly, as it happens with the parties of Clarissa, to which he is in comment to give the correspondent approval to organize such parties.



Nevertheless, when it comes to the authority that they had towards Elizabeth Dalloway, their daughter, both care for her equally. During that period the mother was in charge of teaching good manners to their daughters whereas the husband had no kind of indoctrination towards their daughter because of her female gender. It can be illustrated by the thoughts of Richard when he states that: "if he'd had a boy he'd said, work, work. But he had his Elizabeth; he adored his Elizabeth"(124). This quote implies that as Elizabeth is a woman, she cannot work as men would, but atleast, her father acknowledges her with love. As a woman she is only allowed to know how to behave and socialize as her mother does, what implies, that all the education she received was centered towards marriage.

In the secondary place, there is a description about Smith's couple. They represent a conservative matrimony of the beginning of twentieth century, which is consulted, as suggested by the great difference of age between them. Septimus Warren Smith is a conventional officer that devotes his life to the army in order to prepare to fight for the British countries behalf. Unfortunately, when he is fighting in world war I he witnesses how Evans, both his friend and companion of war is skilled. As consequence, Septimus develops a mental illness provoked by this traumatic experience.

By means of stream of consciousness, Woolf allows the readers to presume how Septimus can no longer keep maintaining a common life because he is constantly haunted by Evans presence. In fact he marries Lucrezia as a desperate escape from his depressing feelings rather than marrying for love, because he is convinced that it may solve his problem. However, his uneasiness increases, as he perceives how Lucrezia and the other people feel comfortably in places where he cannot help but feeling displaced.

Therefore, the readers can find a couple made up of a common lady who, suddenly, has to take care of both the household and her husband's sanity. Despite the adversities and the fact



that their marriage is consorted, she is comfortable with the role that has been assigned to her and she does not doubt to fulfill for her active role of Caring for her husband. In fact Lucrezia is depicted as a devoted woman who loves her husband deeply and she is even completely submitted to him. For instance, this can be illustrated when Sir William Bradshaw tells her that her husband must be sent home because he has lost his "sense of proportion" and she reacts to this news by thinking that "no one could separate them"(163).

Consequently, once again, in this couple male dominance can be found. In this case, despite the fact that it resembles that Lucrezia is the one who exerts the authority in her matrimony. In reality Septimus still possesses the whole control over her. As he regrets an incessant supervision in order to keep him from killing himself, Lucrezia is submitted to him because she cannot do anything but overseeing him. Similarly to Clarissa, she is imprisoned within her marriage because she is constraint by the marital bond that joins them together and, in her particular case, she also has to help her husband to react the mental balance of his sanity. In fact, the tough adversities that Lucrezia has to go through are more pronounced compared to any other women of her age. For instance, Elizabeth Dalloway. Lucrezia has been denied the opportunity to have some sort of education, whereas Elizabeth can have access to it by means of her personal governess, Doris Kilman.

The final couple is the Whitbreds. They represent the most conventional matrimony in this novel because the few information that possess about them tells that they belong to the highest social class and possibly that suggests that their marriage was concerted as happened with the previous couples. Although their role within the novel comes in a second place, the readers can also distinguish the workings of the male patriarchal authority between them when Hugh Whitbred, accompanied by Richard Dalloway, attends a meeting with Lady Bruton in order to talk about significant topics such as politics, without asking for the approval of her wife.

Lady Bruton figures among some of the most peculiar characters of this novel. She is an unmarried woman who is represented as sensible and cultivated rather than a woman who stands out for her exuberant beauty. She is highly keen on history and politics, what denotes that she holds some common male concerns. It was unusual that a women had such interests and influence on people as they were exclusively taught the basic accomplishments in order to marry. Therefore, Lady Bruton represents one of the most feminist character in Dalloway as she breaks with the standards of the society by remaining unmarried, and also by either organizing or taking part in some meetings that concern topics of such extent, which are usually merrily connected with men. In fact, she does not have to comply with any male boundary at all, as she possesses the whole authority of her life.

Doris Kilman, who is the governess of Elizabeth Dalloway, is another character that resembles Lady Bruton in her feminist attitude. It seems that she is an unmarried women as well, who is fond of modern history. Despite the fact that she does not organize nor at an meetings with men. As Lady Bruton does she also holds the whole authority of her life and has an actual job, that is, teaching Elizabeth Dalloway about some cultural aspects.

The last character is Peter Walsh. He is Clarissa Dalloway's best friend, and he keeps respecting her, even after she rejects him when he reveals her his love. Peter Walsh is a divorced man who has returned to his childhood location by the thoughts of Clarissa who feels sorry about him and his bad luck in love : "what a waste! What a folly! All his life long Peter had been fooled like that; first getting sent down from oxford ; next marrying a girl on the boat going out to India; now the wife of a major"(50). He is portrayed as a sensitive man who leads his life by his passions rather than his reason. In fact, this obsessive behavior can be understood as a necessity to marry in order to fill the void of solitude he possesses. He behaves as a conservative man who needs to marry to achieve a happy life, instead of breaking with those conventions and



manage to be happy on his own. In fact, even though, supposedly, he has no wife who can impose on him some pressure or authority, he has lived most of his life submitted to Clarissa's behavior, and he still does, somehow. He always cares about both, her feelings and her opinions, rather than thinking of his own benefit and what is best for him.

Therefore, Peter Walsh may be understood as a feminist character in the sense that he is divorced and he has violated the conventions of marriage established by his society. However, in reality, he is still submitted to those conventions, as he is not able to accomplish a blissful life without being committed to a woman. Hence, although he seems to be the main authority of his life, his passions as Clarissa asserts, lead him to follow social conventions and to be constantly psychologically submitted to women. In conclusion, in the majority of circumstances the male supremacy prevails over the female, which refracts the real situations of the twentieth century.

Woolf intends to create positive female characters in her fiction and wishes to critique gender norms in her pieces. However, when one questions gender roles, an analysis of masculinity must take place in order to look at Woolf's critiques more in-depth. The dominant structure must be taken into account in order to have a conversation about the oppressed group. Even though theorists such as Butler and Chodorow are associated with discussing the oppression of women within the patriarchy, their work is also necessary in critiquing masculinity and its structure in the patriarchy. A close reading of Woolf's depictions of masculinities gives a more nuanced approach to reading text under a feminist lens because masculinity theory intersects with feminist theory. According to Judith Newton, "masculinity studies...make a profound intervention in the tendency of feminist theory to celebrate the diversity and fluidity of femininities and women while over unifying and sometimes demonizing the categories of masculinity and men" (p. 181). Newton's definition of masculinity studies conveys the need to bring these ideas into conversation with feminist theory and into feminist criticism of literature.



Feminist theory needs to focus on positive female characters; however, negative female characters also need exploration which is one of the goals of this paper. Jacob Flanders, Richard Dalloway, and Mr. Ramsay all illustrate men who are products of their societies, which I do not negate in this project. In their own ways, these men perpetuate the discourse of femininity. On the other hand, these men must adhere to the masculine expectations of their significant others. Clara Durrant, Clarissa Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay illustrate women who suffer from the perils of the patriarchy, but they also become perpetrators within the patriarchy in their expectations of their husbands. These women continue to perpetuate the ideological discourse of masculinity and prescribe gender norms for the men. Woolf not only proves that men's masculinity needs to be brought into conversations about gender, but also she illustrates how women contribute to these flawed senses of masculinity.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Virginia Woolf is recognized as a major twentieth century author, a great novelist and essayist and a key figure in literary history as a feminist and a modernist. There are only a few authors who are as renowned as Virginia Woolf. For she was one of the first authors of her time to try to break the "Victorian grasp" on literary works and put imagination in almost every aspect of literature. She also was one of the few feminists who stood up for the rights she should have through her work. Yet in no way was Virginia Woolf only inspired by feminism. On the contrary many of her works were also influenced by the detrimental results of conventionality that was troubling England at that time period. It was through these concepts that Woolf talked of, at one point or another, almost every social or political problem occurring in her time.

The germ of the novel lay in the medieval romance, a fantastic tale of love and adventure, itself derived from the ballads and fragments of epic poems sung by the wandering minstrel. The anti-Romantic, anti-Victorian attitudes that provided an impetus to the modern movement in poetry had an equally energizing effect on fiction. The early decades of the century were years of experimental pioneering which led to a redefinition of the novel form. In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the novel has been a public instrument focusing on what was significant to society as whole. The early decades of the century were years of experimental pioneering which led to a redefinition of the novel form. The quest for ways of recreating the novel was also a response to the pressures of the times and arose out of a conviction that the old method of novel writing.

What characteristically differentiates the twentieth century novel from its predecessors is the stress on the loneliness of the individual as a necessary condition of man. The demands of a new epoch and the fresh thinking on the condition of man caused writers to reject the old, deliberate way of telling a story. The exciting innovations following the direction of thought set

by the new philosophy ensured that the modern novel in the first phase between 1910 and 1945 reached an unprecedented level of achievement. The new terms in which the old concepts of plot, character and narration were expressed shattered forever the conventional idea of the novel as just a story.

A novel, like a play, has a plot, and a great extent its characters reveal themselves and their intentions in dialogue. It is nonetheless a very effective medium of the portrayal of human thoughts and actions. The novel has, in fact, no rigid framework, and English authors have taken full advantage of the freedom this achieved them.

One peculiar modernist way of constructing a novel – depicting a single day – is in British Modernist writing exemplified at its best by James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. The use of stream-of-consciousness technique, both authors used were, despite the limitation of time being that of one day, able to make their characters emerge more complete and profound than much of the traditional fiction of the 18th or 19th century. This thesis deals with *Mrs. Dalloway* particularly in terms of Woolf's peculiarly sensitive vision of human beings, for which Woolf had to abandon the traditional method of characterization, in order to express the world as she saw it.

This new way of constructing fiction accepts that the view of "what is significant in human affairs" both for the writer and the reader is completely redefined in a way that the most real part of the character's behaviour does not necessarily have to be the one which changes or determines in some way their position in the world (Daiches, NMW 2). This breakdown of the publicly shared view on significance opened the way for Virginia Woolf to free herself from the tyranny of the chronologically ordered conventional novel and introduce "a new concept of time as a continuous flow" which is captured as it consistently flows in the human mind (Daiches, NMW 7).



Trauma in narrative appears due to the cross-disciplinary development of trauma theory. Because the first half of the twentieth century is marked indeed by historical catastrophe, in which the two Great World Wars had led to a global turmoil, contemporary fiction is nonetheless shaped by the representation of those events. And it is not surprising that theorists have turned to the concept of trauma as an instrument for cultural studies. In this case, trauma is not only a word for disaster, but also as a method of interpretation to unfold the far-pervasive effects of the events. As James Berger in his *Contemporary Literature* has maintained that "a traumatic analysis is both constructivist and empirical." (Berger 572) in weighing largely upon traumatic events, trauma theory is also of great value in historical studies within literary works.

Examining Traumatic Symptom Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, written in the form of stream-of-consciousness, is vivid and authentic in representing the traumatic experiences of the characters caused by the First World War. There are two main characters who are described to experience the traumatic suffering incurred by the First World War. Both Clarissa's spiritual discomfort and Smith's psychic problems are relevant to the Great War I since Smith witnessed his friend Evan's death in the First World War and Clarissa exclaimed with relief that "it was the middle of June. The war was over." (2) It has to be found that the novel is for the most part involved in the tone of depression and melancholy, which is in accordance with the thematic issue of the War subsumed subtly in the narrative of the characters spirituality. The term "trauma" derives originally from the Greek word for physical injuries before it refers further to the wound inflicted upon mind. Caruth held that "trauma is an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occur in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucination and other intrusive phenomenon." (Caruth 5) Thus, being belated is the most salient characteristic, given that trauma is actually not fully

experienced at the moment, and instead happens over time, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it.

Janet Pierre also describes it a "delayed response," while Freud states it to be "deferred action" or "afterwardness." Since in Freudian psychoanalysis, just as he points out, "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event the least similar images or events in relation to traumatic memory tend to trigger mental destruction. In fact, traumatic memory is central to psychoanalysis, which unlike normal mentality.

During traumatic experience, flashback has become a routine occasion, disrupting mental representation of its temporal order. As J. Pierre once claims that memories related to trauma remain unclear and unconscious as well, and tend to encroach into people's consciousness occasionally, the failures of repressing traumatic memory are usually confirmed by the returning of traumatic events in the form of repetitive, and compulsive behaviours. For that, neurotic symptom happens, as a result of the repressed drives followed by desires of traumatic events. Excessive in frequency, such rebounding to histories finally incur sufferers' biological urge of equilibrium, which is then theorized as "death drive." (Freud, 1895, p. 7) Herman once said that "traumatic events destroy the victim's fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world, the positive value of self, and the meaningful order of creation." (Herman, 1992, p. 51) People who suffer from trauma are susceptible to suspicious atmosphere, in which any trustworthy relationship with people around is hard to construct. Therefore, remedies for trauma rely upon rebuilding one's identity and a positive sense of the world. The most prominent theme in *Mrs. Dalloway* is time and the distinction between two types of time. The clock measures time, but on the other hand time is represented by the duration of experiences as the human consciousness registers them. It has been interpreted by critics in different ways. The views of critics in interpreting its basic theme differ widely. David Daiches states that the theme



of this novel as well as of others of Virginia Woolf is "Time, Death and Personality"(14) and the relations of these three to each other and to some ultimate truths that include them all. He goes further to say that the novel deals with "the nature of self and its relation to other people, the importance of social contact and at the same time the necessity of keeping the self inviolable. (14) The novel in other words treats of the tension between the extremes of isolation and domination, with the need of love as well as keeping the spirit inviolate.

One of the amazing things about *Mrs. Dalloway* is the creative use of time. The novel starts in an early morning in June 1923 and ends the next day at 3am; that means fewer than twenty-four hours pass during the course of the story. This compact use of time means that one has to read closely because every moment counts. Because of this, a lot happens in the course of just a few minutes, usually in thoughts more than in actions. For example, characters will flash back to the past at Bourton, and recall elaborate stories, while in present time only a few minutes have passed.

The readers are constantly reminded of time by Big Ben, London's giant clock tower, which is sounding off the hours through the entire novel. This is particularly poignant for Clarissa whose preoccupation with time relates to her fear of death. She's deeply aware that as time passes, she gets closer to death, and she feels odd that life will go on just the same without her. Just as she knows that time existed long before her, she's aware that it will go on long after her bones have turned to dust. So Woolf, on her part, leads her readers into the inner experience of her character. It develops the time-scheme of one day in the life of middle-aged wife of an MP, who prepares to give a party at a time when an old friend whom she might have married has just come back from India.

The reader experiences the world only as it impinges on Mrs. Dalloway's consciousness, her thoughts and feelings and her memories of the past. As Harry Blamires points out, in



exploring the subconscious life of the mind Woolf fastens upon "What she held to be the real stuff of life, located as it is in the secret place of the hear". The practice of Woolf certainly provokes the rethinking on what the content of a novel should be and how it should be written.

Throughout Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the main characters, most notably Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway, float in and out of their own thoughts rather than through each other's lives. Woolf originally imagined these separate streams of consciousness to depict twentieth-century England through the eyes of both the sane and the insane. However, while Clarissa Dalloway, fluttering politician's wife, and Septimus Smith, a world war I veteran who suffers from shell shock, play their respective roles well, it becomes evident that both are intrinsically damaged. The difference, however, between Clarissa and Septimus is that Septimus fully grasps the extent of the damage the society has done to them and judges the world accordingly.

The novel has two main narrative lines involving two separate characters within each narrative there is particular time and place in the past that the main characters keep returning to in their minds. For Clarissa, the "continuous present" of her charmed youth at Bourton keeps intruding into her thoughts on this day in London. For Septimus, the "continuous present" of his time as a soldier during the great war keeps intruding especially in the form of Evans, his fallen comrade.

This compact use of time means that one has to read closely because every moment counts. Because of this, a lot happens in the course of just a few minutes. For example, characters will flashback to the past at Bourton, and recall elaborate stories, while in present time only a few minutes have passed. One is constantly reminded of time by Big Ben, London's giant clock tower, which is sounding off the hours through the entire novel. This is particularly poignant for Clarissa whose preoccupation with time relates to her fear of death. She's deeply

aware that as time pass, she gets closer to death, and she feels odd that life will go on just the same without her. Just as she knows that time existed long before her, she's aware that it will go on long after her bones have turned to dust.

Time and space aren't always the same for all people and this point is clarified in Mrs. Dalloway. Like Woolf herself, Septimus Warren Smith suffered from mental illness. In *Moments of Being* in June, Adams uses Smith's actions such as having delusions of birds singing to him in Greek to make a connection with the actions and ultimately in his decision to kill himself. Since Woolf had mental problems herself, she knew first - hand how society treats with mental disease or anything that they don't understand. Therefore, she was able to use her characters to show the plight that Smith goes thrthrough and the things that lead him to the conclusion that suicide isn't only the best option, but it is in fact the only option he has.

One lives in a consumer society consuming time. Time functions smoothly but also channelises the direction of one's lives. The notion of time in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* indicates the importance of time as one of the novel's themes. By looking at Woolf's writing style, critiquing her use of clocks, and analyzing Clarissa's thoughts, the reader finds a philosophical message about time, powerfully expressed.

In 1923, when Mrs. Dalloway takes place, the old establishment and its oppressive values are nearing their end. English citizens, including Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus, feel the failure of the empire as strongly as they feel their own personal failures. Those citizens who still champion English tradition, such as Aunt Helena and Lady Bruton, are old. Auth Helena, with her glass eye, is turning into an artifact. Anticipating the end of the Conservative Party's reign, Richard plans to write the history of the great British military family, the Burtons, who are already part of the past. The old empire faces an imminent demise, and the loss of the traditional and familiar social order leaves the English at loose ends.



The lyrical, flowing pattern of Woolf's writing easily slides in and out of different characters' thoughts. Her ability to show the random yet patterned working of our minds gives us a realistic sense of mental time. Woolf's sentences quickly cross the boundaries of the past, present, and future. She saw the writer's task as "being able to go beyond the 'formal railway line of sentences' and to show how people feel or think or dream all over the place" (Lee 93). She wanted to express a point of view, not a plot. Her stream-of-consciousness writing allows us insight into a variety of characters. For example, within the first moments that we meet Clarissa, we rapidly travel between her present, her past, and her thoughts about the future. In the process, we understand pieces of her life which create the woman we come to know in a single day. We see the lifetime culmination of beautiful moments and painful moments embodied in Woolf's characters. Through the character of Clarissa, Woolf aptly expresses her perspective on time. Clarissa pays attention to the details of the moment: "What she loved was this, here, now, in front of her" (Woolf 9). Her appreciation of the moment leads her to a consideration of death:

Did it matter then, she asked herself...did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely. (Woolf 9)

Despite her attachment to the present, another part of Clarissa wants her spirit to outlast her time on earth. She wants to remain. Her eternal connection is two-fold. First, she feels like an eternal piece of the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best. (Woolf 9) She also hopes to survive time in her offering to the world—bringing people together at parties by briefly obliterating the boundaries that create alienation among them. For an evening, she pulls together fragmented lives and creates communion.



Virginia Woolf's message about time should be heeded. Our rush to leave a dramatic mark in the world leads to further destruction. Tension abounds in our modern world as we create technology to increase our efficiency. Our civilization tends to see scientific and monumental achievements as the most valid measures of an individual's success. However, in the process, our communities disintegrate. More and more people complain of feeling alienated. The evidence surrounds us. The internal time that allows us to slow down and be involved with people finds itself dominated by external societal time. Some might find Clarissa Dalloway's gift to the world to be trivial. However, we need individuals with the ability to pull people together-people with the ability to create community where it no longer exists.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, one is given the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of a man who has gone mad because of the war. Though one can certainly see that Septimus has been driven mad by the violence and death of combat, many characters deny the very possibility of madness. Dr Holmes in particular thinks that Septimus is just "in a funk," (100) and that gaining some weight and distracting himself will be the perfect cure. Septimus' visions are also a source of anxiety for his wife, who feels like she has to hide him from the prying eyes of the public. She dreads what people must think of her husband for the way that he behaves. By presenting Septimus as she does, Woolf suggests that war can cause profound psychological effect – something society at her time was not prepared to accept because shell-shock didn't conform with right British behaviour. In Woolf's day, people were still trying to understand the psychological effects of World War I. Septimus has to reconcile what it means to be a man who suffers when he's back in proper, post-war society. In short, Woolf suggests that time exists in different forms. It exists in the external world, but also-and perhaps more importantly-in our internal world. Her description of the loud and rushing civilization suggests that we push ahead in the name of progress, without fully appreciating the moment. Through the character of

Clarissa, Woolf challenges the usual definition of success. Perhaps we need not leave some magnificent gift behind in the form of a building or a concrete art piece. Instead, maybe it is how we live our lives and our appreciation for the present that are truly more powerful and eternal. The small gifts we offer others, like bringing people together through a party, can touch people differently than a monument.

Virginia Woolf then portrays the conventional society of the beginning of the twentieth century, incorporating some peculiar aspects that create a certain ambiguity when it comes to the standards of that period. There can be two social scopes plainly differentiated: the public sphere and the private sphere. It is clear that majority of men belong to the public sphere, as all of them possess an active role within their society. Nevertheless, most of women belong to the private sphere, as they are the ones bound to take care of the household or some domestic issues such as sewing, teaching manners and taking care of their children. However, there are some characters, which have suffered a transformation and, as a consequence their role in their society has changed from active into passive or vice versa. . In conclusion, in the majority of circumstances the male supremacy prevails over the female, which refracts the real situations of the twentieth century.

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**Subversion of Multiculturalism in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**OCTOBER 2018**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **Subversion of Multiculturalism in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar The Clown*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

  
SARANYA J.

THOOTHUKUDI

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled, **Subversion of Multiculturalism in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*** submitted to St. Mary's college (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Saranya J. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie remains the world's most famous living novelist. Most of his works have been regarded as novels dominated by diasporic consciousness. He re-creates cultural crisis in his fiction. He views history, politics and identity of the Indian subcontinent through a migrant's consciousness. In *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie traces the roots of violence and the way its expression twists and ruins the world, using the hyper verbal style for which he has become known.

The project entitled **Subversion of Multiculturalism in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*** discusses the Concept of borderless world and its implications in order to bring unity in Kashmir with the collective consciousness of Salman Rushdie. It also examines the fall of Kashmir from the haven of tolerance and peace to a hotbed of extremism and fundamentalist violence through the smaller story of two people who grow up there, fall in love, and then are torn apart by circumstances that result in murder, bloodshed, and tragedy.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with a short biography of Ahmed Salman Rushdie with reference to the general characteristics of his works and his predominant place in the realm of British Indian Literature.

The second chapter **Subversion of Multiculturalism** analyses how Salman Rushdie attempts to destroy the cultural pluralism with the willing and unwilling subversion multiculturalism through love, betrayal, repentance and revenge by the portrayal of two aspects of the novel: the story of Shalimar, his wife Boonyi Kaul, and the American diplomat, Max Ophuls.

The third chapter **Kashmir as a Paradise** throws light on the glory of the incomparable paradise of Kashmir during the reign of the Mughal kings. Rushdie introduces Pachigam as an incomparable divine gift, culturally rich, hybrid and diverse, by pointing out the pre-colonial society that was almost always multi-ethnic with a great variety of cultural repertoires.

The fourth chapter **Kashmir as a Lost Eden** depicts the harsh reality of Kashmir by projecting how the politics of the sub-continent ripped apart the lives of the people of the paradise. He consciously elaborates the description of paradise in Pachigam so as to heighten the tragedy of the loss of it and the need for a possible resolution to the Kashmir problem.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie remains the world's most famous living British Indian novelist and essayist. He is regarded as the king of controversies. Most of his work has been regarded as a novel dominated by diasporic consciousness. He re-creates cultural crisis in his fiction. He views history, politics and identity of the Indian subcontinent through a migrant's consciousness which is reflected in his work. He believes that migration should go ahead with multiculturalism instead of being cut off from roots.

Salman Rushdie is one of the best-known contemporary writers in the Postmodern English Literary world. Postmodernism is a way of life, a way of feeling, and a state of mind. Postmodernism is a broad term used to describe movements in a wide range of disciplines including literature, architecture, visual arts, philosophy, sociology, fiction, design, cultural and literary criticism and music. The term postmodernism is notoriously ambiguous, implying either that modernism has been outdated or that it has continued into a new phase in the domain of literature and other arts.

According to Rushdie, the diasporic feeling continues when a person returns to his own country. Rushdie experiences that one feels alienated even in his homeland. He is not certain whether he will be accepted in his own country. Only in memories can one create an imaginary homeland. In fiction, villages and cities of his dream can be created, not in real life. Rushdie's worldview is connected to his own diasporic experience. He validates his position as a migrant writer by emphasizing the multiple heritages or multiple identities. The distance from the homeland makes him impartial. He represents India as well as the Indian subcontinent through his writings.



Rushdie was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1947. He was born into the broad-minded Muslim family of Anis Ahmed Rushdie and Negin Rushdie. He studied at Cathedral and John Connon English Mission School at Bombay. At the age of fourteen he went to Rugby School in England. He read History at King's College, Cambridge and received his Master's degree in History in 1968. After graduating, he lived with his family who had moved to Pakistan in 1964.

Rushdie is a cultural mediator. His writings integrate two worlds - British Indian. His writings moves from the Asian continent to the Middle East and London and New York. The experience of an exile and identity crisis are the major themes in his work. Rushdie is a novelist, essayist, travel writer and screen writer and is known for bold speeches. The writings of Rushdie interest the audience worldwide. He has established himself as a contemporary writer and as a migrant writer he has argued for a rightful place for diasporic writers.

Rushdie's first career was a copywriter. He worked for the two advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. His first novel, *Grimus* (1975), a part-science fiction tale, was generally ignored by the public and literary critics. Except *Grimus*, almost every novel is based substantially on political theme. Rushdie has been married four times. In 1976 he married Clarissa Laurd Zafer. While he was at Ogilvy, he wrote *Midnight's Children*. It is his second novel which threw him to literary notability. This novel is about the past in another sense throwing a nostalgic glance back to another country from which Rushdie has immigrated. This work won the 1981 Booker Prize and, in 1993 and 2008, was awarded the Best of the Bookers as the best novel to have received the prize during its first 25 and 40 years. *Midnight's Children* follows the life of a child, born at the stroke of midnight as India gained its independence, who is endowed with special powers and a connection to other children

born at the dawn of a new and tumultuous age in the history of the Indian sub-continent and the birth of the modern nation of India. The character of Saleem Sinai has been compared to Rushdie.

However, the author has refuted the idea of having written any of his characters as autobiographical stating, People assume that because certain things in the character are drawn from his own experience, it just becomes him. In that sense, he has never felt that he had written an autobiographical character.

Rushdie is a minute observer of Indian society, so almost all the major social and political incidents in India are bound to catch his attention to come down to his fictional imagination. Thus, much of his fiction is set on the Indian subcontinent. His style is often classified as magical realism with historical fiction and a dominant theme of his work is the story of many connections, disruptions and migrations between the Eastern and Western.

After *Midnight's Children*, In 1983 Rushdie wrote his third novel *Shame*, in which he depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan, basing his characters on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. *Shame* won France's Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger (Best Foreign Book) and was a close runner-up for the Booker Prize. Both these works of postcolonial literature are characterised by a style of magic realism and the immigrant outlook that Rushdie is very conscious of as a member of the Indian diaspora.

Rushdie fathered a boy child named Zafar in his first marriage, his son was born in 1980. In 1985 he was separated from Clarissa and married Marianne Wiggins an American writer in 1988. In the Following year, he published his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which was the centre of a major controversy, provoking protests from Muslims in several countries. Some of the protest was violent, in which death threats



were issued to Rushdie, including a fatwa against him by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran, on 14 February 1989. The title itself refers to a dispute Muslim tradition. This book was publicly burned and was banned in several countries including India. During their forced exile his second marriage broke up. He divorced her in 1993.

In September 1998 the Iranian government announced that the state is not going to put into effect the fatwa but Ayatollah Hassan Sanei announced a reward for killing the author. However, when the threat was lifted, Rushdie ended his hiding. In 1997 he again married Elizabeth West and had a son Milan. Salman Rushdie moved from London to New York in 1999. He holds the rank *commandeur de l'ordre des Arts et des Letters* of France in January 1999.

Rushdie left his third wife because he fell in love with the actress Padma Lakshmi. They married in 2004, but in June 2007, Rushdie divorced. In June 2007, he was appointed a knight bachelor by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to literature. He began a five-year term as distinguished writer in residence at Emory University in 2007. He was also elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In 2008 The Times ranked Rushdie thirteenth on their list of the fifty greatest British writers since 1945. The only son of Anis Ahmed Rushdie, a University of Cambridge educated lawyer turned businessman and Negin Bhatt, a teacher, Rushdie was born in Bombay, India, in to a Muslim family of Kashmiri descent. Rushdie wrote in his 2012 memoir that his father adopted the name Rushdie in honour of Averroes (Ibn Rushd).

Rushdie wrote a non-fiction book about Nicaragua in 1987 called *The Jaguar Smile*. This book has a political focus and is based on his first-hand experiences and



research at the scene of Sandinista political experiments. Rushdie has published many short stories, including those collected in *East, West* (1994).

*The Moor's Last Sigh*, a family epic ranging over some 100 years of India's history was published in 1995. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) presents an alternative history of modern rock music. The song of the same name by U2 is one of many song lyrics included in the book, hence Rushdie is credited as the lyricist. In his 2002 non-fiction collection *Step Across This Line*, he professes his admiration for the Italian writer Italo Calvino and the American writer Thomas Pynchon, among others. His early influences included James Joyce, Gunter Grass, Jorge Luis Borges, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Lewis Carroll. Rushdie was a personal friend of Angela Carter and praised her highly in the foreword for her collection *Burning your Boats*.

Rushdie had a string of commercially successful and critically acclaimed novels. His 2005 novel *Shalimar the Clown* received, in India, the prestigious Hutch Crossword Book Award, and was, in Britain, a finalist for the Whitbread Book Awards. It was shortlisted for the 2007 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

Salman Rushdie's novel *Shalimar the Clown* presents the story of the communalism of the disputed Indian province of Kashmir, since partition, through the experiences of a set of characters from the fictional village of Pachigam. The main characters of the novel include Maximilian Ophuls, Boonyi Kaul, Shalimar, the clown, Pandit Pyarelal Kaul, Pamposh Kaul, Abdullah Noman, Firdaus Noman, Kashmira, Colonel Kachhwaha and Maulana Bulbul Fakh.

Rushdie tends to make his characters local, symbolic equivalents for national and international dilemmas and tensions. Through them Rushdie tackles the subject of Kashmir and mirrors an earthly paradise lost to religious extremism and military brutality which has echoed around the world today.

The novel *Shalimar the Clown* is a novel of love, betrayal, revenge and the agonizing struggle over the contested Himalayan region of Kashmir. Rushdie voices the concept of a borderless world and its implications. He makes a clear account of the wasteful and despoiling struggle over the valley of Kashmir, combined with an impressionistic depiction of Islamist Jihadis terrorism. There is also a second plotline - a love story, a generational drama and tale of passion, adultery and revenge woven in with the larger story of Kashmir. It is a deeply personal novel that evokes the Kashmir that was the homeland of Rushdie's grandparents, Dr. Abdullah alias Babajan and Amir Unnissa Butt alias Ammaji, to whom the book is dedicated.

The novel is an ode to the simple, idyllic life of the valley, the land of Rushdie's roots, a land of eternal beauty and charm, that, "... was lost...like paradise, ...Kashmir, in a time before memory" (4). Portrayed as the ideal world with its unique way of life, it's Kashmiriyat, where differences and divisions were non-existent, a world untouched by hatred and communalism. Peace, love and brotherhood characterize the Kashmiri way of life. It is a life and world of innocence that is betrayed by its own people, and slowly walks down the path to destruction as embodied in the life of Shalimar, the protagonist and his village, Pachigam. Not only Shalimar, but also the other main characters of the novel are highly symbolical. Rushdie's works carry a deep imprint of the complex socio-cultural scene of India as well as his passionate involvement with the history and the politics of India which has induced many critics to consider him as an Indian writer in English. In *Shalimar the Clown* the postmodern perspectives have been identified.

Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* is a powerful love story which is intensely political as well as historical. Rushdie portrays the condition prevailing in post-Independent Kashmir and the multiple factors contributed to the growth of



terrorism in the region. The entire political history of Kashmir is provided as a backdrop to the story the author weaves. Rushdie depicts all the political conflict with the help of his central character.

In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie skillfully showed the contemporary history of the unrest in Kashmir and highlight the interconnection of the Kashmir. Rushdie has portrayed the recent tragic history of Kashmir with nostalgia and sensitivity in the novel. Both these historical narratives, the structure which emerges from Rushdie's signature stylistic excess is repetition and not of words merely and expressions and phrases but of stages in the plot.

Though the novel deals with the negative aspects prevailing in the political history of the nation, it also affirms the belief on the resilience and strength of the human spirit, a belief in future. The hope that all is not lost to Kashmir yet and that there is every chance of Kashmir restoring back to its lost splendor is the hope the author doesn't seem to have lost. The story represents a new life, a new beginning with the dissolution of divisions and segments.

Thus, in the novel *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie's critique of fundamentalism and his mourning for its casualties are most effective in the beautifully narrated sections on the transformation of Kashmir. When Rushdie depicts Kashmir's transformation from the diverse community that orients itself around Kashmiriyat to a ruin of wasted lives, he shows the readers the fragility of social bonds and culture in the face of willful ignorance and violence. The terror, the feeling of fury at the waste of life, and the dread that fill the sections on the destruction of Kashmiri society are depicted with a depth that evokes the same emotions in the reader.



His latest novel is *Luka and the Fire of Life*, published in November 2010. Earlier in the same year, he announced that he was writing his memoirs, entitled *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*, which was published in September 2012.

In 2012, Salman Rushdie became one of the first major authors to embrace Booktrack (a company that synchronises books with customised soundtracks) when he published his short story.

Rushdie has quietly mentored younger Indian writers, influenced an entire generation of Indo-Anglian writers, and is an influential writer in postcolonial literature in general. He has received many applauses for his writings, including the European Union's Aristeion Prize for Literature, the Premio Grinzane Cavour, and the Writer of the Year Award in Germany and many of literature's highest honours. Rushdie was the President of PEN American Center from 2004 to 2006 and founder of the PEN World Voices Festival.

He opposed the British government's introduction of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act, something he writes about in his contribution to *Free Expression Is No Offence*, a collection of essays by several writers, published by Penguin in November 2005. Rushdie is a self-described atheist, and a distinguished supporter of the British humanist association.

Rushdie says that he would have become an actor if his writing career had not been successful. Even from early childhood, he dreamed of appearing in Hollywood movies. Rushdie includes fictional television and movie characters in some of his writings. He had a cameo appearance in the film *Bridget Jones's Diary* based on the book of the same name, which itself is full of literary in-jokes. On 12 May 2006, Rushdie was a guest host on *The Charlie Rose Show*, where he interviewed Indo-Canadian film maker Deepa Mehta, whose 2005 film, *Water*, faced violent protests.

He appears in the role of Helen Hunt's obstetrician-gynecologist in the film adaptation (Hunt's directorial debut) of Elinor Lipman's novel, *Then She Found Me*. In September 2008, and again in March 2009, he appeared as a panelist on the HBO program "Real Time with Bill Maher".

Rushdie has collaborating on the screenplay for the cinematic adaptation of his novel *Midnight's Children* with director Deepa Mehta. The film is called *Midnight's Children*. Seema Biswas, Shabana Azmi, Nandita Das, and Irrfan Khan are confirmed as participating in the film.

Rushdie announced in June 2011 that he had written the first draft of a script for a new television series for the U.S cable network Show Time, a project on which he also serves as an executive producer. The new series, to be called *the next people*, is according to Rushdie, a sort of paranoid science-fiction series, people disappearing and being replaced by other people. The idea of a television series was suggested by his U.S agent said Rushdie, who felt that television would allow him more creative control than feature- films.

Rushdie is also a member of the advisory board of the Secular Coalition for America, an advocacy group representing the interests of atheistic and humanistic Americans in Washington, DC. In November 2010 he became a founding patron of Ralston College, a new liberal arts college that has adopted as its motto a Latin translation of a phrase ("free speech is life itself") from an address he gave at Columbia University in 1991 to mark the two hundredth anniversary of the first amendment to the US.Constitution.

Rushdie has reported that he still receives a sort of valentine's card from Iran each year on 14 February letting him know the country has not forgotten the vow to kill him. He said, it's reached the point where it's a piece of rhetoric rather than a real

threat. Rushdie came from a Muslim family though he is an atheist now. Since 2000, Rushdie has lived mostly near Union Square in New York City.



## Chapter Two

### Subversion of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a widely used term in the literary criticism of postcolonial literature. This term is also referred as cultural pluralism. Multiculturalism as a political philosophy involves ideologies and policies which vary widely, ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society, through policies of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity, to policies in which people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed by the authorities as defined by the group to which they belong. Subversion multiculturalism means an attempt to destroy the cultural pluralism. Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* is a powerful parable about the willing and unwilling subversion of multiculturalism.

As Salman Rushdie said in *Midnight's Children*, the Kashmir is still enjoying its golden days of peace and tolerance, but looming beyond the horizon is a violent future with army camps and soldiers. It took nearly a quarter of a century for Rushdie to return to Kashmir in full force, which he finally does in *Shalimar the Clown*. The novel portrays Kashmir's fall from a paradise of tolerance into a society defined by dividing lines. Although the focus of the novel is Kashmir, it opens outward to multiple past and present. Rushdie addresses the past to come to terms with social and political present of – not one nation – but the entire world. It is fair to argue that Rushdie chose this particular subject for this particular book at least partly because the issue of terrorism has made Kashmir more visible internationally.

*Shalimar the Clown*, his first novel seems to be Rushdie's response to the terrorist attacks, the war on terror, and the on-going Indo-Pakistani conflict in Kashmir. Hence, this novel reflects on the opaque, terror stricken present and tries to make it more intelligible. The main focus of the novel is to examine the historical



sedimentation in *Shalimar the clown*, its cultural universalism strangely reminiscent of the wasteland and the impact of Rushdie's work on the present. It seems that the novel's counter-hegemonic aesthetics and politics allow it to explore labyrinthine power politics. Despite its emancipatory plurality, the mixing of cultural codes is ambivalent at best, and defamiliarization, often associated with hybridity, can lose its effectiveness as a political gesture. Allegorical and ambiguous, fantastic and mythical, Rushdie's *Shalimar* sets out to allegorise neo-imperialist power plays but seems to be incapable of altering the present.

*Shalimar the clown* gives evident of Rushdie's cosmopolitanism and his international-historical consciousness, he also connects individual with collective consciousness. While, Kashmir turned into a territory riddled with army camps, camouflaged trucks, and soldiers lurking in the mountains. The transformation was brought on by the Kashmir conflict, a conflict which dates back to 1947, the year of Indian and Pakistani independence. Due to the partitioning of the subcontinent into two separate countries, the princely states in the British colony, including Kashmir, were allowed to choose which they wished to join. Geographically, Kashmir could have chosen either since it had land borders with both India and Pakistan. Population-wise, it was predominantly Muslim, but had a Hindu ruler. This ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, decided to play a waiting game in the hopes of creating an independent kingdom. This game was brought to an unexpected end when Pakistani troops began invading Kashmir. The Maharaja had to appeal to India for military help, and was forced to accede the state to India on 26 October, 1947. This and the consequent arrival of the Indian army in Kashmir led to the first Indo-Pakistani war. The cease-fire line, later named the Line of Control, was established on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, and has ever since been the de facto border between India and Pakistan in the region. The

two countries have subsequently fought three more wars, in 1965, 1971, and 1999, all of them involving Kashmir in one way or another.

The conflict remained unsolved for decades, but at the end of the 1980s, it started to heighten, leading to communal violence, protests, and general unrest, and finally to a full-scale insurgency. The reasons behind the insurgency were various. Globally, contemporary freedom movements in, for instance, Romania, the Philippines, Burma, and Nepal, as well as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, encouraged the people in Kashmir to try their own luck. Regionally, Kashmir had become a sensitive border state for India because of the wars it had fought with Pakistan. For fear of further conflict, India looked doubtfully at and tried to restrict any political opposition in the state. Consequently, democracy and state institutions were never allowed to work and corrupt electoral processes plagued the state-building process. Throughout the entire conflict, India had been transporting more troops into Kashmir to keep the state under its control.

After the terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center on 11 September, 2001, and the commencement of the US-led war on terror, South Asia, including Kashmir, has received more attention from the West than at any other time after the fall of the Soviet Union. The issue is relevant, after all, as Nadir points out, the South Asian region has the highest annual number of fatalities as a result of acts of terrorist violence in the world. The popularity of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the area has grown, partly due to India interfering in Kashmiri politics and preventing the dissident population from expressing their opposition and criticism in a democratic manner.

Pakistan's involvement is significant as well, since the country is known to act as a training base for Muslim fundamentalists and terrorist organisations. The war



on terror made Pakistan an important supporter for the United States, which in turn led Americans to take increasing interest in the ongoing conflicts in the area, Kashmir included. Thus, instead of focusing on the effects of British colonialism on the Indian subcontinent, a prominent theme in most of his other novels, in *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie turns his mind to the status of the United States as a world hegemon. Leaving the discussion of manifestations of the British Empire to a minimum, the novel does not concentrate on Kashmir alone. It also explores among other matters, the themes of multiculturalism and global terrorism in Asia and in the West, and even makes a deviation into World War II Strasbourg and the France of the French Resistance.

The novel revolves to a great deal around its four major characters, each of whom presents a different viewpoint into the novel's central issues. It explores the fall of Kashmir from a heaven of tolerance and peace to a hotbed of extremism and fundamentalist violence through the smaller story of two people who grow up there, fall in love, and then are torn apart by circumstances that result in murder, bloodshed, and tragedy. The centerpiece of *Shalimar the Clown* is a case of personal revenge, not programmatic terrorism, though Rushdie's point might be that terrorism has a personal face.

The non-linearity is encrusted in both the themes and the structure of history, incorporates history, act as a counter-history and offers an alternative reading of the historical. His heteroglossic novel includes not only dialogue of characters, but also dialogue of genres, of historical times, of the eastern and the western civilizations. It is easy to gauge that in *Shalimar*, Rushdie resorts to a pastiche of genres: - thriller, fantasy, echo-dun-it to negotiate with the terrorism in Kashmir, globalization. In doing so he blends heterogeneous traditions – both indigenous and western. The novel is characterized by the multiplicity and dispersion of events which characterize

Foucault's genealogical method in language, counter-memory, practice. Yet this is not to say that these genealogies have nothing to do with truth. The search of origins or roots is rejected and revealed to encourage hate. Rushdie emphasizes that such a search promotes hatred of others – hatred of those who don't share similar political, cultural, religious and economic origins. In *Shalimar*, the fascist hate Jews and the Muslim fundamentalist groups largely see the Hindu pandits as their enemies.

The rejection of origins demands experimentation with the traditional space-time structure. Interestingly, space rather than time becomes the determining factor for historical explanation – as Rushdie evokes the invasion of the Mughals, the Indo-Pak partition, 1965 riots, the Amritsar massacre, Jihad, amongst other events in his massive syncretic novel. Synchrony replaces diachrony, co-presence takes the place of the succession, and history is a time filled by the presence of now.

Consequently, Rushdie is able to connect Alsace with Kashmir; territories to which different countries lay claim (France and Germany, India and Pakistan). Different spaces marked by shifting frontiers, upheavals and dislocations, flights and return, conquests and reconquests coexist in the ambassador's\ director's imagination. Traditional chronology bound history disappears as Max's questions resonate in the text – 'could any two places have been more different... could any two places have been more same' (226). However, the simultaneous interest in Max Ophuls, the Jew, and Pyarelal, the Kashmiri pandit is not co-incidental. The two races have faced ethnic cleansing and forced exile. Rushdie is not simply interested in who the minority is, rather his interest lies in what exactly is done in minority's name.

Unsurprising then, Rushdie does away with the traditional history in favour of minority groups – like Hindu pandits, Jews and women. The narratorial voice, however, is not absent from the novel's structure, and this narrator often plays the role



of observer of facts. In the novel, the concern for Kashmiri pandits' oppression is voiced – not only by pandit pyarelal – but by Rushdie himself:

three hundred and fifty thousand pandits, almost the entire pandit population of Kashmir, fled from their homes and headed south to the refuge camps where they would rot, like bitter fallen apples, like the unloved, undead dead they had become (369).

In a world threatened with ethnic and religious strives – where various parties have invariably resorted to violence and force, to further their claims, pandit pyarelal – is perhaps exemplary of those – who have totally rejected violence as a means to fulfill socio-political aspiration.

Besides the concern for historiographies of minorities, the postmodern concern with the presence of the past also helps Rushdie juxtapose the stories of Shalimar and Max, Boonyi and Peggi across geographical borders and demands of linear time. Rushdie's syncretic jumble conveys the sense of history as a palimpsest through conventions culled from Bollywood and Hollywood; oral and written narratives; folk and classical traditions; mythology and soap operas. Moreover, Rushdie draws attention to the slipperiness of language and possibilities of miscommunication in the present: 'guttural, glottal sloppy', India speaks in a language or 'dream tongue' which men do not understand (1). However, Rushdie's polyphonic narrative cannot (and should not) be understood only within the parameters of Western epistemological systems such as postmodernism.

Then novel rewrites Indian epic stories using codes of modern thrillers, adventure stories, political satires, folk stories and slapstick comedies. For instance he recuperates an endangered Kashmiri theatrical tradition of the Bhand Pather. The Bhand Pather, in *Shalimar the Clown*, becomes representative of Kashmiriyat: Both



decline simultaneously the art, the watermark of syncretic and inter-communal habitation loses its appeal as Kashmir is struck by destruction. Rushdie deploys the 300 to 400 year old genre of Kashmiri folk to great effect. Clearly his forms of narrativization and language are not archetypally post-modernist. On the contrary he deploys remarkably non-western to great effect. His narrative is a derivative of the especially Indian form of non-mimetic narration, derived, finally, from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and exemplifies, in the Words of Raja Rao, the characteristically Indian penchant for obsessive, digressions and the telling of an interminable tale.

Still, Ramayana with its stable ethical and moral codes cannot suffice the demands of Rushdie's novelistic discourse. Shalimar in the age of moral relativism cannot be Ram, nor is Max an archetypal Ravana. Boonyi, like Sita, comes from 'bhoomi' or earth, but she lacks her 'moral strength' and 'dignity' (61). Rushdie, like Boonyi, gives the epic story "a different interpretation" (61). Rushdie states: "Sita had freely chosen to run off with her American Ravan and willingly became his mistress and bore him a child; and Ram-the Muslim clown, Shalimar, misplaying the part of Ram-fought no war to rescue her" (328). In a nutshell, the demon king cannot be Over-powered in contemporary panoptic on society. Hence, Rushdie Juxtaposes tradition with modernity and interweaves details of tradition into his otherwise modern rendering of the politico-religious mission. Rushdie uses a plethora of western and indigenous genres to introduce this very discontinuity, in order to grapple with history. In a Foucauldian manner, Rushdie systematically dismantles the traditional devise for constructing a comprehensive view of history and retracing the past, as a patient and continuous development. History becomes effective to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into each character's very being.

Rushdie's history interpreted in semi-autobiographical mode connects individual with collective consciousness. Rushdie creates the determinate system with a life in the form of his novel and as such communicates with the consciousness of the society, making his novel a statement of truth which compresses the collective memory of the in-group and at the same time builds upon it.

Rushdie seems to interrupt on the national consciousness of the people of India, the country in question in his novel. The use of individual perceptual details is brought forward by Rushdie using the skillful technique of chronological shift that successfully keeps the story and its culmination under wraps. Shalimar's story is one of the many tales of unwritten history of Kashmir. He does not forget his past. The novel also shows the increasing alienation among the two communities, the rise of Iron Mullahs and accidental killings by army officer Kachwala and his men who decide to teach a lesson to the locals. What follow are the disciplinary measures by the army, the destruction of the statues of Hindu gods and the dislocation of the lives of the pundits. Pyarelal, the father of Boonyi remarks to his daughter "We are no longer protagonists but agonists" (295). Rushdie seeks the ways of the persecution of the pundits, the negligence of the welfare of the refugees, the unhygienic conditions in the slum camps, the diseases of the camp inmates and death in life of the people in spite of the presence of the army. The increasing distrust by the army leads to disasters. The novelist seeks to know the wrong doers of arson, shootings, maiming, arrests, missing, demolition of homes and the elimination of the young and the old, boys and girls, burning of libraries, whippings, rapes of the living and the dead women. Kashmiri women face the combined fury of the patriarchal practices of all men surrounding them, whether militants or security forces, of their own families, or indeed the state.



The main action of *Shalimar the Clown* involves a love triangle and an extended pursuit of personal revenge by one of its aggrieved parties. Max Ophuls, married U.S. ambassador to India, falls in love with Boonyi Kaul Noman, a beautiful Kashmiri dancer who also is married. With the help of an immoral embassy assistant, Max seduces Boonyi to New Delhi. There she hopes to advance her career, but Max makes her mistress, enjoys her for a while, and then leaves her pregnant. Max's wife, Peggy, annoyed by his habitual womanizing, leaves him but adopts Boonyi's baby, Kashmira, whom Peggy renames India. Boonyi returns in disgrace to her Kashmiri village, Pachigam, where she is declared one of the living dead, and spends the rest of her life alone in an abandoned mountain hut. Meanwhile, Boonyi's husband, Noman Sher Noman, also known as Shalimar the Clown, vows deadly revenge against Max, Boonyi, and the baby. Taking an indirect route through several terrorist organizations, he spends years training, killing professionally, and whetting his knife for the upcoming big events.

The book is divided into five parts, which are told through the eyes of the five main characters that we encounter. The first section, set in present-day Los Angeles, revolves around the life of India Ophuls, a beautiful documentary maker and the daughter of Max Ophuls, a former American ambassador to India and later the US counterterrorism chief. India's glamorous and sophisticated life consists of her work, of maintaining her appearance, and of trying to decide between varieties of imperfect suitors. Suddenly, this life is turned upside down when her father is assassinated by his former chauffeur, a Kashmiri man who calls himself Shalimar the Clown. Several flashbacks take the readers to the past, and one learns that Shalimar was once full of affection, love and laughter.



The second part of the novel takes us back in time to 1960s Kashmir, to a fictional village named Pachigam. Drawing on his own childhood memories, Rushdie present this town as an idyllic retreat from the creeping chaos that followed the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. In the middle of a glorious natural paradise, the town is a peaceful mix of Hindus and Muslims, a way of life the novel explores through the village's ancient myths and legends. The community is so close-knit that when a Hindu girl named Boonyi Kaul and a Muslim boy - Shalimar, still a sweet romantic at this point - fall in love, the village elders unanimously agree that they should marry.

Everything seems fine for Shalimar and Boonyi for a while, but the seeds of trouble are there from the very beginning. For one thing, it's probably not a great idea for two fourteen-year-olds to make such a commitment. The night of their wedding, Shalimar playfully tells his new wife that if she ever leaves him, he will track her down and kill her and any children she may have that are not his. Boonyi brushes this off, though she soon realizes that she wants more than a village life with a man who performs a tightrope act (this is why Shalimar is called the Clown). She gets her opportunity when Max, now the ambassador, travels through Kashmir and stops at the village where he sees Boonyi dancing. The two embark on an affair, and Max gets Boonyi an apartment in Delhi, where she lives until she has his child, a girl she names Kashmira. The illegitimate birth causes a scandal, and Max is recalled to the U.S. His cold and proper wife renames the baby India and takes her with them.

In the novel's third section, we learn about Max who Born in the French city of Strasbourg to a Jewish family, Max ends up joining the French resistance during World War II after his parents are killed in a concentration camp. He is brave and develops a skill set as a spy that will eventually make him an excellent diplomat.



After the war, he marries an aristocratic British woman, and together they move to the United States, where Max quickly rises through the ranks until he is appointed as an ambassador.

The next section brings us back to Pachigam, but now we are in the angry, brutal mind of Shalimar. Ever since Boonyi left him, his fury and resentment have built up to such a degree that whatever love, kindness, and fellow feeling he has ever had has been replaced with the murderous intent to kill everyone who has stood in the way of his happiness. Boonyi, forced to return to the village after losing her child, has been officially declared dead for breaking the marriage vow. It is clear that Shalimar will kill her, but is waiting because he has promised her father and his own to only do it after they are both dead.

Obsessed with raining down blood vengeance on those whom he thinks have wronged him, Shalimar goes for training to various jihadist and extremist groups; militant fundamentalists were more than happy to teach him how to kill. Assassination is now the only way he can feel pleasure - on his first assignment, he sets up to use a knife rather than a gun because he wants to feel first - hand what it is like to take someone else's life. It turns out that Shalimar is an excellent assassin, helped along by his tightrope skills, and by the fact that he is only a hollow shell of a real human being. This section of the novel is particularly difficult, as Rushdie meticulously details the real-life atrocities committed in Kashmir by fundamentalist groups.

In the book's last section, Shalimar has continued his training with insurgents in Afghanistan and then the Philippines. He now finally considers himself ready to go to the U.S. to install himself as Max's driver as part of a long-range plan for revenge. After killing Max Shalimar, he escapes the authorities. The novel ends on an

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unresolved cliffhanger, with Shalimar making his way to India's home, intent on fulfilling his promise to Boonyi that he would kill any children she had by another man. The author leaves the reader to imagine the ending and concludes it based on his point view of happening.

Even though the book has a political message about the destruction of Kashmir and about how little it takes to destroy relations between various groups, when tragedy and disaster strikes, Rushdie still manages to keep the story well-paced and the sections discussion more political issues, feel integrated in the novel. There are some elements of magical realism in the story and they work to emphasize the rest of the story, as well as how the people of Kashmir think and see the world. It also investigating terrorism and how peaceful tolerant countries can suddenly be caught up in violence and conflict, it's an attempt to understand what makes people become terrorists and how sometimes, it only takes a small incitement or a personal crisis to turn people. And how people react when they are suddenly told how to dress and act and the length people are willing to go to make other people act as they see fit. Rushdie also looks at how the decisions on nation level influence the ordinary people and the role of the military.

Rushdie however explores the possible resolutions to the Kashmir problem by bringing in another interested party to give a vital impetus to the process of restoration of harmony. But he fails to unite. His novels have insinuation, not only for the happiness of individuals, but also for the stability and harmony of the state.



### Chapter Three

#### Kashmir as a Paradise

The word 'paradise' comes from the old Persian word 'paradeida', meaning 'enclosed garden', tells Ganapathy-Dore (31). This is precisely what Kashmir in *Shalimar the clown* is before India and Pakistan start to fight over it, shalimar is an enclosed garden. *Shalimar the Clown* derives its name from Shalimar Gardens, one of the several Mughal Gardens in the localities of Srinagar, which was laid out in several parts of undivided India when the Mughals reigned over the subcontinent. Rushdie introduces Pachigam as an incomparable divine gift, culturally rich, hybrid and diverse, there by point out that pre-colonial society was almost always multi-ethnic and included a great variety of cultural repertoires.

In the pacific past, the meadows and slopes of Kashmir did feel like paradise, at least to the rest India - if only because it had snow. It's what happens in Kashmir: people from the rest of India arrive, and there's this mucky snow at the airport. They get excited and pick it up as if it's this magic substance. Crucially, *Shalimar the Clown* depicts the valley in happier times, not as a trouble-free bed of roses but a place where open-hearted Muslim and open-hearted Hindu could live with and even enjoy their differences, with their separate identities as descriptions not divisions.

*Shalimar the Clown* may be one of Rushdie's most carnivalesque of titles, but it is his least carnivalesque novel. True, it features a village full of circus performers, and true, it uses the naming and renaming of characters to emphasis the liminality of identity (though more often than not, people fail to remake themselves by the names they select, and discover that names are made for them by circumstance). The novel also features its share of magic-realist whimsies: the man who can hear colours, the

preacher who is made of iron, the giant marmot-like treasure-hunting ants, and (yet again) the telepaths who can read each other's minds.

In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie builds the myth of a golden age of inter-religious and inter-racial harmony. This might be seen in the 16<sup>th</sup> century during Mughal Empire. The golden age is seen in the village of Pachigam and Shirmal. Pachigam is on the river Muskadoon which means "refreshing" in Kashmir (46). Even though both the villages have religious and cultural differences they lived in harmony like a family with love and peace.

The Kashmiri's in *Shalimar the Clown* also have their myths and their histories, of which the following tale is a prime example: In the middle of the fifteenth century the Sultan Zuin-ul-abidin succumbed to a deadly Disease, viz. a poisonous Boil on the Chest, and would certainly have died, had it not been for the intervention of a scholarly Doctor, a Pandit whose Name was Shri Butt or Bhat. After Dr. Butt or Bhat had cured the King of his illness, Zain-ul-abidin told him he should ask for a very precious Gift, for had he not given the King himself renewed Life, the most precious of all Gifts, he need nothing for himself, Dr. Butt or Bhat replied, but sir, under the Kings who came before you my Brothers were persecuted without end, and they are in need of a Gift at least as valuable as Life. The King agreed to cease the Persecution of the Kashmiri Pundits at once. In addition, he made it his Business to see to tilt Rehabilitation of their devastated and scattered Families, and allowed them to preach and practice their Religion without any Hindrance. He rebuilt their Temples, reopened their Schools, and abolished the Tares that burdened them, repaired their Libraries and ceased to murder their Cows. Where upon a Golden Age begun.

The village of Pachigam, initially exist in a safe bubble, to a large extent cut off from the outside world. The Kashmir in *Shalimar the clown* is initially a Utopian



place, an ideal, a paradise that perhaps never was but should have been. Initially the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent into two separate nations had not yet taken place. India and Pakistan had not yet gained their independence. There was only Kashmir, where Muslims and Hindus as well as people of other religions lived happily and peacefully side by side, a place well-known for its tolerance and mixing of traditions. This is seemingly the case at the beginning of the tale of Kashmir in *Shalimar the Clown*.

Kashmiri people in the novel *Shalimar the clown* seem to place their shared identity as Kashmiris higher than their different belief systems, adopting a flexible and boundary-blurring attitude. Kashmir becomes an idealized place, and valued not so much for its beauty or its cultural uniformity but rather for the manner in which it symbolizes how ethnically diverse societies can create a legacy of tolerance and civilization.

Rushdie celebrates cultural syncretism through presenting Pachigam as land of eternal beauty and charm where peace, love and brotherhood characterize the Kashmiri way of life. In Pachigam, Muslims and Hindus live in a peaceful coexistence because

the words Hindu and Muslim had no place in their story...In the valley these words were merely descriptions, not divisions. The frontiers between the words, their hard edges, had grown smudged and blurred. This was how things had to be. This was Kashmir (57).

By presenting Kashmir as the ideal world with its unique way of life where differences and divisions are non-existent, Rushdie highlights and explores a vernacular form of cosmopolitanism. This local form of cosmopolitanism draws on the ideal of Kashmiriyat, the ethos or the values of Pachigam which serve as the basis



for a vernacular cosmopolitanism. Drawing on the ideal of Kashmiriyat, Rushdie tends to erase or diminish the threatening aspects of religious and class differences.

It is Rushdie's conceit that Kashmir, prior to the political dramas that have transformed it in the twentieth century, was a haven, a paradise of peaceable village traditions, and multi-cultural, multi-faith tolerance. Rushdie demonstrates this by introducing the Shalimar-Boonyi plot with a potential tragedy. Shalimar is a Muslim, Boonyi a Hindu, and they consort in secret because they fear repercussions. As Shalimar's father Abdullah Noman, himself a Muslim, ponders,

the pandits of Kashmir, unlike Brahmins anywhere else in India, happily ate meat. Kashmiri Muslims, perhaps envying the pandits their choice of Gods, blurred their faith's rigid monotheism by worshipping at the shrines of the Valley's many local saints, its pirs. To be a Kashmiri, to have received so incomparable a divine gift, was to value what was shared far more than what divided (83).

The Kashmir of *Shalimar the Clown* is initially an unparalleled paradise on earth, where the following scenario, related by Boonyi's father Pyarelal Kaul, himself a Hindu, is in all its unlikelihood entirely possible:

Today our Muslim village, in the service of our Hindu maharaja will cook and act in a Mughal - that is to say Muslim - garden, to celebrate the anniversary of the day on which Ram marched against Ravan to rescue Sitar. What is more, and two plays are to be performed: our traditional *Ram Leela*, and also *Budshah*, the tale of a Muslim sultan. Who tonight are the Hindus? Who are the Muslims? Here in Kashmir, our stories sit happily side by side on the same double bill, we eat from the same dishes, we laugh at the same jokes. We will joyfully celebrate the reign of the good king Zain-ul-abidin. and as for our

Muslim brothers and sisters, no problem! They all like to see Sita rescued from the demon-king, and besides, there will be fireworks (71).

Kashmiriyat / Kashmiriness, believes that at the heart of Kashmiri culture there was a common bond that transcended all other differences. In the novel *Pachigam* is the village home of the two of the novel's main characters Shalimar and Boonyi.

Shalimar and Boonyi, symbolically stand for the entire Kashmir and represent the heart of Kashmiriyat. Shalimar Noman is "called the pandit sweetie uncle, though they were not connected by blood" (47). In this place, no meta-narrative is allowed to gain a dominant position. It is a village of performing artists and cooks, both of whom happily cross religious and cultural boundaries: a place where a Muslim actor can play a Hindu God and where Hindu cooking can be introduced into the Muslim cuisine and vice versa. In all its peacefulness and tolerant coexistence it truly seems a paradise on earth. In Pitkin's words, it is possible to see this fictional pre-partition Kashmir.

as a model for the ordinary yet remarkable capacities of human societies to include and accommodate many historical strands and varieties of people and to handle conflicts (mostly) without violence (259).

Traditionally, Kashmir has been a relatively tolerant region as regards religious differences. Muslim craftsmen have always been involved in the preparations of Hindu festivals, while the local Pirs, the Sufi holy men of Kashmiri Islam, are revered by both communities as saints. The above-mentioned incomparable divine gift of being a Kashmiri could refer to what Brennan calls the evocation of deep, sacred origins which becomes a contemporary, practical means of creating a people. In *Shalimar the Clown*, it also shows it to be a created paradise, not a god-given gift but an outcome of social and cultural processes. This seems to be in line



with Homi K Bhabha when he states, echoing Anderson's famous formulation of imagined communities, that "nations, like narratives, love their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (1).

According to Homi K. Bhabha, the nation is:

... a contested cultural territory where people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as the continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process. (297)

Simply put, the existence of the nation, or by extension any such entity, is taught to its people as historical fact, which the people then perform in their daily lives, thus validating the teachings by action. However, what is also important in the forming of a nation or a community is forgetting. Since national unity is very often affected by brute force, it is imperative for the survival of the nation that its nationals forget that which could set them apart.

When the Kashmiris read this story, they choose to concentrate on the good Muslim king and his deeds of tolerance and cross-cultural goodwill towards the Hindus of Kashmir. What they choose to forget is the previous kings' persecution of the same Hindus. Following the above quote of Homi K. Bhabha, this tale and others like it construct Kashmir as a community of tolerance and peaceful coexistence of different religions. These principles, set firmly in the state's remembered history, are validated when the Kashmiris realise them in their daily life.



The two Kashmiri protagonists of *Shalimar the clown*, Shalimar Noman himself and Boonyi Kaul, are born at the moment of Partition, and so come to act as mirrors of a post-Independence Kashmir. Shalimar and Boonyi's love blooms in the beautiful and perfect surroundings of the Kashmir valley hidden from the eyes of their elders.

Love and hate were shadow planets too, noncorporeal but out there, pulling at his heart and soul. He was fourteen years old and had fallen in love for the first time in the village of pachigam where the travelling players lived. It was his time of glory (46).

Rushdie invokes the ideal of Kashmiriyat in his portrait of the village of pachigam and particularly in his description of the romance between Shalimar the Clown and Boonyi. Though Shalimar the Clown is Muslim and Boonyi is Hindu, their marriage is welcomed by the villagers and they are married in the name of Kashmiriyat. When people find out, they uphold the values of Kashmiriyat and bless the young.

As the father of Shalimar says:

"So we have not only Kashmiriness to protect but Pachigaminess as well. We are all brothers and sisters here". "There is no Hindu-Muslim issue. Two Kashmiri – two Pachigami – youngsters wish to marry, that's all. A love match is acceptable to both families and so a marriage there will be; both Hindu and Muslim customs will be observed". (110)

"To defend their love is to defend what is finest in ourselves" said Pyarelal (110). The crowd cheered and and Shalimar the Clown broke out into a broad smile of disbelieving love. Their marriage, then, represents the triumph of Kashmiriyat and constitutes a national romance that bridges ethnic and religious differences. Kashmir

is depicted in this joint image as secular, anti-communal and syncretic. While the marriage of the young lovers shows how strong the spirit of Kashmiriyat is, the culture of the village shows how much actualized it is. Rushdie portrays theatre, dance and cuisine as prominent features of traditional Kashmiri culture.

The Muslim - Hindu unity and harmony in the village is glorified as an ideal state of Kashmiriyat, a regional spirit of communal harmony and cultural syncretism. Boonyi and Shalimar's marriage represents what Rushdie sees as the finest quality of Kashmir. Abdullah Noman speaks of this Kashmiriyat in the following words: "Abdullah then mentioned Kashmiriyat, Kashmiriness, the belief that at the heart of Kashmir culture there was a common bond that transcended all differences". (180)

The names of principal characters, Shalimar and Boonyi are symbols of Kashmir. Both of them changes their original names and takes idealized names. He names himself Shalimar, the majestic garden in Kashmir. The name is also a symbol of his love for Boonyi as he chose it because she was born in that garden. Boonyi, referring to the Chinar trees of Kashmir, changed to this name from her real name Bhoomi. She detested the name due to its association with mud, dirt and stone. Boonyi attempts to make herself beautiful and majestic by naming herself after a tree that has these qualities. One of Boonyi's greatest desires is to achieve the grandeur her name suggests by moving out of Pachigam and becoming a famous dancer. This allegorization of herself excuses her of the unethical actions she uses to reach her goals. Her name signifies that she is fated to have a majestic existence, which justifies using any means necessary to achieve this fated goal.

Rushdie appeals the idyllic of Kashmiriyat in his representation of the village of Pachigam and also particularly in his description of the romance between Shalimar the Clown and Boonyi. And also by signifying their marriage he brings out the



paradise of Kashmir. Thus Rushdie by employing some of the features of magic realism in *Shalimar the Clown* depicts the Kashmir which was once symbolized Paradise in particular.

It's an unusual thing to believe. It is simply a very strange combination of unique combination of intense physical beauty with a culture that grew up there of enormous tolerance and harmony. The physical beauty, of course, is still there-the gigantic Himalayas, the lushness of the valley, the lakes, the streams, the saffron meadows, the honeybees-that's all still there. The human beauty of Kashmir which was derived from this culture of tolerance that grew up between the various communities, Hindu and Muslim and Sikh, that, of course, has been colossally damaged by the history of the last half century as India and Pakistan have trampled over it.

Rushdie has always been an adamant supporter of Kashmiri self-rule and expresses his delight in the first part of the novel. He consciously elaborated the description of paradise in Pachigam so as to heighten the tragedy of the loss of it. Although Rushdie does not consider himself part of the Muslim community, *Shalimar the Clown* pays a warmly eloquent tribute to the tolerant, eclectic Islam of Kashmir, the land and the faith of his grandparents. They came from that poisoned Eden of snow-shrouded summits and flower-filled orchards, where veil-free Muslims worshipped saints (a virtual polytheism that shocked incoming jihadis) and Hindu Brahmins eagerly scoffed meat (and lots of it).

As a child in Bombay, Rushdie adored his Kashmiri grandfather, who was a devout Muslim. He had performed the Haj to Mecca. He said his prayers five times a day every day of his life. He was very close to him and he was for me a kind of model of tolerance and open-mindedness and civil discourse - even to such a wrangling.



irreverent kid. His relationship to him was one in which everything was up for discussion, from the existence of God downwards. And that Muslim culture, of which he was a product and a very fine example, is the Muslim culture he grew up in.

## Chapter Four

### Kashmir as a Lost Eden

*Shalimar the Clown* is about how Kashmir has become corrupt through American Neocolonialism. Rushdie uses allegory to establish Kashmir as a Lost Eden. It is so because Kashmir has lost its glory because of the external influences. By incorporating the views and opinions, aims and aspirations of ordinary Kashmiries, Rushdie interrogates the official description of history that justifies Indian control over Kashmir and exposes the myth of dogmatism and national reliability that are used as a discussion to suppress all the rebellious elements with force. By accommodating the confined point of view and by asking some suitable questions, Rushdie's adaptation of Kashmir story has been able to subvert the prevailing discourse on Kashmir.

The fall of Kashmir is narrated from the haven of tolerance and peace to a hotbed of extremism and fundamentalist violence through the smaller story of two people who grow up there, fall in love, and then are torn apart by circumstances that result in murder, bloodshed, and tragedy. Rushdie traces the roots of violence and the way its expression twists and ruins our world using the hyper verbal style for which he has become known, the magical realism which enabled him to make mythical and historical connections that would otherwise remain hidden.

There are two aspects to this novel, the portrayal of Kashmir, and the story of Shalimar, his wife Boonyi Kaul, and the American diplomat, Max Ophuls. The story, which is essentially a tale of love, betrayal, repentance and revenge, is not dependent on its Kashmiri setting. This is where the strength of the novel resides. This portrayal is what hits the Indian reader hard, so that one emerges from it as from a holocaust.



There is at first an idyllic picture of the unravaged Kashmir, seen in microcosm in the neighbouring villages of Pachigam and Shirmal, where Kashmiriyat (Kashmiri-ness) blooms undisturbed. One could read about the famed Kashmiri feast, the wazwan, in which the villagers are expert cooks, so that their fame has reached the Raja's palace. There is also the entertainment troupe, in which the anti-hero of the novel, Shalimar Noman, is an acrobat and clown. The women of the village scorn the burqa. There is no Hindu-Muslim divide, so much so that Shalimar marries the Pandit school teacher's daughter with the blessings of the elders.

Then came the partition of the country, the Pakistani raiders, Islamic militants, and the Indian army. The army is the most villainous of them all; it uses rape as a weapon to demoralise the population, and justifies all manner of atrocities in legalese. However, there is no sympathy for the militants either, who force Kashmiri women into burqa, segregate the villagers by religion, and thrust a joyless and hate-filled version of Islam on the local Muslims. The tragedy of its Muslims, of its Pandits, and of Kashmiriyat itself, are heart breakingly and unflinchingly told. We also get glimpses into the camps of international Islamic terrorism.

The title *Shalimar the Clown* refers to one of the character in the story named Shalimar who performs tight rope for the amusement of the others. The title of the novel also has a double meaning, the clown is both the man, Shalimar, who turns to political violence from motives of personal revenge but also the author displaying his virtuoso skills, balancing regional commentary with global violence. Rushdie tends to play the acrobat-clown walking the tightrope between satiric fables, ridiculating the puritanic decree of drab uniformity. Several recollections take the readers to the past, and one learns that Shalimar was once full of affection, love and laughter.



As one could see, Shalimar Noman marries Boonyi Kaul, the school teacher's beautiful and sexually precocious daughter. Then a philandering American diplomat falls in love with Boonyi upon seeing her dance. The author takes trouble to show that this is not philandering, this is love. Boonyi, who has not fallen in love with him, nevertheless goes away with him to Delhi and (cunningly, despite his precautions) has a daughter by him.

The appointment of Maximilian as American ambassador to India eventually leads to his unspecified role in relation to American counter-terrorism. Shalimar receives training from rebellious groups in Afghanistan and the Philippines, and leaves for the USA. The diplomat's wife, childless thus far, takes the daughter named India, renamed her as Kashmira away and the child is brought up in England and USA with only a vague knowledge of her Kashmiri origins. Shalimar vows vengeance and extracts it after thirty years by killing the diplomat in New York on the daughter's doorstep. Before that, he has also beheaded his adulterous wife who returned repentant, hoping to reclaim his love.

Salman Rushdie with the help of this love story tells a bigger story by employing magic realism on the history of Kashmir since partition. He portrays how Kashmir was once a paradise and how the politics of the sub-continent ripped apart the lives of the people of the paradise with the help of his moving characters. The book is divided into several parts, which are told through the eyes of the five main characters. The first section, set in the present-day Los Angeles, revolves around the life of India Ophuls, daughter of Max Ophuls, a former American ambassador to India and later the US counter terrorism chief. Unexpectedly her life turns upside down when her father is assassinated by his former chauffeur, a Kashmiri man who calls himself Shalimar, the Clown.

Then the novel moves to Max symbolizing the increasing influence of alien presence on the Kashmiri landscape, corroding and degrading the values of the valley, the Kashmiriyat. This influence can be seen in the radical preachings of Bulbul Fakhri, the iron mullah and in the arrival of Maximilian Ophuls on the scene, the representative of American interest. He is European-born, Jewish-American Ambassador to Kashmir who in his younger days fought in the resistance against the Nazis during World War II and ends up joining the French resistance after his parents were killed in a concentration camp. He later has become a secret delegate for American interests around the globe. He is brave and develops a skill to act as a spy that eventually makes him an excellent diplomat. After the war, he marries an aristocratic British woman, and together they move to the United States, where Max quickly rises through the ranks until he is appointed as an ambassador. His involvement in Kashmir is registered through his impact upon the lives of Boonyi, whom he seduces, impregnates and abandons.

Ophuls' seduction of Boonyi, and their subsequent relationship during which he surpluses her with goods before abandoning her out of hand when he loses interest in her, can clearly be read as an allegory of America's relationship "the back yards of the world"(2). America's power seduces, its affections imprison, its commodities corrupt, and it abandons once it has taken what it wants. Boonyi is thus a product of America's love for the world, and when she speaks, she speaks in the voice of Kashmir. She tells Ophuls:

I am your handiwork made flesh. You took beauty and created hideousness, and out of this monstrosity your child will be born. Look at me. I am the meaning of your deeds. I am the meaning of your so-called love, your destructive, selfish, wanton love. Look at me. Your love looks just like hatred.



... I was honest and you turned me into your lie. This is not me. This is not me. This is you. (205)

Boonyi's desire to excel herself was a fantasy but she lived in the shadow of the glamour and glitter of elite society. Boonyi a simple native village girl with big dreams in her eyes that was terribly misdirected. The path she took for herself, sooner or later had to lead only to one destination, and that was imminent disaster for its traveler. Boonyi desires freedom from a middle class orthodoxy, but she discovers that the free world she had tried to build for herself was not free from the filth of betrayal. Her disastrous flirtation with desire led to an avalanche of catastrophe not only in her life but also in the lives of the people related to her. She loses her Kashmiriyat and flips down the path of complete psychotic degeneration, waiting alone in the wilderness for death to truly free her. Freedom was what Boonyi desired, "But free isn't free of charge" (253).

Boonyi who symbolises Kashmir, we find the eagerness for liberation, lured by which she, loses herself courting destruction. The freedom that Boonyi chooses for herself is false freedom, an illusion, a bait to tempt her to sin, which she, like Eve, is easily tempted and eagerly accepts the Ambassador's offer of a change.

Boonyi stands out as the most tragic figure and she clearly represents Kashmir in its beautiful and then tragic aspect. She is not only abandoned by her appealing American suitor as well as her own people. Kashmir becomes a subject as a result of "a three way power struggle between U.S interests, the Indian army and Islamic insurgents from Pakistan"(234). Peaceful moment of a grace in village is short lived. Rushdie made an attempt writing current history of Kashmir in the form of an intricate comic allegory. The Eden lost in the world in the novel is Kashmir.



The next section goes back to Pachigam, but to the angry, heartless mind of Shalimar. Ever since Boonyi left him, his rage and resentment are built up to such a degree that whatever love, kindness, and fellow feeling he has ever had has been replaced with the murderous intent to kill everyone who has stood in the way of his happiness. When Boonyi was forced to return to the village after losing her child, she has been brought officially declared dead for breaking the marriage vow with Shalimar and again Shalimar will kill her, as promised.

Obsessed with vengeance on those whom he thinks have wronged him, Shalimar goes for training to various Jihadists and extremist groups. This section of the novel is particularly painful, as Rushdie meticulously details the real-life atrocities committed in Kashmir by fundamentalist groups.

In the last section, Rushdie narrates how Shalimar has continued his training with insurgents in Afghanistan and then in Philippines. He finally considers himself ready to go to U.S. to install himself as Max's driver as part of a long-range plan for revenge. After killing Max, Shalimar escapes the authorities. The novel ends on an unresolved cliffhanger, with Shalimar making his way to India's home, intent on fulfilling his promise to Boonyi that he would kill any children she had by another man.

Rushdie here makes a very relatable point that Kashmir's problems stem not from inherent Hindu-Muslim opposition, but from a Hindu-Muslim opposition that has been brought into being by political processes and historical forces. Though this point is well made, however, the implication that Kashmir, before the 1940s, was a paradisiacal zone of tolerance and harmony, in which the only conflicts result from disputes over cooking pots.

The first foreshadowing comes in the guise of the pot war, a quarrel between Pachigam and the neighbouring village of Shirmal.

The pot war horrified everyone in Pachigam even though they had come out on the winning side. They had always thought of their neighbors the Shirmal villagers as being more than a little weird, but nobody had imagined that so outrageous a breach of the peace was possible, that Kashmiris would attack other Kashmiris driven by such crummy motivations as envy, malice and greed(198).

As the local prophetess Nazarebaddoor predicted, this incident was to be the pebble that started the avalanche. Interestingly, the first sign of division in Kashmiriyat presented in *Shalimar the Clown* is caused by the crossing of a traditional boundary, the creation of a village that is hybrid not only in its cultural and religious but also in its occupational makeup. Furthermore, the roots of this conflict can be found in the Kashmiris' economic aspirations rather than in cultural difference.

The Kashmir of *Shalimar* plays a familiar iconic role in Rushdie's imaginative universe. The problems in Kashmir, however, seem too present, too rooted in a long history of oppositions, for readers to suspend disbelief sufficiently in the interests of the broader symbolic scheme.

Rushdie conveys his sense of disgrace at the systematic slaughter carried out in Pachigam by both Islamic insurgents and the Indian army. This outrage reaches a climax twice in the novel, and on both occasions the narrator is left unable to do anything more than ask questions. On the first occasion – after a week-long orgy of unprovoked violence against Kashmiri Hindus during which the Indian army stood by because it helped simplify the situation – the question is why:



There were six hundred thousand Indian troops in Kashmir but the pogrom of the pandits was not prevented, why was that? Three and a half lakhs of human beings arrived in Jammu as displaced persons and for many months the government did not provide shelters or relief or even register their names, why was that? When the government finally built camps it only allowed for six thousand families to remain in the state, dispersing others around the country where they would be invisible and impotent, why was that? ... There was one bathroom per three hundred persons in many camps why was that ... and the pandits of Kashmir were left to rot in their slum camps, to rot while the army and the insurgency fought over the bloodied and broken valley, to dream of return, to die while dreaming of return, to die after the dream of return died so that they could not even die dreaming of it, why was that why was that why was that why was that why was that (296-97).

On the second occasion – after the Indian army takes revenge on the village of Pachigam for managing to hold out against them for so long – the question is who:

Who made those men disappear? Who shot those boys? Who shot those girls? Who smashed that house? Who smashed *that* house? Who smashed *that* house? ... Who killed the children? Who whipped the parents? Who raped that lazy-eyed woman? Who raped that grey-haired lazy-eyed woman as she screamed about snake vengeance? Who raped that woman again? Who raped that woman again? Who raped that woman again? Who raped that dead woman? Who raped that dead woman again? (308).

Due to all these terrible atrocities Pachigam ceases to exist. Charged with harboring extremists, the village bears the full brunt of the atrocities of the armed forces. Everyone is killed, people and life is totally obliterated from the place where



love had once bloomed and blossomed. "The village of Pachigam still existed on maps of Kashmir, but that day it ceased to exist anywhere else, except in memory" (309).

The furies thus, find a new home in the action of the armed forces meant for protection of people. Rushdie here indicates the pathetic situation of the people of Kashmir who have to bear the atrocities of both the terrorists as well as the forces primarily meant for their protection. Life for them has left no option open for them to live in freedom and without fear, undone by the twin forces of nationalism and religious fundamentalism. It is not only fundamentalism or extremism, which proves to be harmful for life and country, nationalism can also endanger life and freedom when taken in the stringent sense concerning itself only with selfish aim of possession and power. Bound in these twin chains, an individual lose all, identity, liberty and life. The fury unleashed by their combined powers creates only chaos and destruction wherever they exist.

These questions are strong enough to shake anybody who is sensitive to these issues. These questions are not asked in vain, it is not merely formality. They have two constructive political functions to perform. Firstly the very act of posing the question of bearing witness to atrocity constitutes a potent political gesture, a demand for attention and a demand for redress. Secondly Rushdie's question-asking attitude also functions as a plea to moderate Muslims to seek to reform their religion, and a plea to European and North American politicians to create a global political context that helps rather than hinders their progress.

In this way Rushdie's novel asserts the need to recognise the honourable, even utopian, intentions behind the post-war allied efforts to bring about a global consensus regarding the welfare of common humanity all around the world. At the

same time it also asserts the need to recognise that those initially honourable intentions have gone sour, or at least been kidnapped and corrupted by forces more pragmatic and cynical.

If there is one redeeming element in *Shalimar*, it resides in the next generation, Kashmir itself may have been annihilated, but the seduction of Kashmir by America (the seduction of Boonyi by Maximilian Ophuls) has produced a bastard child – India Ophuls, a hybrid being, who lives in America and loves her American father, but is also in the process of discovering who her father really is, what he has done, and who her mother was.

Global politics may be such that old Kashmir no longer exists, but Kashmira's story tells us something different. She embodies the emergence of a new beginning from the chaos and turmoil of atrocities to the arrival of a bright new dawn, full of hope and regeneration. Her presence is an indication by the author that Kashmir will not be lost; it will emerge from the darkness into the light of true freedom and hope for its entire people, a new life. She symbolizes this new beginning in her realization and acceptance of her true identity, in her love for Yuvraj, and ultimately in her emerging victorious by executing the hatred and violence of Shalimar. She was no longer a prisoner of fury when she lets her arrow find its mark. In the end, as the novelist says, "She was not fire but ice"(398). It is certain that the novel is one of fury, whatever are the interpretations of *Shalimar The Clown*, is.

The novel ends with this failure to unite. Shalimar has just broken into India's home with a knife to kill India, and India is armed with a bow to guard herself. At this point, mutual recognition is not even an option. Either India or Shalimar will probably kill the other. As the last line of the book states, -there was only Kashmira and Shalimar the clown (398). It is only the two of them together, but they are part



separated entities. Through the novel, Rushdie expresses the sadness for the ideal that has been lost in Kashmir and in so many parts of the Muslim world, the ideal of tolerance and secular pluralism. Kashmiri way of life is a life and world of virtuousness that is betrayed by its own people, and slowly walks down the path to obliteration as personified in the life of Shalimar, the protagonist and his village, Pachigam.

Partition of the nation did not only carve out two nations out of one but it also created a sharp division between two communities i.e. Hind and Muslim. The partition between these two nations was not merely based on geographical accounts but it also accounts for some deep psychological trauma which still echoes in the minds and hearts of two nations, two communities and people. Rushdie has brilliantly portrayed the recent tragic history of Kashmir, the homeland of Rushdie's maternal grandfather and one-time favourite location for Rushdie family holidays, had appeared only as a shadowy original for the Valley of Kashmir. Rushdie's history written in semi-autobiographical mode connects individuals with collective consciousness. While depicting the story of his characters, he also weaves the story of Kashmir, its life and culture, and the degeneration of this Paradise into Hell.

The novel is not only an Odyssey from innocence to betrayal but also an affirmation and belief on the resilience and strength of the human spirit, a belief in the future. Truly a trilogy of innocence, betrayal and new beginning, *Shalimar the Clown* is a story portraying the life cycle of death in life and life in death, a perpetual cycle of birth, destruction and regeneration. It represents a new life, a new beginning with the dissolution of all divisions and segments. Now, "There was no India. There was only Kashmira, and Shalimar the clown" (398). The multicultural, hybrid world is welcomed on the horizon, that has no place for any kind of divisions or borders. All



divisions dissolve and disintegrate paving the way for the reign of Humanism, for the victory of the essential Life Force present in all of us.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Ahmed Salman Rushdie is one of the best-known contemporary writers. He is famous for allegorical novels and those novels examine the historical and philosophical issues by means of surreal characters, threatening humour, and a demonstrative and melodramatic prose style. His treatment of sensitive religious and political subjects made him a controversial figure. Rushdie stands unchallenged in his treatment of the postmodern devices like magic realism, hilarious subversion of history and so on. His migrant status is responsible for his preoccupation with migrant identity and it is a recurring theme in his novel. A very important element has gone so far unnoticed, which is Rushdie's preoccupation with the anger that sleeps within a man – the wild streak in human nature, the tiger caged up in every man which even a cursory reading of Salman Rushdie's work's *Shame*, *Fury*, *Shalimar the Clown*, and *Midnight's children*.

Rushdie sets his novel *Shalimar the clown*, in the valley of Kashmir. His story focuses on a village life in a corner of India once idyllic where there is no Hindu-Muslim issue now being destroyed by insurrection, fear, and violence. The Kashmiri landscape is slowly corroded by increasing influence of alien presence on the Kashmiri landscape. In *Shalimar the Clown*, the Political conflicts are played out in the lives of the character.

The two protagonists Shalimar and Boonyi who were born at the moment of Partition reflects as a mirror of post-independence. Shalimar's and Boonyi's love story acts as the foundation of his historiography. Though they belong to different religious groups, they got married. Shalimar and Boonyis' marriage stands as a symbol of happy Kashmir. As the story progresses, it is made clear that Boonyi is



highly ambitious and does not want to remain stuck in the village. She waits for an opportunity to fly. Max, an American Ambassador arrives. Boonyi observe Max's interest in her, acts provocatively.

Max seduction of Boonyi is a reflection of the seducing power of America, the corrupting power of its commodities, and its abandonment after taking what is wanted. Boonyi, who in multiple ways is symbolic of Kashmir's troubled reality, offers herself to the American ambassador, 'my body will be yours to command and it will be my joy to obey' (242). Max involvement in Kashmir issue is also registered through the impact he has on the lives of Boonyi.

Meanwhile, Shalimar unable to bear the humiliation of Boonyi finds a home with the iron mullah, learns the tools of insurgency, and becomes a tool in the worldwide Islamic struggle caught between Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India, communalism and state repression turning Kashmir into a harsh environment.

The novel looks at an anti-movement and analyses the roots of terrorism through the prism of the individual consciousness. Women are caught between things between the past and the future, the home and the world. Women's actions and innermost thoughts in Rushdie's novel become the expression of the national / international consciousness, offering a completely different, non-official, extra-religious and extra-political aspect of present world-culture.

Within the novel, Boonyi becomes Rushdie's mouthpiece for reinterpreting oppressive. In Ramayana, the dignity, the moral, strength, the intelligence of Sita was beyond doubt and could not so trivially be set aside. Rushdie negotiates with the present terrors in the name of women, they are representatives, even signs. Women figure as tropes of nation formation and of national development/ disintegration. If Sita undid men's magic in Ramayana, and Eve was responsible for Adam's expulsion



from paradise, then Boonyi is responsible not only for Shalimar's expulsion, but the very destruction of paradise on earth is Kashmir.

Rushdie with the help of his collective consciousness presented Kashmir as a fictional utopia, quite against the nature of political history. Kashmir had once been an idyllic heaven of the British colonials. They had put in a Hindu Raja to rule over the population that was predominantly Muslim, right from the time of the Mughal rule. The tolerance exhibited by the village and co-existing Hindu-Muslim unity that Gandhi hopes to achieve have all given way to sectarian battles and terrorism aligned with global Islam.

Projecting Kashmir to be a heaven of peace, tranquility and harmonious living prior to the political intervention is unbelievable. The existence of a different Kashmir in actuality has also generated new combinations, new ethnicities in politically equalizing the complex political relationship. The writer is neither sympathetic towards the US, nor in the arms of absolute militants. Though all the political stances opted for, by Rushdie are not entirely convincing portraying Kashmir as a harmonious mixture of different religious is excessive. Later, Subversion of Multiculturalism destroys cultural pluralism in the land of Paradise. *Shalimar the Clown* is a powerful parable about the willing and unwilling subversion of multiculturalism.

The foundational understanding seems to be that our present, with our past, forms one entangled whole. The novel reflects on the opaque, terror-stricken present and tries to make it more intelligible. *Shalimar the Clown*, gives evidence of Rushdie's cosmopolitanism and his international historical consciousness. Although the focus of the novel is Kashmir, it opens outwards to multiple pasts and presents (American, German, Russian, and Indian, Jewish, Islamic etc...). Rushdie addresses

the past to come to term with social and political present not only of one nation but also the entire world.

He also looks backwards to uprisings of the 1980's as a way to investigate the cause and outcomes of religious and ethnic conflict and the effect of globalization today. Rushdie's attempt to show how a conflict that initially has very little to do with religion or culture turns into something that resembles a clash of civilisations. Kashmiri tolerance is smashed by transforming the previously quite inconsequential differences into insurmountable divisions. When enough time passes, these boundaries and borders begin to have their effects on the once borderless culture of the valley.

Muslims are set against Hindus where they once lived peacefully side by side. Just as cultural and national unity are produced by remembering that which connects and forgets that which separates by remembering which supports them forgetting that which does not. It seems that Rushdie is not disproving the possibility of inter-civilisational clashes but rather pointing out that civilisations as entities opposing each other are consequences of the arbitrary drawing of borders. In relating the transfer of Kashmir from tolerance to strife, *Shalimar the Clown* demonstrates how a situation resembling a clash of civilisations is created. However, this also turns out to be counterproductive in terms of resistance to such essentialising interpretations. As the novel is showing how a conflict can be seen as a clash of civilisations, it also inevitably creates a clash.

Rushdie has always been an adamant devotee of Kashmiri self rule and expresses his delight in the first part of the novel. He consciously elaborates the description of paradise in Pachigam so as to heighten the tragedy of the loss of it. Rushdie explores the possible resolutions to the Kashmir problem. To an extent, the



residents of Kashmir want a greater degree of autonomy. However, Rushdie deems Kashmir for Kashmiris as a moronic idea in *Shalimar the Clown*. Rushdie further explores the possibility of bringing in another interested party to give a vital impetus to the process of restoration of harmony. Hence subversion of multiculturalism fails to unite the people of Kashmir.

The uncertainties in Rushdie's novel have insinuations, not only for the happiness of individuals, but also for the stability and harmony of the state, or society at large. Each of these characters is not only images of the self that fragment but images of a host of ill-defined others who similarly defy categorization, and are there potentially threatening, ill-fitting, to be feared and if possible removed. The novel's expressive energy comes from its specific delineation of individual characters.

Rushdie seems to share India's subject position as an insider/ Outsider. He attempts to the received notions of national identity and the nation-state. Recent writers such as Lffat Malik and Chitralkha Zutshi draw attention to the immensely complex nature of religious conflict in the valley. In *Shalimar*, his India seems not just a distant memory, but a lost one. Politics, religion and reason are metanarratives that are subjected to suspicion and deconstruction.

Rushdie consistently insists that the times of demons had begun perhaps, never to end. Like the acrobat performer, the artist always has his apparatus on display, and there is always some risk of pushing it to the extreme. That is what happens with *Shalimar*. The novel, like the circus, is a heterotopic space and provides an opportunity for the co-existence of multiple realities but unravels none. It cannot be emphasized enough that Kashmir problem has serious repercussions for India. At the domestic level it is consequential for secularism, nationalism, democracy and federalism as for India's international relations. Instead, of Pakistan or Kashmir



Rushdie in his Foucauldian reading portrays abstract spaces that are occupied so entirely by power, that there is no room for resistance and representation, 'discord has entered Pachigam / Kashmir never to depart' (312). Everyone is implicated in Power Politics is replete with corruption and violence. Kashmiri history has no subjects or collective projects. Kashmir is being given a different past. The previously emphasised history of tolerance and peaceful coexistence turns into a history of intolerance and sectarian violence. *Shallimar the Clown* was a kind of an attempt to write a Kashmiri Paradise Lost.

However, Rushdie who is known for unity made an attempt to unite Kashmiri people with the help of his consciousness which is not possible in the current scenario. Salman Rushdie's novels represent his interpretation of history and the world and their influence on life and society. As a post-modern novelist, Rushdie's fiction has a touch of unreality and vastness.

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**Power of Faith in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **Power of Faith in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

*A. Sarobin*  
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## CERTIFICATE

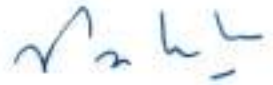
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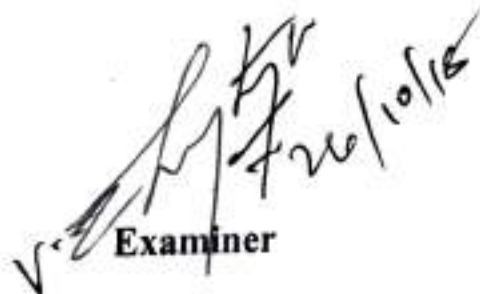
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## PREFACE

Preeti Shenoy is one of the most significant contemporary Indian writers in English. Her second novel *Life is What You Make It* was among the top selling books of 2011 in India. It is a glorious work of art which discusses the little known but widespread problem- bi polar disorder through the character Ankita, a happy living girl in her twenties and attempts to enlighten people about the mental illness and the cure. Set across two cities in India in the early eighties, it is a gripping account of a few significant years of her life. It is a story of love, hope and how determination can overcome even destiny.

The project entitled, **Power of Faith in Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It*** examines the different spectrum of life and how one should comprehend the need to live life peacefully. It delves into the mysterious psyche of the character of Ankita and her indomitable spirit to overcome even destiny.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with the biographical details of Preeti Shenoy with reference to the general aspects of her works.

The second chapter **Ankita the Phoenix** focuses on Ankita's life and how her past haunts her present, tossing on the daily trials and tribulations of the family, their fears and pain, their helplessness, patience and understanding to deal with a disease which throws the life of their loved ones totally off the track.

The third chapter **Twists and Turns of Ankita** deals with the reasons for the twists and turns of her life. It highlights how a mental disorder turns a young girl's

life topsy turvy and how she manages to come out of the abysmal depths of her depression by fighting tooth and nail to regain her sanity and her hold over life.

The chapter four **The Bounce** establishes Shenoy's reputation as a philosophically enlightening novelist. It analyses how Ankita comes out of her cocoon through her positive way of life.

The chapter five **Summation** sums up all the significant features discussed in the preceding chapters.

The Researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Hand book 7<sup>th</sup> Edition for the preparation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Indian English literature has developed over a period of time and writing in English does not start in day. It took many years and several distinguish personalities to bring the present and gives distinction to Indian English literature. It is originated as the necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. It has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad. It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only a part of Common Wealth Literature, but also occupies a great significance in the world literature. Today, a number of Indian Writers in English have contributed substantially to modern English literature.

The foundation of Indian novel in English is laid with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's outstanding feat *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). It is followed by host of other novels like Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* (1865), Sohee chundra Dutt's *The young Zamidar* (1885) and S.K.Mitra's *Hirdupur* (1907). Iyengar says in this early phase most of these novels are imitative and immature in nature, "no more than an antiquarian or historical interest" (315).

The great flowering of Indian novel in English begins in 1930s when *The Big Three* novelists-Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao have published their first novels and they changed the course of Indian novel in English. These novelists are injected by heavy dose of realism into their fiction and have portrayed the contemporary social and political issues in strikingly different manner; Narayan through the cosmic-satirist recording of everyday life; Anand through social idealist's vision of Marx and Rao through philosopher's musing on Indian culture.

Indian English literature has a relatively recent history. It dates back only up to one and half centuries. The first Indian novel in English was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's wife* appeared in 1864. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the social reformer is also an important figure in this period. He is well known for his provocative and revolutionary works to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. Raja Rao's *kanthapura* is Indian author to win a literary award in the United States. Nirad C. Chadhari, a writer of non-fiction is best known for his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* where he related his life experience and influences. Over the next few decades it published many new authors of post-independence urban literature. Many of these authors later became important.

After independence as the socio-political-economic matrix of India has undergone a change, the novelists begin to reflect the changing pulse of the nation. A fresh crop of novelists continue to nourish the tradition of social realism by probing more deeply and comprehensively into the social, political, economic and culture of the contemporary period if the Indian English novelists of 1960s and 1970s like Anita Desai and Arun Joshi have shifted their focus from socio-political economic concerned to the exploration of individual's interior world. To articulate the psychological realities they have experimented with form and technique and look recourse to stream of consciousness technique and interior, monologue.

Diasporic Literature is a very vast concept and an umbrella term that includes in it all those literary works written by the authors outside their native country, but these works are associated with native culture and background. Generally, diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity.



The reason for immigrants migration be, financial, social, political, no matter whether they migrated for trade and commerce, as religious preachers, as laborers, convicts, soldiers, as expatriates or refugees, exiles (forced or voluntary), or as guest workers in search of better life and opportunities have shared some common things as well as differences which are based on their conditions of migration and period of stay in the adopted land. Mostly the migrants suffer from the pain of being far off from their homes, the memories of their motherland, the anguish of leaving behind everything familiar agonizes the minds of migrants.

Indian Writing in English refers to the body of works by writers in India who wrote in the English language and whose native or co native language would be one of the memories of India. It also associated with the works of members of the Diaspora like Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, who were born in India but live outside the nation. It is frequently referred to as post-colonial literature. As a category this production comes under the broad realm of post-colonial literature, the production from previously colonized countries such as India.

Indian novel in English touches the new horizons after 1980 when some promising novelists like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Arundathi Roy and Amitv Ghosh have arrived on the literary firmament and signaled a new trend by introducing new themes and techniques. It ranges from mythology and history to diasporic experience, feminism, self- reflexivity and the other post-modern techniques. These novelties, with cosmopolitan outlook, take resource to magic realism, fractured structure and subverted the grand narratives of the old generation



Women novelists have made a significant contribution to the contemporary Indian Writing in English. Not only they experiment with the form of the novel to carry burden of their peculiar experiences but have also succeeded in making the genre a viable medium to cry out their agonies. It becomes a potent means in their hands to analyze, interrogate and highlights the current problems in the society. Along with the male writers, women writers have emerged during this period facing a long way of struggle. Indian women novelists have given a new dimension to the Indian literature. Before the rise of novels, several women writers have composed songs, short stories and small plays.

It is still believed that women are the upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables, story telling and more. In the mid-nineteenth century, more women start to write in the English language. With the passage of the time, English literature has witnessed several changes in the writing patterns. Woman novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings and it has affected the cultural pattern of Indian literature. They have a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing.

Since long, feminism has been used by women novelists. Their novels reflect that women in recent times are not helpless and dependent. They feel that a woman is an equal component just like a man. Today a woman of modern era thinks on different lines and that is what is depicted in the novels of the Indian women authors. These facts are incorporated by the woman writers. Indian women writers explore the feminine subjectivity ranging from childhood to complete womanhood. Through their novels they spread the message of what actually feminism is and which actually is very hard.

Prior to the raise of the novel, many Indian women composed poetry and short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Women were

the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of story-telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. Once literary figures began to through society, those stories were transformed into poetry and drama. The novel was not at first a common form, perhaps because the majority of women had less access to education than men. It was not until prose began to be used in the late nineteenth century by Bengali writers who had been exposed to European culture that the novel form took hold in India.

Traditionally, the work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. One factor contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women write about the enclosed domestic space, and women's perceptions of their experience within it. Consequently, it is assumed that their work will automatically rank below the works of male writers who deal with weightier themes.

Additionally, Indian women writers in English are victims of a second prejudice and their regional counter parts, since proficiency in English is available only to writers and their works, belong to a high social stratum and are cut off from the reality of Indian life. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewives, a subject matter often being considered superficial compared to the depiction of the repressed and oppressed life of women of the lower classes in regional writing in Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, and other native languages.

Women were the focal figures who express the struggle and emotions in a structural manner. They became the best story-tellers through explain even the eternal and sole part of the lands, legends, song and fables. In the last two decades there has been an astonishing flowering of Indian women writing in English, the literature of this



period being published both in India and elsewhere. The authors are mostly western educated, middle-class women who express in their writings their discontent with the plight of upper caste and class traditional Hindu women trapped in repressive institutions such as child marriage, dowry, prohibitions on women's education, arranged marriages, sati and enforced widowhood.

Anna Sujatha Matha in *Attic of Night* (1991) writes the trauma of separation and the travails of a separated woman. Poetry for her seems too been act of transcendence of agony, in the name of survival. But the image of woman she projects is strong and determined, and she argues for a sense of community, justice and companionship. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by patriarchal society. Thus the theme of growing from childhood to womanhood is a recurrent strategy. As in poetry, the image of the New Woman and her struggle for identity of her own also emerges in the Indian English novel.

In the contemporary scenario there developed many writers who through their regards to the new-fangled styles, techniques and trends in women's novels and poetry emerged. Here is a noteworthy movement linking the domestic with the public sphere of work, improved metropolitan involvement, sophisticated and posh life styles standardization, globalization, urbanized influences of disco, cafe and pop culture.

Shenoy who is among the best-selling authors in India weaves magic with her words and pictures. India today has named her as being unique for being the only woman in the best-selling league. Preeti Shenoy, the 20<sup>th</sup> century writer and an artist from Bangalore in India. She was born on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1971. During her school years Shenoy studied in Kendriya Vidyalaya's all over India, due to her father's constant job



transfers and this contact with different cultures and languages may have had an influence in her later interest for sociology. She started developing her writing skills since her early life, with an interest considered of becoming a professional writer. She created a blog on October 2006 in order to establish herself as a writer. The number on her log increases day by day, and readers through the world suggested her that she should consider publishing her texts.

In 2007, she wrote a couple of articles for *Metro Scan*, a local magazine and in the beginning of 2008 she was invited to start contributing regularly to the newspaper "*Times of India*". Encouraged by the favorable reception of her publications, she decided it was time to dedicate to large project, and began writing her first book, "collection of narratives" based on real life incidents, some of which had been previously posted on her blog in a shorter form. Her first book *34 Bubble Gums and Candies* was launched in October 2008. She is best known for her, *Life is what you Make it* which was among the top selling books of 2011 in India, and it continues to be a steady seller. Her third book *Tea for Two and a Piece of Cake* was released in February 2012, makeup it to the top five best-selling Indian fictions of 2012.

Shenoy's fourth novel, *The Secret Wish List* was released in October 2012. Her fifth book, *The One You Cannot Have* was released in November 2013. In December 2014, she released yet another novel, *It Happens for a Reason*, and had released a non-fiction book titled *why we love the way we do* in November 2015. In September 2016 she released eighth book *It's All in the Planets*. Her ninth book titled *A Hundred Little Flames* was released in November 2017. Plans are to become a full-time writer. Shenoy is also a poet whose poems were published in Sulekha book series.

Shenoy is consistently nominated for Forbes list of the 100 most influential celebrities of India since 2013. "India today" calls her 'the only women in the highest selling league' alluding to the immense popularity of her books. DNA newspaper has extorted her 'Excellent story telling skills'. There is simplicity in her writing that appeals to her inherent good in all her positivity and "Live Life to the fullest", philosophy finds a large number of takers, who follow her very popular blog. Shenoy also writes a regular column called *Sex and the City* for "Financial Chronicle" Saturday issues.

Shenoy is an extremely talented and versatile individual. She is a self-taught artist who paints with water colours, oil and also works with mixed media like acrylic and paper. Her interests are multifarious and diverse as her several academic degrees include an internationally recognized qualification from UK in portraiture. Her pencil-portraits are life like which strikes one with realism. She is also into paper-quilling. She has written articles for publication like *Times of India*, *Readers digest* and many more magazines. She has worked with several schools conducting workshop on thinking skills and creative crafts. She says, "Life is short. Follow your heart and chase your dreams. And yes, they will come true".( 75)

Shenoy who is among the best-selling authors in India weaves magic with her words and pictures. India today has named her as being unique for being the only women in the best-selling league. *It Happens for a reason*, the story of a single mother Vipasha whose small world is ripped into shreds when two major twists hit her life. The book *Why We Love the Way We Do* deals with one of the most delicate issues of life relationships. Besides the work it's All a Planets, it is about the story of Ankeh whose life revolves around two women, Trisha, his girlfriend and Widhi, who is thirty four and who has quit



her corporate job to follow her passion. Then *A Hundred Little Flames* is the story of Ayan, a young boy brought up Bahrain, who is sent to live with his curmudgeonly grandfather, Gopal Shanhal.

Shenoy is much more than the best-selling author of four books. Her talent and versatility makes her not just a pleasure to read but also an absolute joy to talk. Her dynamic personality and multifaceted skill sets are emulated in her twitter. Her ability to keep her audience captivated and to develop deep into the minds of her characters made her a potential writer.

Shenoy is a voracious reader herself and loves reading both fiction and non-fiction alike. She veers towards philosophy and some of her favorites are Rian Weiss and Deepak Chopra. Her family is very proud of her achievements. As she takes writing very seriously, she keeps informing them of word count she has completed each day. This also helps her to keep herself focused on her target. There is something about Shenoy's novels; six of them click with readers. Shenoy is very observant in nature; she is empathetic and can easily relate to people's situations. She is able to bring that out in her books. She wants the readers to go inside the story. She also wants them to feel what the protagonist feels. The prolific author in Shenoy was born when she began a log to get over the grief of her father's death on 2006. With the reception for her posts, she realized that her writing could touch the people:

As we have life experiences, we grow as a writer. What I write today is much better than what I wrote five years back. When you read, travel and write constantly, automatically the craft will get refined. When you realize the fragility of life, it will make your creations better. (89)



Shenoy believes that responses of the readers is the real accolade and feels happy for her books and are well connected to the hearts of the reader. Shenoy creates characters in all her works that people can relate to their real life situations. Shenoy is the author of three bestsellers, all of which have inspired thousands of readers. She began her writing career with her first book called *34 Bubble Gums and Candies* which is a complication of her blog post sharing. Shenoy says in Deccan Chronicle,

I did extensive research on the illness. I found out that the western countries provide adequate considerations to Bipolar Disorder children, while in India where there over a million bipolar affected children the picture is entirely different and disturbing. So, I wanted to create awareness. This formed a strong part of my novel.(8)

Her third book, *Tea for Two and a Piece of Cake* is an inspiring story of Nisha who doesn't let a broken marriage affect her life, moves on to find success and love. The idea of *The Secret Wish List* came when someone Shenoy knew had made a wishes were fulfilled. Most of the story in *The Once You Cannot Have* is written from the point of view of the male character someone she knew, who is madly in love with his ex-girlfriend.

*Life is What You Make It* is a fictional work by Shenoy. The novel is now considerably by our society as a must read novel for all ages describing the roller coaster life of Ankita Sharma. The story is told in first person narration which enables oneself to relate to the protagonist Ankita. In the opening scene, Ankita finds herself in a mental asylum. It has a nice background to it, college lie that most people would be able to identify themselves with her. She is young and enthusiastic and it is through her talents

that she manages to get herself into a premier management college for her Master in Business Administration (MBA) half a year later, she is admitted into a mental hospital. Why and how is what the novel tries to answer, along with few other things.

The feel that the story had ended abruptly is well compensated by what everyone calls a happy ending. The story makes one look back at their life and think, 'life is not only about money, jewels, expensive cars and big career. It's about the profound joy in seeing a beautiful flower bloom. It's about the sheer joy on seeing an old friend after so many years. It's about the excitement when we walk in the rain'. The book projects life in a different spectrum and makes us want to live our life different.

## Chapter Two

### Ankita the Phoenix

*Life is what you make* It discusses the little known but widespread problem- bipolar disorder. It is a mental infliction which is characterized by extreme mood swing. Preeti Shenoy tries to spread awareness about this problem through the story of Ankita and attempts to enlighten people about the mental illness and the cure. The novel endeavours to remove the stigma attached with mental illness. It also emphasizes on the importance of love in one's life. As the writer says love is:

I would never ever forget those words or his voice my entire life. Never to belittle, is the closet transformation that I can come up with the words he spoke that day. No matter where it came from and to be a little humbler, nicer and kinder with my words and actions". (79)

What's more the story elucidates with a belief that life is the biggest teacher of all. It moves over the inspiring journey of Ankita through the ups and downs of life and her perseverance and determination to fight all odds, to repossess the power and control over her life.

*Life is what you make* It is a gripping account of a few significant years of Ankita's life. It is a chronicle of her life. The story revolves around the protagonist Ankita who is in her 20s and has some issues from the past which haunts her. It is narrated in a sequence where the past of her life is haunted in the present tossing on the daily trials and tribulations of the family, their fears and pain, their helplessness, patience and understanding to deal with a disease which throws the life of their loved ones totally off the track.



Ankita sways in her twenty's and travels from past to present all day and night. She is a sweet, attractive, smart, ambitious and happy go lucky girl born into a conservative middle class family. She is young and enthusiastic and it is through her talents that she manages to get herself into a premier management college for her Masters in Business Administrations (MBA). She has a regular college life with great friends, academically brilliant scores and even a stint as Arts Club Secretary during the college elections and a couple of guys falling in love with her. Everything moves smoothly on her way up till then. But suddenly her life is in a mess. She finds herself in a disturbing situation partly because of her fault and partly due to destiny. All is not only well, but simply great for Ankita, till she starts manifesting the symptoms of a mental illness, which is later diagnosed as Bipolar Disorder. Half a year later, she is admitted into a mental health hospital. But, like the birth of Phoenix she overcomes her peculiar circumstances. The story ends with the rebirth of Ankita into a person who celebrates everyday for being alive.

Although some may not sympathize with what happens to Ankita at the end of the story the author has done a pretty nice job. The unknown reality about bipolar disorder and the consequences could be felt throughout the book. Despite the fact that mental health issues are still unmentionable and considered to be a taboo in the society, the author has done a great job on it. As it is, towards the end, the novel does grab pace and pulls one back to find out more. It inspires anyone who has felt destiny's blow in their lives and at the same time, to those who haven't, it serves as a guide. In Shoney's own words *Life is what you make it:*

It is a story of courage, determination and growing up. It is also how life can take a totally different path from what is planned, and yet how one can make a success out of it. It is a story of faith, belief and perseverance too and charting your own destiny. (205)

The initial chapters take one through the college days with fun and friends, letters and love. Then comes the career and choices, and next is the depression and the disease and finally the sweat and success. And all through Ankita's journey, there is her innocence, distress, apathy, pain, frustration and strength of mind. Ankita's thoughts get divided and confused as it goes around. Ankita gets into B-School and starts working hard, becomes very competitive in nature. At college she gets cozy with another guy and starts liking her, meanwhile her parents find the secret letters written by Abhi and those letters are burnt off in front of her giving a warning. Ankita gets very disturbed with events turning out in this way and gets affected by bipolar disorder and the story is all about how she handles the situation. With sheer determination she overcomes all challenges to make life the way she wants.

Preeti Shenoy begins the story as a flashback. It is shown that Ankita is sending letter to Vaibhav and in return he replies to it. As the story moves we can find that Ankita's parents are old and they fail to understand her. She is not approved of her being with other guys even if in a group or allowed her friends who are boys to call her at home. So from here they begin their sneaking works. She begins to sneak around, doing all such mischievous pranks which can make her and him make in touch with each other. It is to be guessed that love is like that. Teens do sneaking to stay in touch without the knowledge of their parents. Ankita has the world at her feet. She did her schooling in



Delhi, where within the first few months she was in contact with Vaibhav, her school friend. On Ankita's birthday Vaibhav proposed her.

The story slowly moves to Ankita's college life where she enjoys it to her at most cores. This part of the story goes on very well. She enjoyed her college life and had good enjoyment with new friends. They enjoy the days in all ways. Shenoy gives the note of college life through Ankita:

It is a joke at Agnes that best looking girl at Mahaveers, could not match up to an average looking girl at Agnes. And funnily it was true. At cultural events like these, the guys from Mahaveers would try to impress the Agnes girls desperately, and strangely there would always be very few girls in any of their own teams. (22)

She is been nominated as one of the office bearers with the help of her friend Suvi. She has already been elected into the school office bearers group. Being one among them she had great fun. The campaign part is of much fun. The story moves on very quietly and smoothly until the second guy Abhi, enters the picture. After his entry the story gets a bit turned. The guy meets her at an intercollegiate event. He begins to follow her. He wants to woo her. Now it is good and perfect on her part to tell him about Vaibhav. She tries to tell him about Vaibhav and all stuff. But she feels if she is really in love then it would be really strange and due to that she starts feeling for Abhi. Suddenly she starts doing all types of pretensions all along.

Abhi too has love towards Ankita. A few days pass by. On one final day he proposes her. They have had many joyful and funnier moments together which made an unforgettable mark in their heart. As their college days came to an end and Ankita was



moving from Cochin to Bombay for her father's transfer. She wants to do her MBA in Mumbai. But Abhi asks Ankita to stay in the city and do her college too there for they can continue their relationship. He had a thought that she would stay but all his thoughts were in vain. Ankita refuses her chance because of her parents. She has got her admission in one of the best colleges in Bombay.

By the time, there was a quarrel between Ankita and Abhi. She feels very bad and even refuses to guarantee him that she will stay in touch with and sneak calls with Vaibhav who was right near to her and whom she loved earlier. As Abhi commits suicide she leaves the city having a sad unbearable note. Ankita feels:

I loathed myself for lying to Joseph. I loathed myself for not having admitted the truth to Abhi. And I loathed myself for getting involved with three different men. I look at my face in the mirror. I hated it. I felt if I was ugly then they would not have told me I was beautiful and make myself ugly. May be I could mutilate my face too. I hated it so much now. (111)

Now her third part of the life begins. She has entered new surroundings. She is in her new college for her Master degree. Due to the environment her character also changes a lot which is quite stunning. There is a far difference in her character. She becomes even more competitive and she starts to seek perfection; she also started to have a new affection for one of her new classmate Joseph and had a joyous moment with him. One day they were in a cab he kissed her hand from that time onwards she saw Abhi in Joseph. As she sees Abhi in him she was more affectionate towards him she feels a lot for having missed Abhi. While he kissed in her hand in return she cried and kissed in his lips,

it was all for Abhi. Finally, Joseph proposed her she replied but not with true love. She is unable to imagine that how she was able to kiss him.

When her academics seem to be good and going on well her parents find her too mischievous as they found her love letters. Infront of her, her parents burnt the letters. From here, her mind and heart cracks. Then onwards she feels an ache in her heart and mind. Ankita fails to restrain herself. Again and again her mind calculates the past as Shouvik Bhattacharya says:

There are times when you just don't want to think about something, yet that is all you managed to keep thinking about. The uncertain phase of life where the heart tunes up with something you could never get, and yet every ounce of few wants to hum the unsung melody . . . ,feelings were just like the clouds-they never stayed at a point.(5)

She is fully disturbed which makes her completely change into a person who is mentally disturbed. The problem grows big and she has no heart for going to college. She stops going to college. Her parents are unable to understand her. They really don't know why there is a vast change in her behaviour. They decide to take her to a doctor. They take her to psychiatrists and try to solve her problem.

Dr. Madhusudan was not only kind and understanding but was intuitive also. He cared a lot about Ankita. Moreover he could read people's mind. He read exactly Ankita mind and tries to calm her down. He is the one who has kept Ankita alive for many times. He made her know that she is also important as any other person in the world. He was very caring to her, which brought a vast difference in Ankita which was really very amazing. It was really a surprise to Ankita that words of kindness can heal a person. In



*You are the reason for my smile*, Arpit Vageria explains the importance of good surrounding who make the life better to live:

In a life many a time you fall short of words when you find yourself struggling between choice and necessity.... One thing that remains as real as oxygen in this world is the world full of smiles that you imagine for yourself. . . . a world that inspires you to live, a life that inspires you to love, and a love that strengthens your life in this world. (1)

Dr. Madhusudan represents a kind of good sign in Ankita's life. It is true, his supportive words and kindness perhaps healed Ankita more than medicines. He has stopped all the medications which the two doctors had prescribed earlier. In fact, meditation is the only medicine which he gives Ankita. He said Ankita that it was Lithium which is essential for her right now. He advised Ankita only to take the tablet twice a day without fail, as it is a life saving medicine for those who are suffering from bipolar disorder. He kept on insisting to her that it was not her mistake.

Ankita survives her depression with this feeling as it allows one to feel oneself into the world of the other. She felt her world into the world of Dr. Madhusudan and her parents as she says:

I owe you a lot. You have taught me the value of life, and you have showed me how love and time are the greatest gifts one can receive. There was a time when I could not read nor write; now I can hold them dearer than life itself. To me, this is the greatest gift I can ever give and receive from you. (194)



Dr. Madhusudan would always visit her room at last while going for rounds. He encouraged her with some kind words which improved her health. He consoles her by telling that she will not be sent to her house directly. At the end, she will be shifted into the Occupational Therapy Wing. She was surprised to see such a planned routine schedule on her table. Finally she recovered her good health. He bought her some children's books, to regain her memory power. He emphasized to continue with the medicine and meditation. After his retirement, he established the first suicide helpline in Kerala. Thus, he has saved hundreds of life like the protagonist Ankita. Her persistence makes her stand firm and helps her to get back her normal life. Shenoy's view about the life suits with the ideology of Rhonda Byrne who writes about the positivity of life:

Whatever you want in your life, you want it because you love it. Take a moment and think about it. You don't want things you don't love, do you? Everyone person only wants what they love; nobody wants what they don't love.... Most people think and talk about what they don't love more than they think and talk about what they love. (17)

As time passed by Ankita's parents observed how life had changed for their depressed daughter. "I was sure of what I wanted in life. Life is too precious to do the things one wanted to". Everyday awakened her to learn something of her parents as they realized how important friends were in her life, how writing was something she had taken for granted earlier, but now she valued each word not less than a gem. Her fondness to read and write increased her thinking caliber and all she wanted was to read how many times she wanted.

Ankita truly responded to life after being someone whom she never was, but became human when 'love of writing and faith in the words of Dr. Madhusudan. "Mark my words, you will do well." worked miracles on her mind, heart and body. She was no longer the same girl who had worried about people's opinions, as she knew that was the world she lived in, and the same world she cared no more in order to lead a perfect life.

Finally time came for her to leave the hospital after all happy sessions, and Dr. Madhusudan had observed a remarkable progress as it was her strong will, to fight against her bipolar disorder, and tremendous power in bringing back her lost senses to read and write. The element of humanism is found in the relation between Ankita and her Doctor, where he supports her emotionally, understands her, and patiently bears her maniacal attitudes.

Even by their trial and force she can return to college. She has been taken to NMHI where she comes into a new world and finds someone who is willing to listen to her a lot. She also finds a person who can understand her problems and help her bypass them. At this time her parents also understand her situation and act accordingly. They move freely with her friends. Now she got back her life and is happy to know that she is alive. The novel ends with a letter to Vaibhav. She is happy at the end. And her parents are happy that they have got back their child.

The plot of the novel may seem very straightforward. It is a novel worth reading. It discusses the little known but widespread problem-bipolar disorder which is characterized by extreme mood swing. The novel tries to spread awareness about this problem through the story of Ankita and it attempts to enlighten people about the mental

illness and the cure. Thus the novel endeavours to remove the stigma attached with mental illness.

Life has cruelly and coldly snatched the most of her better parts and she rightly fights against it to get all back. It is a deeply moving and inspiring account of growing up, of the power of faith and how determination and an indomitable spirit can overcome even what destiny throws at you. The story, at its core is a love-story that makes one question one's beliefs and concept of sanity and forces one to believe that life is truly what one makes it.

Life is an opportunity; it is God's greatest gift. Life, full of promise, is expanding every moment, and transitory moments flit before we know it. Everybody wants to be happy in life and wants to live a perfect life. To maintain an optimistic attitude towards life, one must remain a positive person throughout life and make the best of every situation and must keep a cheerful attitude because life is short.

Thus Preeti Shenoy has proved that a tiny ray of hope can take one a long way and faith as a strange and powerful thing can work miracles.



## Chapter Three

### Twists and Turns of Ankita

The focus of the book is around an individual, who had Bipolar Disorder, and how she makes up her mind to change her own destiny and make life what she wanted it to be. It is not just a story about bipolar disorder, but as Preeti Shenoy expresses, it is a story of courage, determination and growing up in charting one's own destiny with love, hope and determination to overcome even destiny.

Bipolar Disorder is slowly gaining awareness in India but continues to be treated as somewhat of a taboo topic in most households. The novel is based on a true story and when Preeti Shenoy first heard the story, it moved her so much that she decided it had to be written and shared with the world. The real life Ankita is a very inspirational person and since she had Bipolar Disorder, the writer says that she had to do quite a lot of research on the disorder to put herself in her shoes and write her story in a realistic fashion.

It seems that the novelist has simply stated that real life goes by a much different course than one has planned it to be. Although the twists and turns of life have to be accepted, the power to carve out the best possible out of it lays in the hands of the individual. The novel jots the journey of Ankita who has suffered mental depression and how she frees herself to view life with the therapy of Humanism and feeling.

The story is set in Kerala in the 1980s. It opens with a series of letters between the protagonist, Ankita and her childhood friend, Vaibhav, who is in IIT Delhi. Ankita has just entered St Agnes College for Girls and makes many friends. Soon, she becomes the ace of the college, excelling in studies and in college cultural festival events. Her

attraction for Valbhav starts fading away. She meets Abhishek from another college, who confesses to having feelings for her. Her thoughts get divided and confused as she grows up. Very competitive by nature Ankita gets into B-School and starts working hard. At college she gets comfortable with another guy and starts liking him.

Three years later, Ankita gets selected at a premier management institute in Mumbai and dumps Abhishek. Heartbroken, Abhishek commits suicide. Meanwhile Ankita starts her MBA course where she starts progressing like never before. Ankita develops a photographic memory, excellent stamina and is able to ace her exams. She also becomes creative, witty and articulate. Meanwhile her parents find the secret letters written by Abhi and those letters were burnt off in front of her giving a warning. Ankita gets very disturbed with events turning out in this way and gets affected by bipolar disorder. Ankita's life soon turns with the twists and turns, when she is diagnosed with a mental illness- she develops Bipolar Disorder. But soon, she gets carried away with her euphoria, becoming reckless. Ankita falls into great depression and tries to commit suicide. She is later admitted to a mental hospital where Dr Madhusudan diagnoses her with Bipolar Disorder. After many months, Ankita is able to recover from her depression and is able to manage her condition. With sheer determination she overcomes all challenges to make life the way she wants.

The novel thus explores the two counterparts of suffering and survival in the life of Ankita and also applies the theory of Humanism on the psyche of people affected by bipolar disorder, the self between sanity and insanity, and family depression. Ankita connects with few significant people, the parents, and Dr. Madhusudan who taught her



the process of being open, lying "aside all perceptions from the external frame of reference".

In the prologue of the novel *Life is what you make it*, it is said that Ankita was taken to a mental hospital, where she feels like sinking, refusing everything as a mental patient. She feels helpless, lost and irritated. When the doctor asks her questions she does not feel like responding. When the doctor starts compelling she feels trapped, craned, exasperated and suddenly very tired and she just wants it to end. So she starts to answer.

Bipolar Disorder is a serious brain disorder that causes dramatic shifts in moods, energy levels, attitudes and ability to carry out everyday tasks. It is very different from the normal mood changes that everybody goes through from time to time. It develops typically in late adolescence or early adulthood. The symptoms are very severe and it is usually hard to diagnose, as it is not easy to spot when it starts. The symptoms may often seem like very normal personality changes which a person undergoes, in the course of day to day living as it happened to Ankita. Ankita's academics bloom out in great success with real hard work and sincerity. When her parents sites her love letters hidden for years and puts ablaze, she stands there in tears glimpsing them turning into ashes, then onwards she feels an ache in her heart and mind. She remembers the words, 'say no more,' he wrote me. 'There are no buts and no ifs in life'. Ankita fails to restrain herself. Again and again her mind calculates the past as Shouvik Bhattacharya says:

There are times when you just don't want to think about something, yet that is all you managed to keep thinking about. The uncertain phase of life where the heart tunes up with something you could never get, and yet



every ounce of few wants to hum the unsung melody....feelings were just the clouds-they never stayed at a point.(5)

The problem grows big and she has no spirit to go to college. She stops going to college. Her parents are unable to understand her. They really don't know why there is a vast change in her behavior. They decide to take her to a doctor. They take her to psychiatrists and try to solve her problem. This was the moment when destiny changed Ankita's life. She underwent more than a mood swing called bipolar disorder or manic-depression. This disorder ranges from extremes in energy to deep despair. Sometimes decisions that are taken in the nick of a moment are the ones that have the power to affect a whole train of events that follow.

Ankita's life had become imbalanced just like her brain indicating neurotransmitters that shocked all her family and friends. Her relation with Abhi came in picture with many incidents, promises, secrets, as they lived through thick and thin. The death of Abhi struck her saying, "I don't want to see a bloated body. I have seen him when he was alive and well and those shall be my last memories." I said. I hated myself for it. (76) Yet I could not bring myself to go. My inner voice was screaming out the answers blaming me, but silenced it, not allowing it to rise up, not wanting to hear it.

Bipolar Disorder can be so severely crippling that it can result in damaged relationships, poor job or academic performance and even suicide. It has also been associated with creativity. People with this disorder experience intense emotional states which alternate between a 'high episode' called manic episode and it is followed by a 'low episode' called a depressive episode. During a manic state, the person feels overly happy, outgoing and is bursting with high energy levels. Creativity in is at an all time

high. There is a huge increase in goal directed activities and the person is usually restless and needs very little sleep. The person is very energetic, optimistic and enthusiastic about everything as with Ankita. Having a disorder like that does not mean it is the end of the world either. It can be managed in number of ways and people affected can lead very positive and complete lives.

In contrast, during a low period, there is an increasing feeling worthlessness or emptiness which is hard to describe. The person feels exhausted and has trouble concentrating or remembering things and making decisions. There is a loss of interest in everything that the person once enjoyed including sex. Often the person thinks of death and suicide attempts are not uncommon.

Everyone, at various times in life, feels sad or "blue". It's normal to feel sad on occasion but sometimes this sadness comes from things that happen in our life. Depression is not a character flaw or an individual weakness. Many women feel guilty about being depressed when they have to be happy. Such depression lays its threat on Ankita as she becomes a victim of postpartum depression blabbering all time about Abhi's loss as she states,

I wish I had told him that I would keep in touch. I wished I had told him that a part of me still loved him. I wish I had assured him that we would meet when I visited Cochin once a year for holidays. I wished a hundred million times. I wished a hundred million times. I wished a hundred million things. (9)

People with bipolar disorder are very sensitive. They are able to experience emotions in a very deep and intense way. It gives them a very different perspective of the



world. It is not that they lose touch with reality. But the feelings of extreme intensity are manifested in creating things. They pour their emotions into either writing or whatever field they have chosen. The psyche of Ankita can be analyzed with Sigmund Freud's concept of "Id", "Ego" and "Super Ego" which corresponding to the conscious, the conscience, and the unconscious part of the mind. It examines the human psyche and forms the basis of psychoanalysis, the vital purpose of Humanistic therapy focused on the qualities of choice, and realization of self. This theory drew forth the problems that every individual faced, and their meaning of being human again, with dignity and interest in the development of every person. M.H. Abrams in his work talks about the development of human mind which is based on these three concepts of Freud:

Freud's model of mind as having three functional aspects: the Id, (which incorporates libidinal and other innate desires), the Superego (the internalization of social standards of morality and prosperity), and the Ego (which tries as best it can to negotiate the conflicts between the insatiable demand of the Id, the impossibly stringent requirement. (322)

The idea of being Ankita had drifted slowly, she could not face people, and she had no idea what she was doing. It was the first time she realized that she could not trust her own self anymore. Victims of bipolar disorder experience absence of mind, or unconsciousness in deeds. Every night she blinked away tears of shame that welled up her eyes, threatening to fall. The pain was almost physical, it was an absurd heart with dead mind, aching for Abhi, a feeling never wanted to let go, just to see him, hear his voice, smile at him, where death can never tangle him.



A huge dark void occupied Ankita's mind where nothing existed anymore, she cuts her skin slightly and felt better as the pain was then real. She could bear this. Her parents had no idea of her ignorance, but she was happy that at least in this they could do nothing about.

This was my body and I could do what I wanted with it. It was a strange kind of defiance. It was a way of showing them for what they did with my letters. Each letter was screaming as it burnt, "Save me, save me, please let me live". But I was silent as I watched each one dying a slow painful death. (67).

Something was born and something died from that very second, she could not give it a name, maybe it was her soul. Or maybe it was a part of her destiny that deformed her to psychological depression in life. Ankita questioned how she could land up in mental hospital as any mental patient would.

I was admitted in a mental hospital and I was alone. I hate you. Both of you. Come back here-don't leave me like this -you're my parents dammit.

Why the fuck did you give birth to me? Come back Dammit-Come back.

Shut Up. What the fuck do you know about out of control? (159-60)

Her journey in the mental hospital doomed her at first but later a faint fluttering ray of hope had begun stirring, when Ankita met Dr. Madhusudhan who treated her, gently and drew his personal life with her attempt of committing suicide. He says, "Life is a gift; we should not throw it away. You have no right to kill others. Then how can you have a right to kill yourself?". (169)

It was a seed that he had sown and it had taken firm root. First time in many months, Ankita thought about the future, whom she wanted all time, her face lit up with a smile. It was the first time in months she had ever smiled. Ankita began to live, painting her emotions with joyous and hopeful experiences.

The enormity of Ankita's life was speeding to the next level of hope, with the words of her doctor spreading in her mind like sunrise after sunset. Sometimes all one needs is a strong anchor, a heart that can comfort one for no reason, and leads on the busiest road carefully, follows when lost. "To me Dr. Madhusudan was that person, whose presence calmed me, words reassured me completely. Faith is indeed a strange and a powerful thing that can work miracles" (180). And she soon discovered it. The life of psychological suffering groomed Ankita to overcome this crippling to a new level of multiple surviving as she states:

Spending time in a mental health Institution makes you a hundredfold more sensitive towards others than you were earlier. You learn to value emotions. You adapt to look out for others. You learn to truly care. Most specifically you learn to pay heed to what others do not tell you. (188)

Ankita survives her depression with this feeling as it allows one to feel oneself into the world of the other. She felt her world into the world of Dr. Madhusudan and her parents as she says:

I owe you a lot. You have taught me the value of life, and you have showed me how love and time are the greatest gifts one can receive. There was a time when I could not read nor write; now I can hold them dearer



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than life itself. To me, this is the greatest gift I can ever give and receive from you. (194)

Every day and night Ankita wrote out passages she read from the children books, to remember what she read. Six weeks passed by where she noticed she no longer needed to write as she remembered, as though someone told her. The real thrill she lived, dancing and shouting out to the world telling, "Look I am able to read! Look I am able to remember!" (185)

As time passed by Ankita's parents observed how life had changed for their depressed daughter. "I was sure of what I wanted in life. Life is too precious *not to do the things one wanted to*". Every day awakened her to learn something of her parents as they realised how important friends were in her life, how writing was something she had taken for granted earlier, but now she valued each word not less than a gem. Her fondness to read and write increased her thinking caliber and all she wanted was to read how many times she wanted.

Finally time came for her to leave the mental hospital after all her therapy sessions, and Dr. Madhusudan had observed a remarkable progress as it was her strong will, to fight her bipolar disorder, and tremendous power in bringing back her lost senses to read and write. The element of Humanism is found in the relation between Ankita and her doctor, where he supports her emotionally, understands her, and patiently bears her maniacal attitudes.

Ankita truly responded to life after being someone whom she never was, but became human when 'love of writing and faith in the words of Dr. Madhusudan, "Mark my words, you will do well" worked miracles on her mind, heart and body. She was no



longer the same girl who worried about people's opinions, as she knew this is the world she lived in, and she cared no more.

Ankita felt proud of herself, as she sucked the pure air she breathed coming back to life, rejoicing the sensation of what life has given her. The moments being alive, in a new world, new friends, new self, believing, that day something died to recreate a life, and would last not just for time but for all ages. A true saying, 'The world is indeed a better place when there is love, friendship, acceptance, and hope. Powered by these, we can overcome anything, including the mysterious destiny'.

Through all that she undergoes Ankita learns that life is not to be taken as granted but is to be cherished as the most precious attribute bestowed to one. She grows up in relation to her understanding of values inherent in making a life truly worth living, and also in her ability to comprehend the beauty and charm of life when it abounds in love, care and affection and for the loved ones. She remarks that from the time onwards she would never belittle love from whichever source it comes, and try to be more sympathetic towards the feelings and emotions of those at the giving end. She learns the importance of caring and sharing for others.

If you do not laugh for a day, if you have not made somebody's day happier, if you've not appreciated something good that has happened to you and if you have not felt thankful to be alive, then you have wasted that day of your life on earth!(201)

Through the traumatic experience that Ankita undergoes and the way she combats it all lends a positivity of approach on the part of the author towards such a grave. This positivity serves as an eye-opener to all those who in fits of frustration or depression

stoop to the fatal tendencies as suicide or take recourse to other methods as drugs and addictions of the like.

The significance of the essential life-values and relationships of family and friendship based on true love is underscored by the novelist as she suggests that these are the very anchors on which an individual can rely in times of distress. The story subtly suggests that it is the presence of these values that makes one's life truly fulfilling and satisfying. The relationships based on these foundations make them typically human and it is on these that the very powers of the sustenance of life depend. The story highlights the belief of the author that although life is as it has been ordained yet it is the potential of the individual through which he can shape his own destiny.

Life is indeed unpredictable and it is true it could take a sudden and unexpected turn. Life is what you yourself churn it, no matter how much charged with punishments, burdened inside gates, tortured by horror mates, wrath and tears, smiles and cheers, where you are the master of your fate; you are the captain of your soul.

## Chapter Four

### The Bounce

*Life is what you make it* establishes Shenoy's reputation as a philosophically enlightening novelist. Shenoy reveals her intense penchant of her thought that life is to be lived and destiny to be twisted in her fiction. As the novel is deeply rooted in the idea of determination and an indomitable spirit can overcome even what destiny throws at one, it depicts man's quest for overcoming the fearful thoughts of fate. The reflection of Shenoy's thoughts in this novel display positive vibrations by creating awareness among the readers. Using philosophy in her novels Shenoy lets her readers know life with love and sanity as its base could do wonders and forces them to believe that life is truly what one makes it.

As *Life is what you make it* is deeply rooted in the idea of determination and an indomitable spirit that can overcome even what destiny throws at you, it depicts man's quest for overcoming the fearful thought of fate. The theme of the novel, as Shenoy observes:

Bipolar disorder does not mean that the person is crazy or a lunatic which are terms which people use without even a second thought. Having a disorder like that does not mean it is the end of the world either. It can be managed in a number of ways and people affected can lead very positive and complete lives. (207)

The philosophical aspects of this novel *Life is what you make it* could be associated with the philosophical thought of existentialism put forward by Jean Satre. Because the theory tells us that it expresses the power of human beings to make freely-



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wild choices, independent of the influence on religion or society. It also tells us that all the things happening in one's life is a result of his or her doings.

*Life is what you make it* reclines its best attribute and the topic that it explores- college life, delusions and hope that love offers to one- and the break in it leads to bipolar disorder may seem irrelevant by itself, but when taken together it creates a thread of thoughts that makes one wonder what actually the book talks about. It is not just a story about the bipolar disorder but as the author expresses, "it is a story of courage, determination and growing up. It is a story of faith, belief and perseverance too and changing your own destiny". (195)

Shenoy undertakes the tough task of portraying reality as it is and depicts the true potential and ability of real character amid seemingly realist circumstances. Inspired by the real life of Ankita, Shenoy portrays a character that has had the best possible accomplishments along with the worst possible experiences, but instead of sitting back and accepting what the entire destiny had to offer, this courageous character through her single mindedness and urge resists the shattering blows of life and finally emerges as triumphant.

Through the traumatic experience that Ankita undergoes and the way she combats it all lends a positivity of approach on the part of the author towards such a grave thought. This positive attitude serves as an eye-opener to all those who in fits of frustration or depression stoop to the fatal tendencies as suicide or take recourse to other methods as drugs and addictions of the like.

Ankita is fully disturbed which makes her completely change into a person who is mentally disturbed. In the prologue it is said that Ankita was taken to a mental hospital.

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where she feels like sinking, refusing everything as a mental patient. She feels helpless, lost and irritated. When the doctor asks her questions she does not feel like responding. When the doctor starts compelling she feels trapped, craned, exasperated and suddenly very tired and she just wants it to end. The problem grows big and her parents are unable to understand her. They really don't know why there is a vast change in her behaviour.

Ankita falls into great depression and tries to commit suicide. She is later admitted to a mental hospital where Dr. Madhusudan diagnoses her with Bipolar Disorder. Dr. Madhusudan represents a kind of good sign in Ankita's life. Ankita's words are:

Dr. Madhusudan was not only kind and understanding but intuitive too. He kept me alive many times over. He was not only supportive but very confident that I would get better very soon. More than anything else, I was his unwavering faith in me that gave me courage. (166-67)

It is true, his supportive words and kindness perhaps healed Ankita more than medicines. The enormity of Ankita's life was speeding to the next level of hope, with the words of her doctor spreading in her mind like sunrise after sunset. Sometimes all one needs is a strong anchor, a heart that can comfort one for no reason. He who wins one's trust blindly, would lead he or she on the busiest road carefully and follows you when you're lost. Ankita words are:

To me Dr. Madhusudan was that person. His presence calmed me. His words are reassured me. I trust him completely. I believed him with all my heart. Faith is a strange and a powerful thing and it can work miracles. It was something I would soon discover. (182)



After many months, Ankita is able to recover from her depression and is able to manage her condition. Fifteen years later as said in the epilogue she has earned six degrees, married and has a small daughter. The story highlights the belief of the author that although life is as it has been ordained yet it is the potential of the individual through which he can shape his own destiny.

Shenoy begins the story as a flashback. She uses the flashback technique to narrate the sequence where the past haunts present all day and night. The story flashes the memory of the Vaibhav whom she loved, and sneaked against her parents wish and guess love for her was like this. It is shown that Ankita is sending the letter to Vaibhav and in return he replies to it. As the story moves we can find that Ankita's parents are old and they fail to understand her. Here, the novel starts with the letter and ends with the letter. The writer was able to charm the readers with her incredible narration. Shenoy could hypnotize one with her mesmerizing story telling technique. As Shenoy says:

My letters to Vaibhav described all this and more. Our letters to each other are getting longer and longer. We became experts in anticipating how much postage would be needed for each letter. As the weeks sped our letters to each letter were our constant connection, our link and the happiness we derived from them kept both of us going. (8)

The story is told in first person that enables the readers to relate to the protagonist, Ankita Sharma. It has a nice background to it, one's college life that most people would be able to identify themselves with. She is young and enthusiastic and it is through her talents that she manages to get herself into a Premier Management College for her Masters in Business Administration (MBA). Half a year later, she is admitted into a



mental health hospital. Why and how is what the novel tries to answer, along with a few things and traces the roller-coaster life of Ankita Sharma.

Preeti Shenoy, the 20<sup>th</sup> century novelist influences a lot of youngsters by producing a positive vibration in their mind and conveying a message through her works as "destiny is not excited but created". *Life is what you make it* is one of the Shenoy's best works conveying this philosophical thought about the human life. Shenoy reveals her intense predilection for her thought... "Life is to be created is to be lived and destiny is to be created" (90) in her fiction. It is deeply rooted in an idea of determination and an indomitable spirit can overcome even what destiny throws at you. It depicts man's quest for freedom.

Being affected by a psychological disorder is more deadly than being affected by a physical illness. The character of Ankita can be compared with great personalities like Charlie Chaplin, Abraham Lincoln who have suffered a lot in their lives but they came out successful in their lives, because, of their positive attitude. Benet mentions Shiv Khera's view in his article "Social Perspective in Contemporary English Literature":

This was a man who failed in business at the age 21; was defeated in a legislative race at age 22; failed again in business at age 24; overcame the death of his sweetheart at age 26; had a nervous breakdown at age 27; lost a congressional race at age 34; lost a senatorial race at age 45; failed in an effort to become vice-president at age 47; lost a senatorial race at age 49; and was elected president of the United States at age 52. This man was

Abraham Lincoln.... The only difference is that every time they failed, they bounced back. (9)

*Life is what you make it*, her successful novel which is sold over three lakhs of copies is based on a true life story. Shenoy makes use of it to create awareness among the readers about the bipolar disorder as a part of its function. The author says:

While the plot of the little boy came to my mind, I did extensive research in the illness I found out that the western countries provide adequate consideration to bipolar children while in India where there are over a million bipolar disorder affected children the picture is entirely different and disturbing. So, I wanted to create awareness. This forms a strong part of my novel. (Deccan Chronicle)

Shenoy's beautiful description and phrases such as "Never Belittle Love" (79)

give emphasis to her philosophical notion of bouncing.

Shenoy has beautifully narrated the description of common events with example of snooker game. It is feeling as though a snooker player had hit a single hard strike and like the snooker balls all had scattered in various directions, random balls coming together with no pre- determined plan. The author has also given some autobiographical touches to the story which can melt the heart of the readers and make them shed tears of solitude.

Shenoy's lucid narrative style makes the novel easy to identify with the character Ankita. This also makes the readers feel as if they are undergoing what is being narrated. Shenoy uses simple diction in this novel. And Shenoy gives the optimistic tone at the end yet the story revolves around many negative approaches. At the end Ankita says:



If you do not laugh for a day, if you have not made someone's day happier, if you have not appreciated something good that has happened to you and if you have not felt thankful to be alive, then you have wasted that day of your life on earth (201)

Shenoy uses very simple and lucid style. The story seems more inclined towards existential values, the incorporation of which is much required for shearing the nihilistic tendencies that have crept in today's youth. As Deccan Herald says it is:

A simple narration with umpteen smart phrases makes the book a one session reading. Easy to read and it is in lucid style. The mundane and quotidian turns into great literary stuff in the hands of the author. This book promises to be a show stealer. (Deccan)

Shenoy has beautifully developed the plot of the novel. She has also used many characters with appropriate character sketches. All the characters in the novel are well portrayed, with none of them given more or less space than required. The characters used in the novel makes it lively and colourful. Shenoy has carefully portrayed the emotions of people who are mentally affected and society's attitude towards them. These people are human beings too, and they also require love and compassion like any other individual. The story opens in the mental hospital, so that the reader's curiosity is aroused from page one onwards. The conflict faced by Ankita while choosing between career and love is common to every youngster; the story is very close to reality. It dealt with the innocent ambitions of youngsters and how at one point, they seem so important that they are ready to give up everything to achieve them.



The writing style is simple yet thought provoking. The story is light and breezy in the beginning but becomes more intense and captivating towards the end. It also gives readers an insight on bipolar disorder, which is not a very well known disease. Shenoy develops the story in a simple language filled with a simple narrative style. Her styles hold the readers and keep them captive. She prefers to write in simple English as a writing style makes it easier for readers to understand. She writes as one speaks. Though she writes in a simple diction, she keeps her writing grammatically correct out of her respect the language. Whenever Ankita speaks, the readers would feel her emotions and pain. When she thinks:

I loathed myself for lying to Joseph. I loathed myself for not having admitted the truth to Abhi. And I loathed myself for not being able to tell the whole truth to Vaibhav. I despised myself for getting involved with three different men. I looked at my face in the mirror. I hated it. I felt if I was ugly then they would not have told me I was beautiful and pretty. Maybe if I was ugly Abhi would still be alive. (11)

Shenoy has stated that she would rather use a simple word than a pretentious one in her novels. Shenoy's style is unique in many ways, she suggests things rather than advising. She gives examples and inspires the readers through her characters. Shenoy's words fill with hope and determination. She speaks with the readers by making the characters speak. She makes the protagonist utters, "The world is indeed a better place when there is love, friendship, acceptance and hope. Powered by these you can indeed overcome anything including destiny". (80)

Shenoy uses both long and short sentences to convey her ideas. Some of the sentences are complex. The special part is that, she has beautifully expressed her poetic diction as one could notice:

I nudged him when I saw the ocean. The skies were a turbulent grey and the sea danced in wild abandon. The wind sang a melancholy song as nature unfolded her splendor, like a dancer who knows that she is cynosure of all eyes (110).

Most of her thoughts are poetic. The following lines clearly portray the pain and the anguish of gap in relationship:

A stop gap relationship

She looks at him with misty eye

They have made love

Or attempted to....

He is talking about leaving now...

Filled with the smell of their sweating bodies

In her mind a thought crosses

That the only difference between her

And her sister on the street

The so called whores

Is that they receive payment in cash

And she receives it through emotions.

In forms of words

Words that have ceased to have a meaning now

The author has used the epistolary technique in some chapters. This can be seen with the exchange of letters among Vaibhav and Ankita, Abhi and Ankita, Suni and Ankita. To be more precise, she uses dialogic technique of novel writing. The beauty of the novel is also seen in the uncommon theme, simple language, simplicity of events, character details, Abhi and Ankita's conversation, pouring of complicated emotions of Ankita and rare description of common events.

The limitations of the novel lie in its repetition of emotions, over detailed academic part while Ankita was with Agnes, slow paced part in Mumbai and the MBA part went in a rush. The explicit character of Ankita hides behind her disorder. Sherry has creatively written this novel and readers can co-relate some segments of their life to it.

The epilogue at the end of the novel traces the bouncing of Ankita which says eighteen years later, she has earned six more degrees and still in quest for more knowledge, happily married and to have excelled in her talent of portraiture.

The title and the cover are really inspiring. The cover is pictured with a girl who jumps out of joy, with an umbrella held high in her hand, as if that is a knight in shining armour and has the ability to dissipate all her problems. Be it the cruel sunshine or the harsh rains, she can overcome it all. She seemed to be daring the Sun to scorch her with all her might, as she is confident of coming out unscathed, unharmed, mesmerizing one with her courage and infecting one with her zeal.



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The novel is a gripping one and the reader will find it difficult to put it down before finishing it. Each character is thoroughly explained with ease so as to imagine as they roam around us in everyday life thus giving hope and persistence.

If you have not made somebody's day happier, if you have not appreciated something good that has happened to you and if you have not felt thankful to be alive, then you have wasted that day of your life on earth... we are what our thoughts have made us. So take care what you think. Thoughts live. They travel far. (133-34)

Thus in *Life is what you make it* Shenoy has delved into the mysterious psyche of her characters and flawlessly pictured it. She has ability to express the most common way and that's her strength. And for this style of writing, her books have been widely read throughout the country. The title of the book in a way describes the central theme of the book but the manner in which she drives home the point through an interesting story, is delightful.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Preeti Shenoy is one of India's bestselling Indian authors known for her novel *Life Is What You Make it*. The book was selected in the 'Top Books of 2011' by Hindustan Times and became a national bestseller. Preeti Shenoy is a vibrant name in the world of Indian youth and her novels, poems and non-fictional works have much critical attention. *Life is what you make it* is her second published work. India today had named her as being unique for being only woman in the best-selling league. She is a blogger, very active on the social media and has an extremely popular blog. She is also an artist specializing in portraiture. Her writings revolve a lot around life and its entity, the challenges and the aspect of recording them. The hallmark of Shenoy's work is the simple language and the fact that is straight from the heart.

Shenoy's *Life is what you make it* is all about a happy living girl Ankita and how she reaches ups and downs in her life and how she overcomes obstacles in her life. The story begins with Ankita writing a letter from Cochin to her love interest Vaibhav who has just joined in IIT Delhi, describing the things in her new girls college. She makes friendship with many girls in her college and after winning the election she becomes the arts secretary of her college. She was studious and also all rounder of her college. In a college fest she meets Abhi and after some time unexpectedly she gets in a relationship with Abhi.

Twist arises when Abhi dies and Ankita along with her family shifts from Cochin to Mumbai when she got a seat in a prestigious MBA college. Anyway she feels some guilt about Abhi and Vaibhav, but she gets concentrated in her studies and she becomes

the topper of her college. She makes new friends, she has a perfect timetable and becomes too much excited about studying, painting, jogging, writing poems etc. But her excitement lasts for only few days.

Ankita suffers from Bipolar disorder, the story takes another different turn. Preeti Shenoy perfectly describes how badly ankita suffers from mental depression and how she loses all her interests in life. Ankita suffers too much badly and she is even unable to read and write properly, soon she regains herself with the help of Dr.Madhusudhan and overcomes bipolar disorder. The story ends with Ankita who overcomes her mental illness and fifteen years later she marries a kind man, she gained more than 6 academic degrees and she is working as art therapist.

Shenoy narrates the first half of the story with college, friends and relationship and second half with how Ankita suffered from bipolar disorder and later how she manages herself as a strong woman overcoming bipolar disorder. In the depression part, one could feel the pain of Ankita even more realistically. It also focuses on the little known disease called the bipolar disorder. This plot is set in the 80s and moves across two cities.

The story begins as a flashback. As story moves, we come to know that Ankita's parents are very old and don't approve of her being with other guys even if in a group, or allow her friends who are boys to call her at home. So they begin to sneak around, doing what they can to stay and touch. In her anxiety- ridden state, she passes sleepless night and in the worst of her fits, she attempts suicide. But, like the birth of phoenix she overcomes her peculiar circumstances. The characters are too lively as they can be seen in our everyday life. The characters are beautifully portrayed and describe in the novel



without even missing minute details. Among all the minor characters, the portrayal and nature of Dr. Madhusudan is inspiring. Through the traumatic experience that Ankita undergoes and the way she combats it all lends a positivity of approach on the part of the author towards such a grave thought.

The enormity of Ankita's life was speeding to the next level of hope, with the words of her doctor spreading in her mind like sunrise after sunset. After many months, Ankita is able to recover from her depression and is able to manage her condition. This positive attitude serves as an eye-opener to all those who in fits of frustration or depression stoop to the fatal tendencies as suicide or take recourse to other methods as drugs and addictions of the like. Fifteen years later as said in the epilogue she has earned six degrees, married and has a small daughter. The story highlights the belief of the author that although life is as it has been ordained yet it is the potential of the individual through which he can shape his own destiny.

The novel is based on a true life story of a girl who suffered a mental malady named bipolar disorder and how she combated it to resume to her normal life. At every moment when her life was at its peak, an unexpected turn of events strike to turn it all topsy turvy. This serves to catapult the u-turn of her life; she gradually starts feeling depressed.

Shenoy is concerned with philosophical explorations. She includes a positive spirit through her works. Shenoy's work generally interpret the life of common men and she pluck out the philosophical thought from it. The projection of the philosophy in her novels is best understood as the aesthetic undertaking of an imaginative writer who has

given as distinctive form to her novel by correlating the usual post- colonial mode of writing.

Shenoy is a novelist of consciousness. She is a contemporary writer who influences a lot of youngsters by producing a positive vibration and conveying a message through her works as "power of faith". It is also a story of courage, determination and faith of Ankita and the writer has made it successful by taking a totally different path from what is planned.

Shenoy is known for her simple vocabulary which creates a bond between the reader and the characters. The simple language used by her has made the novel easy to understand. The lucid narrative style makes the novel easy to read as well. The story is told in first person, which enables us to relate to the protagonist, Ankita Sharma. Shenoy prefers simple English for her readers to understand. She has also expressed her philosophical idea in this novel. Using this philosophical she lets her readers reflect about life.

The story of this novel is taken from real life incident. She had beautifully written some phrases. The author has used both long and short sentences. Shenoy has beautifully expressed the poetic diction which we could clearly see in some chapters. The author has also used the epistolary technique in some chapters. Thus, the novel explains the sufferings of loneliness and the state of complete depression, and how she is able to overcome that depression with the power of faith. Through these incidents Shenoy has portrayed her philosophical idea which proclaims our acts are responsible for what we are now. She has used her flawless story telling technique and keeps it straight and simple. She delves into the mysterious psyche of her characters and pictures it beautifully.

Shenoy insists her reader to be happy and positive in all circumstances. She explains the common suffering of women which gives a sudden hope to the readers to adapt the life and its challenges. She emphasizes the beautiful side of life which is a forgotten side in this modern era. The character from *Life* is *what you make it* represent the real incidents and leave a strong message that a friend can do miracles in one's life. Shenoy presents the digital era's mind set with colourful incidents. She makes the characters speaks her description.

Shenoy makes her readers think about the importance of smile and friends. She propels the motif that one should experience everything in life not only the victory. According to her, one can create his own rather than blaming fate.

One could get many themes as novel proceeds. First this novel explains the immature nature regarding election, leadership, infatuation, love and ambition. The concept goes with the Shakespeare's belief that destiny is determined by our deeds and not by fate. The themes of loneliness, psychological trauma, love-hate relationship can be exploded further. Shenoy has rightly used typical Indian imagery in bringing out the hidden facts behind Ankita. Thus, Preeti Shenoy has proved herself the best among the recent contemporary authors in India.



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**Resuscitation of Self in Anita Nair's *The Lilac House***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**



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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **Resuscitation of Self in Anita Nair's *The Lilac House*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

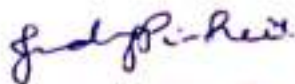
**THOOTHUKUDI**

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**OCTOBER 2018**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Resuscitation of Self in Anita Nair's *The Lilac House*** submitted to St. Mary's college (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Selva Kuzhanthai Meenakshi C. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Resuscitation of Self in Anita Nair's *The Lilac House*** analyses the protagonist's struggle in her quest for self identity and explore the freedom of the woman to live life basically as a human being.

The first chapter deals with a short biography of Anita Nair, discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in the realm of Indian Literature.

The second chapter throws light on the fragility of the modern Indian marriage and the overwhelming challenges of raising children in a milieu.

The third chapter depicts how women face the challenges of patriarchal society in their quest for self identity.

The fourth chapter deals with the expressions of myth as a metaphor to interpret man and woman and their emotions in various situations of life.

The fifth chapter sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters and supports the feministic concept.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Indian English Literature is the literature produced in English by Indians. This definition excludes the literature produced by Englishmen in India. Indian English Literature begins as an interesting by product of an eventful encounter in the late nineteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India. Indian English Literature may be defined as literature written originally in English by the authors who are Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality. It is clear that neither Anglo-Indian Literature, nor literal translation by others can legitimately form part of this literature.

Indian English Literature has travelled a lengthen voyage to reach its magnificence and stateliness. Indian English Literature refers to the body work by writers in India who write in the English language of India and whose native or co native language can be one of the numerous language of India, its early history begin with the works of Micheal Madhusudan Dutt followed by R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao who contributed to Indian Fiction in 1930. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian diaspora, such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kovind Gupta and Salman Rushdie, who are of Indian descent.

Indian writing in English relegate to a position of marginality on the world literary stage. Within India itself, regional literature enthusiasts will often point to its incompatibility in terms of culture and assert that only the literatures in the regional languages which can authentically portray the lived experience of Indians. In spite of Srinivasa Iyengar's and M. K. Naik's determine efforts to secure for Indian writing in English, the status of canonical literature, the Indian academia would not touched it even with a barge pole.



The beginning of Indian literature in English is traced to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, by which time English education is more or less firmly establishes in the three major centres of British power in India: Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. English literature in India is also intimately linked with the works of association of the Indians this creative writing in English is looked at as an integral part of the literary traditions in the Indian perspective of fine arts. The truthfulness and honesty of the writer writing in English is often made a theme of suspect in their own country.

English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. It is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglian literature. The first book written by an Indian in English is by Sake Dean Mahomet, titled *Travels of Dean Mahomet*. Mahomet's travel narrative is published in 1793 in England. In its early stages it was influenced by the Indian Western art form of the novel.

Early Indian writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. Indian writings in English are a product of the historical encounter between the two cultures such as Indian and the Western, for about one hundred and ninety years. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora, such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Agha Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie who are of Indian descent. It is frequently refer to as Indo-Anglian literature.

The mid twentieth century Indian literature in English has witness the emergence of poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, A. K. Ramanujan, Keki N. Druwalla, Gieve Patel is profoundly influenced by literary movements taking place in

the west, like symbolism, surrealism, existentialism, absurdism and confessional poetry. It is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the ever rare gems of Indian Writing in English commencing from Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Anita Nair, Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt to Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Allan Seally, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Chandra were the panache of fine Indian writers is long and much augmented.

After Independence, Indian constitution has enshrined many rights to women. Indian government has provided equal educational opportunities to women. Women's writing in the present world has made a deep impact on the social and cultural ambience. Women's literature is now perceived as an individual entity, bringing women's consciousness, experiences and values in the act of reading. Literatures produced by women exhibit the subjects, motifs and problems exploring their usage for self-definitions, at times by flouting the structured norms of propriety as well as discarding the prescribed norms of gender relations.

Indian women novelists in English tried their best to deal with pathetic plight of forsaken women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. The women novelists portray the miserable life of an average Indian woman. A woman has to suffer insults, abuse, oppression and injustice without any reason in this male dominated society. Women in the ancient times were upgraded and at all other times they are degraded. But in the modern time, women have shown their courage in every field and in some respect. This is the position of ancient Indian women and the notions upheld by greater thinkers and philosophers but the history of Indian authors in English picturizes that Indian women have shown their worth both qualitatively. Thus they are shown with great attitudes even today without any full stop.



The works of Manju Kapur, Bapsi Sidhwa and Taslima Nasrin focus on the area of contention between hegemonic values and the simultaneous changes transmuting women's consciousness, represented as a marginalized section in their own textual narratives. The underlining theme in the textual construction of the three novelists is the partition holocaust. Women's literature emerges out to be an outcry of a group of people who have remained suppressed, disregarded and abandoned under patriarchy and vested political groups. The dominant male discourses tied with each other to demote womanhood to subjectivity, neglect, infirmity and structured silence.

An anthology of female writers focuses only on one particular genre of literary fiction. It is a multi-disciplinary critique of novels written by South Asian female novelists like Neelum Saran Gour, Kamala Das, Jhumpa Lahiri, Monica Ali, Rama Mehta, Sashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Bapsi Sidhwa, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Manju Kapur, Namita Gokhale, Gita Hariharan, Anita Nair, Kiran Desai, Gita Mehta, Shobha De, Anita Desai and Kamila Shamsie.

South Asian women writers are largely categorized as indigenous to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and South Asian descent but reside in the foreign countries. The fiction of these women writers differ from that of their male counterparts in several ways, including the depiction of female characters. There are differences between British South Asian and Indian Literature the writings transcend barriers of nationality and culture by focussing on the awareness and awakening among their female protagonists. The female protagonists show their rights as human beings and fights for equal rights.

"Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life and it ought not to be" (54), declared Robert Southey in a letter written to Charlotte Bronte in *The Image of Women in Indian Literature*. Female writers of the Indian Diaspora too have carved a



position for themselves. Indian Women English writers have quietly and confidently gone about putting to shape their literary endeavours letting the product do the talking, which it has done most eloquently, establishing Indian English Literature as an inextricable part of Indian Literature.

The works of women novelists in English mirror the exact realistic picture of contemporary world where innocence is suffocating in the "blood-dimmed tide" of corruption in the poem *Second Coming* by W. B. Yeats, while women are supposed to be just dolls in the hands of men, where there is a prevailing sense of gender discrimination in an average house of Indian, where the helpless women have to bear the brunt of patriarchal domination. The novelists of the post independence period who highlighted the causes of women are Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy. These women writers main focus was on the undesirable dominance of men over women.

The novels of 1970s are women- and it become popular for the new dynamic Indian women. A radical thought for those times was Telugu writer Snehalatha Reddy's drama *Sita* (1974), which critiques Ramayana, and upholds the rights of Sita as a wife, as an individual and as women. Reddy depicts Sita as being a rebel against Rama and his pompous masculinity. Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975) which was awarded The Booker Prize and Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) are good examples of female protagonists' struggle for control over their lives. Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977), and Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), which won The Common Wealth Writer's prize for Best First novel in the Eurasian region, are other novels which highlight an educated women's quest for her roots. *The Thousand Faces of Night* portrays the mother daughter bond as well as depicts the life of three different women, of different generations. Many novels are

women-centred, and deal with domesticity, such as Anjana Appachana's *Listening Now*, which depicts the 16 years of the life of Padma, who is a lecturer in a university.

The 1980s sees a maturity in the use of language, style and technique. Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Arundathi Roy, Vikram Seth, Kavary Nambisan, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, Rama Mehta, Gita Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and others brought international recognition in western liberal morality. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela Kasturi, Sharmila Rege, and Vidyut Bhagat are some essayists and critics who write in favor of feminism in English. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* and Anita Nair's *Satyr of the Subway* similarly deal with human relationships. Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai both write on middle class family. They project the alienation and identity crisis of their male dominated female characters. Their quest is for an identity different from role playing as a daughter, a wife or a mother. Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* and, Anita Desai's *Where shall we go this summer?* plumb the depths of female psyche in the characters of Sarita and Sita. They have to find within themselves the strength to be emancipated while living within traditional roles of the society. Sudha Murthy's *Dollar Bahu* moves out of the traditional boundary of India into the land of dreams and revealing the other side of materialism and loneliness. She sees women in various stages of suffering within the folds of a cruel society, subjugated by husband, by children, by mother-in-law, by daughter-in-law, and coping with it.

The novels of 1990s focus on today's women of Modern India and leave it to us to gauge whether the status of women has undergone a change for the better or for the worse. These writers do not carry with them the colonial baggage but show a refreshing and different face of contemporary India. Their creations revolve around the general theme of middle class, in rural as well as urban set up and also the clash of



values and systems, when the twain meet. Namita Gokhale's *Gods, Graves and Grandmothers* (1994), is about social realism. Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984) is satirically comical where Paro is married several times and has an adulterous relationship with a younger man in contrast to a model Indian woman, who is subjugated and chaste. The 1990s novels are on female protagonists and their awareness of what it entails to be a woman in a male-, tradition bound society, as in the works of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Another theme to emerge is that of the lives of women during India's struggle for independence. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998) follows the journey of Ida, who traces the life of her mother Virmati and her grandmother, in a quest to understand them. Khushwant Singh gives authority to the fact posited by Santhosh Gupta in *The Company of Woman* that, "women novelists of the 80s and 90s portray women characters in search of self-fulfillment". Many women writers have written novels of magic realism, social realism and regional fiction. Suniti Namjoshi (1941) and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956) employ magic realism in *Mistress of Spices* (1997), and *The Mother's of Maya Diip* (1989). Suniti Namjoshi stands out for her use of fantasy.

The recent novels are about representation of middle class women who have a career, and a development of feminine sensibility beyond being a feminist. These novels show a lot of variety in genre and themes. Meera Syal's *Life isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (2000), depicts the dilemma of British- Asian men and women caught between the crossfire of traditions and customs of birth and adopted countries. It narrates the tales of Indian women from 1919 to present day, from youth to grandmothers. In *Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri explores the clash of cultures and generations and the painful experience of assimilation into alien culture. Anuradha Marwah-Roy's *Idol Love* (1999) presents a terrifying picture of an Indian dystopia in



the twenty-first century. Anita Rau Badami's third novel *Can You Hear the Night bird Call?* (2006), explores what endurance in difficult situations mean. Night bird spans from 1926 India to 1985 Canada. The three narrative female voices; Sharan, Leela and Nimmo, share the tragedy of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* (2006) revolves round the life of child widows, and pictures the stark life of misery that they live in. Some of the major themes of contemporary women writers are feminism, sex, identity crisis, alienation and loneliness. Shashi Deshpande, a contemporary Indian writer talks about self analysis and self understanding through which her explore their self identity. She has written eight novels of which *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence* has a special mention.

Arundhati Roy is the first Indian woman writer to win the prestigious Booker prize. In her novels, she depicts all kinds of characters and explains how her characters are alienated from one another and from society. Her concentration is exclusively on the women's feelings and thoughts and their search for self identity.

Even though other women novelists are more famous for their style and for their approach in handling fiction, Anita Nair has taken up an outstanding place as a novelist in Indian Literature. Anita Nair stands unique in her style, character portrayal, uplifting woman's rights and duties in their life. She vividly portrays their sufferings in the society. Anita Nair is particularly good on the domestic details such as lazy Sunday lunches, a family row, the sights, sounds and smells of a busy railway station, which make up her characters, live.

Anita Nair is a creative artist bestowed with immense proficiency and scholarly panorama. She is regarded as one of the leading novelists in Indian English Literature. In her works, Nair mainly focuses on the real human condition on the earth. At the same time, she is artful in interweaving her stories in the Indian scenario,

unique in presenting her conceptions and innovative in sharing the experiences of language. Exhibiting an individualistic flair in her writing style, Nair's novels display an awe-inspiring depth in her narration, and the main thrust of her novels is the confrontation between the self-actualization and family responsibilities of the individuals.

Almost all her novels are embedded in Indian culture and the characters and settings are inherently Indian. Her stories may be said to be ideological as well as practical, based on the structure of Indian middle class families. In this context, she displays a sharp mind and observation skill with which she depicts the enigma of Indian women, in an easy manner. Nair mirrors the society in her literary endeavours. In addition, her works are a mixture of realism as found in Indian culture with universal appeal.

Anita Nair was born at Mundakottakurissi near Shornur in Palakkad district of Kerala on January 26, 1966. She studied B. A in English Literature at NSS College, Ottappalam. Due to her father's work in the Ordinance Factory at Chennai, she spent her childhood days in a suburb called Avadi near Chennai. Presently Nair lives in Bangalore with her husband and son but her parents are still living in Kerala. Besides being a doting mother, wife and homemaker too, she was also successful in her career because of the support being offered by the members of her family.

Anita Nair was working as the creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories called *Satyr of the Subway*, which she sold to Har-Anand Press. Her fellowship from the Virginia Centre for her first book enabled her to move to Virginia Centre to pursue her education in Creative Arts in 1998.



Anita Nair's name has been recommended for the Booker Prize thrice. Her name has been selected for the awards such as Pen Margins Award in the U. S. A. And also her name has appeared in the Picador USA list. For her contribution to literature, she was awarded Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Women Achievers Award in 2008, Montblanc Award in 2009, and Women of Substance Award by the Times Group in 2010 and the JFW Women Achievers Award in 2011 conferred by the Sathyabama University. The Kerala Sahitya Academy felicitated her in 2012 and in the same year Arch of Excellence Award was bestowed on her by the All India Achievers award for her contribution to Children's Literature in 2013. Her novels have been translated into more than twenty languages.

Nair is a writer of different genres like novels, poetry, prose, essays, articles, book reviews, travelogues and non-fiction. She is also good at translations. Her first book *Satyr of the Subway* published in 1997, consists of twelve stories, each works around a dramatically different situation ranging from the mundane to the bizarre. This revised edition includes three new stories and incorporates occasional alteration to text, some marginal, some significant, where the writer has revised her characters or situations long after she first created them. The result is a fascinating collection of stories that traverse the entire gamut of human emotion, penetrating in their insight into male-female relationships and seriously funny in their take on the futility of expectations from life or from lovers.

Nair's second book and first novel *The Better Man* was published in 1999. It focuses on Mukundan's emergence from his dismays and humiliations. It fictionalises the patriarchal structure of Indian families. The novel is a profound exploration of the psychological problems of Mukundan. It is based in Nair's imaginary village Kaikurussi supposed to be in the Northern part of Kerala.



Her second novel *Ladies Coupe* was published in 2001. It was a story of six women who are in search of autonomy and perseverance. As a woman novelist, Nair depicts the problems of Indian women and probes into their psyche. The novel also deals with the transformation of the six women in the patriarchal society. The protagonist of the novel Akhila breaks out of the traditions of Indian society which chain her. Not only Akhila but also Prabha Devi, Janaki, Sheela, Margaret and Marikolanthu emerge as independent personalities.

Her third novel *Mistress* was published in 2005. It depicts the changing relationships of husband and wife in society. Her concept of a free woman transcends the limits of economic or social freedom, but relates to her mental and emotional attitude and wellbeing. *Mistress* is a grand saga of relationships. The novel deals with several themes like art and adultery, excitement of new found love, squalor and ugliness of love, abuse, dashed hopes and dark family secrets. It is a book which deals with infatuation and obsession across the gulfs of religion, marriage, legitimacy and conventions.

Her *Adventures of Nonu, the Skating Squirrel* was published in 2007. It is about the squirrel family which move to a new neighbourhood, that makes Nonu unhappy. But soon he discovers that his new home can be fun. With his new friend Nicole, and his brand new skateboard, Nonu is set to have many adventures. Nonu's vibrant world brought to life by bestselling novelist Anita Nair and accompanied by Vinita Chand's striking illustrations which enthralled children of all ages.

Through her novel *Lessons in Forgetting* which was published in 2010, she brings about a new and viewed look of Meera, who is carefully groomed corporate wife with a successful career as a writer of cookbooks. Then one day her husband fails to come home after a party and she becomes responsible not just for her children

but her grandmother and mother, and the running of Lilac House, their rambling old family home in Bangalore. Another important character is J. A. Krishnamurthy or Jak, a renowned cyclone studies expert who undergoes a different tragedy in his life. In his house lies his nineteen year old daughter Smriti, left comatose after a vicious attack on her while she was on holiday at a beachside town. A wall of silence and fear surrounds the incident. The grieving father is helped neither by the police, nor by her boyfriend in his search for the truth. Through the series of coincidences, Meera and Jak find their lives turning and twisting together with the unpredictability and sheer inevitability of a cyclone.

Nair is considered to be one of the most successful writers. She is able to convey her characters and settings so realistically which draws the readers so well. Being a woman she is more interested in the predicaments of women. She presents the vital reality and makes us aware of the miseries of women and injustices done to them by counterparts in the patriarchal society. However it is an important fact that though Nair's novels are crowded with female characters, the analysis of the novels reveals her focus is only on the women protagonists, and the other secondary characters are simply mentioned.

Nair's novel *The Lilac House* was published in 2010. The novel set in India, traces the intersection of the lives of two individuals undergoing devastating personal tragedies. Meera is the protagonist of the novel. Her husband Giri fell in love after spying her in the yard of her family home, the Lilac House. After marriage the couple live there with their two children and Meera's mother and grandmother. As of late, Giri has been pressuring Meera to sell the house, but she refuses and doesn't tell him why the house cannot be sold. Meanwhile Jak, a professor who has been living in the United States, is back in India to determine how his beloved daughter, a University

student, was injured. Smriti, bedridden and unable to communicate, must be cared for around the clock.

Jak and Meera met at a wine lunch where Meera, a successful cookbook author, and Giri appear for the last time as a couple. Before the party ends, Giri abandons her and their son, running off to another life without them. In order to support her family, Meera takes a position working as Jak's assistant, but not before realizing that he is the man who gave her a ride home from the party where her husband dumped her. Frantic about money and unsure of herself, Meera struggles with her change of fortune while Jak faces a future with a child who will never again regain her functionality.

*The Lilac House* narrates from two points of view. There is Meera's story and the characters' within it, and then there is Jak's story with his family and friends. Both the characters are fleshed out by their memories of a time not so long ago.



## Chapter Two

### Sound of Silence

Anita Nair provides perfect example of victimized women in a patriarchal society. Marriage is still a social necessary in which women seek security and men seek responsibility. In an analysis of man woman relationship, the male characteristics were coupled with mental thoughts and positive activity. On the other hand a woman is regarded as dutiful person. In the olden days women is completely traditional, uneducated, superstitious and confined. So a woman has become narrow and controlled. They are unknown of the outside world. A woman is cut off from the dynamic world.

Anita Nair's *The Better Man*, *Lessons in Forgetting* and *The Lilac House* are the novels which mark the mode of twenty first century. There is a drastic change in patriarchy, norms of marriage, parents, child and child parent relationship, love and sex. These changes cause changes in the norms of our social culture. Nair's male and female characters are revolting against the social, cultural and economic aspects of traditional society. So these characters project the cultural changes and these cultural changes mark the mode of contemporary society.

Anita Nair's *The Lilac House* explores marital relationships in the high middle class family along with the problem of parenthood in the context of family life in the corporate world. This novel has a strong feminine flavour where the author portrays her female protagonist as a strong woman. Marriage is an integral part in woman's life. Anita Nair is concerned with the studies, family, and love and striving for fame and fortunes. She has portrayed such a life in this novel. Educated women in India try to assert their individuality though they are constrained in their family life by the traditional patriarchal culture. They are also constrained in their quest for freedom

when there are children to look after, since they think that children are their responsibility.

In India, it is the traditional norms that keep a woman tied to. The fear of society and of being a misfit is a great impediment for a woman. And in India women are always considered to be inferior beings. Women are denied of their rights. So this contradiction needs to be reflected in Anita Nair's characters as well. She portrays about the fragility of the modern Indian marriage and the overwhelming challenges of raising children in the society. This is an ambitious layered novel.

Meera is the protagonist of the novel. She is forty four years old well educated housewife, married to a corporate husband and has two children, a daughter and a son. She is happily submerged in the role of corporate wife. She is the writer of cook book and guides for corporate wives. She is also a typical Indian middle class wife, who is happy to be dependent on her husband. Nayantara was her daughter and she works in the IIT. Nickel is her son. Meera and her family live with her mother, Saro and her grandmother, Lily in a lovely Lilac House in Bangalore. Evelyn Shyndya in *Evolution of an Empowered woman in Anita Nair's Lessons in Forgetting* aptly defines Indian womanhood as, "Women in India who feel proud that they are well protected by their husbands without realizing that they are making themselves helpless". (84)

In the beginning of the novel, Meera, Giri, and their son participate in the party. Meera always wants to be with Giri, but Giri suggests her to mingle with others. It seems that Meera is more possessive, but he does not like that. When Meera take part in the party, she mingles with other people as advised by Giri. In the meantime, Meera searches for him, but she cannot find him anywhere. Later on she comes to know that he has escaped from the party without conveying anything. In such circumstances, Meera compares Giri with Zeus, the husband of Hera.



My Giri is not Zeus. He does not frolic with nymphets or even goddesses. He is prone to fits of rage; he is ambitious. But he is eminently trustworthy. Meera hears again the censorious voice in her head: That's exactly what Hera must have thought each time Zeus disappeared from her horizon! (10)

Meera feels like a queen in her domestic world. She is blissfully unaware of her own individuality, her selfhood, her own independent world. She is married to Giri, who hails from a comparatively poor social background. Giri is enchanted with the Lilac House, the garden around, and Meera in her white nightie chasing the geese away. Giri enters as a model coordinator to assist shooting for a film. But he is attracted by the house as well as the girl, Meera. Giri is impressed as he has never known the high middle class culture. He is hailed from a poor family, but he has done his IIM in Ahmedabad and secured a job in the corporate world. Giri married Meera under the impression that the family owned the beautiful Lilac House, which in fact was only on a lease with them.

After the marriage, Meera's grandmother Lily and her mother Saro, even Meera expected Giri to move to his house, his apartment. But Giri refuses to move out of the Lilac House. He persists in his wrong idea that Meera owns the Lilac House and she fails to tell him it is not. Like Zeus, the king of Greek Gods, Giri is unfaithful to his Meera-Hera. Giri desperately wants to sell the Lilac House, and Meera keeps opposing it. But she does not tell him the truth that the house is on a lease with them.

Meera does not have big dreams. She will not crave for designer clothes or ornaments and expensive holidays. She is happy with what she gets. But she realizes that her husband is not satisfied with what he gets. And one day Giri vanishes from her life, leaving her with her children. Meera feels the sorrow and pain of being



betrayed. When she suspected Giri of having an affair, she tried to console herself thinking that he is not a compulsive philanderer.

Besides, Giri is not Zeus. He isn't a compulsive philanderer, merely a middle aged man who has had his head turned. Meera tells herself, don't panic, who else can offer him this cornucopia of elegance? Which other woman can lay his table as I do, or make a home for him as I do? The felicity of our lives may be shadowed, but will never be tainted or violated. Giri will not risk losing any of this. (74-75)

Meera believes that he will come back. But she is disenchanted when Giri comes to see her finally and refuses to see her at home. Here, it is Meera alone who is paralysed as she was so much worried about how to face her new responsibility of the household. Indian women, who take the security of their married life as granted have to face this traumatic experience of the dissolution of their marriage. They are not mentally prepared for this experience. She used to go to parties because Giri liked it as it gave him a chance to mix with the social elites in such parties. While with Giri, she has to think of her appearance, of her physique, to look well among the women who thronged the parties. She is now at a loss to know how to react to the rejection, being abandoned by Giri. She does not know how to face this situation in her practical life.

There was a time when Zeus decided to punish Hera for her wilfulness. He hung her from the sky, shackled by golden bracelets at the wrist and an anvil at the ankle. In the oceans below, Hera saw herself reflected. She quailed at the image of what she had been turned into. Worse was the knowledge that she would be seen thus: a woman petrified. How could something like this have happened to her? Hera

didn't know what hurt more, the pain or the humiliation. A cry escaped her. (70)

Meera is really an outstanding and self sacrificing wife, as well as an excellent mother. But she is not careful about her looks, as she does not make extra efforts to look beautiful. When Giri left her, she became aware of the changes in her. Meera's love left her, but she has to look after her family. Like Hera, the Greek goddess, she too is betrayed by her husband. Meera's marriage ends with Giri abandoning her. She has to economize on everything such as telephoning, newspapers and magazines, lights and fans. She has never thought of her own desires, except for becoming a perfect housewife for Giri. In personal relationships, as Bhaskar A. Shukla in *Indian English Literature-After Independence* says; "There are three fundamental "affects" that can exist between the self and the other attachment, frustration and rejection". (42)

Meera now realizes that Giri's choice to marry her is dictated by the prospect of selling this beautiful house, and not really the love for her. She now emerges as a new woman. After the disappearance of Giri, she manages to stand on her own feet. She finds a job and manages to fulfil her responsibilities as a mother, a daughter, and she slowly accepts that life has more to offer, even though she does not know exactly what was stored for her. In the meantime, she faces so many difficulties to run the family without having money for her own use. When she is searching for a job, she find a job as a research assistant to a Professor of cyclones from the University of Florida, Jak or Kitcha, who is there for his own mission. Meera gets acquainted with other men after Giri had left her, including the cine star, Soman Rishi and Jak, the storm predictor.



After a long time, Meera gets a mail from Giri that he is settled in Madras. He reveals the reason that why he left her. That is after their marriage he requests her to sell the Lilac House for the development of their family. But she refuses to do that and tells him that it was not hers and they have to pay for staying in the Lilac House. Later, he asks her to divorce him because he wants to marry another girl. In the beginning she compares herself as Hera but after the disappearance of Giri, she gets disappointed.

I am not Hera, she tells herself. I will not panic. I will not spew venom or make known my rage. I will not lower my dignity or shame myself. I can live with these shadows as long as it is me he comes from to. Besides, Giri is not Zeus. He is not a compulsive philanderer. (39)

Anita Nair portrays the character of Meera as an organized person. She does not have any identity for her own, because she assumes different roles as a granddaughter, daughter, wife and mother. She submerged herself into the identity of her husband and allows her to the other roles to contain. The absence of Meera's identity reveals a sad reality of position of women in India.

The women is just doing her job. And it seems to Meera, wife of Giri, queen of her world, mother of two, author of cook books, mentor of corporate wives and friend to the rich and celebrated, that she who has everything can afford to be forgiving... Meera can afford to be generous. She gleams at the woman. (248)

Jak is a weather expert and specially a cyclone specialist. He is working on a book on cyclone. There is a lot of data to wade through, a lot of information to source and collate, and also he is in need of someone's help for his research. So he appoints Meera as his research assistant. When Jak comes to know about the life of Meera, he



thinks of the life of his mother. His mother Sarada Ammal, is a perfect wife and mother. But his father is not interested in marriage. So he is forced by his relatives to marry Sarada and Jak was born. Although he has a perfect wife and son, he is not interested in the family life. So he wants to go to Ashram leaving his wife and son. His mother feels a lot to allow him to go and Jak discovers his mother who plays as a stone after his father has gone. Jak does not know how to console his mother because he also misses his father.

What do I do now? They tell me I ought to feel blessed to have been married to a man who has taken up sanyas. I am cursed, Kitcha, that's what I am. Neither a wife nor a widow. Who am I Kitcha? You tell me...If he let me for another woman, I would woo him back. I would bring him back to us. But this! How do I fight this, Kitcha?. (17)

Then Jak is married to Nina. She belongs to Madras. They have two daughters, Smriti and Shruti. He is known for the reader of omens, the collector of warnings and the storm warning man. He is very accurate in his predictions. He spends most of his time in studying cyclone. For most of the time he stays out of his house. So Nina divorced him. Disaster comes like a Cyclone and it is not aware of any person.

Box after box of dolls from day one to age fourteen and two months, when Jak and Nina separated. When Jak sent for them. Nina's voice had cracked. What are you planning to do with the dolls?. (55)

Like Meera, Jak fails to sense the change. His absence at home has created a distance between him and Nina. As Nina is a short tempered woman, their marriage comes to an end. Both Jak and Nina got divorced and Smriti lives with Jak and Shruti lives with Nina. In this novel, Nair shows two kinds of broken marriage relationships. The first is abandoned by her husband, and the second is abandoned by his wife. The

two protagonists of this novel are abandoned by their partners without having any valuable reasons. Both are helplessly living in the same situation.

Jak's daughter Smriti is very much interested in listening to the tales of India. She comes to India for her Undergraduate studies. She meets one of her friends Shivu in the Shakti Forum. The coordinator of the Forum is the woman named Rupa, who planned to conduct a play on the theme of Female Foeticide. Smriti actively participated in the play. When she goes to Minjikapuram with her friend Rishi Menon she gets injured by a bit of broken glass while walking near a sea beach. So she goes to the nearby hospital for treatment. There she noticed many pregnant women and she come to know that every woman came for scanning in order to find the gender of the foetus. If the report of foetus is girl child, they should do abortion either willingly or forcibly. Smriti felt that it is an illegal and she wished to stop that. She tries to collect the proof against that for creating a report. She meets Chinnathayi, whose daughter dies at the nursing home in abortion. Smriti is in need of some proof regarding the female infanticide problem from Chinnathayi. She also promises to help Smriti. But the people who are supporting for the scanning method threatened Smriti's friend to leave the village Minjikapuram. They also threatened Chinnathayi not to help Smriti and they send a message in the name of chinnathayi and asked her to come to the sea beach. When Smriti comes to the sea beach, those people destroyed her and she becomes motionless and pathetic frozen figure.

When Jak receives the news about the fatal accident of his daughter, he comes to India for the investigation of her daughter's accident. His education taught him to ask questions, to go beyond the limit. Jak, being a father of Smriti, he tries to discover the matter of accident. When the investigation starts he meets the different people who are the friends of Smriti. Those people gave different opinion about her accident.



Jak feels that he is about to know the truth, unfortunately it happens all in vain. As Meera, he also comes to a situation to think about his future life. The shocking experience of Meera over Giri's sudden disappearance from her life is nothing when compared to the blow that Jak receives over the tragedy of his daughter.

Jak took Meera to his house at Bangalore. Both of them shared their thoughts about their families. Meera talks about her daughter Nayantara who is at IIT, Chennai. Jak talks about his daughter Smriti who is nineteen years old. The description of Smriti's room and about her is a very touching one. The novelist's artistic hand creates sympathy not only in the mind of Meera but also in the minds of the readers.

But it is the girl on the bed who causes Meera to grip her bag even more tightly. Her eyes crinkle. Is that a girl? She hasn't seen anything like this creature. Not even in her disaster documentaries. A wave of revulsion washes over her. It lies poleaxed. Legs separate and hands flung wide apart. Swathed in a blouse and pyjamas of fine cotton, it's hair razed to a stubble. Thin as paper and almost as pale, the skin stretched across the bones, causing the cheeks to hallow inwards. The eyes wide open, cast of glass. The mouth askew. A face stricken in a permanent leer. Something about the hardness of the stare and the grim mouth gives in an evil cunning. (137).

When Meera is stunned by the creature's appearance, Jak come forward and tells her that creature is his daughter Smriti. Meera starts showing a motherly attitude towards Smriti. Jak suffered so much when he listened to Chinnathayi's report about the fatal accident of his daughter. Meera starts consoling him and at the same time shrugs away the sadness that threatens to swamp her.



The next character is Kala Chithi who lives with her husband Ambi happily. She has a long hair which attracts her family and also her husband. He makes her a modest girl and then a modest woman. Her husband is very much impressed by her long hair which makes him marry her. And also he gets promise from her that she should not do anything on her hair without his permission. But Kala disobeys his words and cuts her hair without his knowledge. This incident caused some misunderstanding between kala and Ambi. So they decide to break their relationship.

For the first six months Ambi choose to punish me. I had to be thought a lesson, he deemed. For six months he didn't speak to me. Six months of not even a smile. We ate together, slept together, even fornicated when Ambi had the urge, but he wasn't the Ambi I knew or loved. I loved. I was never more lonely or desolate than I was then. (205)

Ambi is not ready to forgive her, so he wants to marry another girl by giving the reason that she also finds the reason to leave him. She herself thinks that she is a wrong wife and she wants to go away from him. Before she leaves him, she cuts her hair at the nape of her neck and gives it to Ambi and declares, "This is all you ever wanted of me. And let me go" (206). After departure she returns to her father's home.

In this novel Anita Nair portrays the condition and status of women and how they suffer in the patriarchal society without having any identity on their own. Her novel reveals the effect of social conditioning of women. She has portrayed her protagonists who are economically independent but still they do not have control over their own life and even major decisions of their life are taken by others. In *The Lilac House*, she tells how women suffer after getting married and without marriage. A woman has to suffer a lot in the patriarchal society.

*The Lilac House* is a story of real people in a real world but far from perfect country, where female infanticide still happens with impunity. It is also a story of forgiveness, redemption and second chances. It is about the individuals in deep crises together to offer succour to each other. Nair's female characters have no identity. But they are bold enough to fulfil their desires by negating family bond to go to the extent of establishing physical gratifications with other men. Women are kept in silence in the male dominated society as they have no rights to do anything and this is portrayed in *The Lilac House*.

## Chapter Three

### Breaking the Barriers

Patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. Feminist theorists have written extensively about patriarchy either as a primary cause of women's oppression, or as part of an interactive system. Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* defines patriarchy as a system of oppression of women. Firestone believes that patriarchy is caused by the biological inequalities between women and men such as women bear children, while men do not. Firestone writes that patriarchal ideologies support the oppression of women and gives as an example the joy of giving birth, but she labels a patriarchal myth. For Firestone women must gain control over reproduction in order to be free from oppression.

Feminist historian Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* writes that "male control over women's sexuality and reproductive functions is a fundamental cause and result of patriarchy." (76) According to Anita Nair, feminism does not uproot women from her background but tries to expose the ideology by which a woman is trained to play her docile role in society. Caryl Fiorina, an American business person and a Politian on her lecture entitled *Changing the Leadership* says, "Feminism doesn't shut down conversations or threaten women. A feminist is a woman who lives the life she chooses and uses all her God given gifts." (58)

Self identity is the distinct trait of an individual. It is a self interactive system of thoughts, feelings and aspirations which exemplifies the uniqueness of an individual. As all the human activities are centred on these endeavours in pursuit of the self, the quest and recreation of the self becomes the predominant concern of



authors of all genres. In Anita Nair's *The Lilac House*, her characters have come out of their struggles in their quest for self identity. Her novel explores the freedom of the woman to fulfill herself basically as a human being. The nature of the self identity is something complicated. It is a constant thrash about going on within every human entity to find coherence among the selves. The self identity within oneself is a source of constant conflict and lack of harmony inside a human being which leads to the hypothetical question of the identity of the self. Margaret Chatterjee in *Philosophical Inquiries* deals the problems correlated with the identity of the self that: "the question of the identity of the self is no less fraught with puzzles. In what sense are you the 'same' as you were ten years ago? There are similar puzzles too about the identity of physical things." (68)

In *The Lilac House*, Meera has gone through an identity crisis in her marriage with Giri. She is basically conservative in the sense that she cannot enjoy the party culture of the high middle class society. She tries to become a corporate wife merging herself into the life of her husband. But when Giri leaves her abruptly, she is at a loss to know what to do with herself. There is deep crisis in her life, as she had merged her identity into her married life. Her attachment is the barriers for the realization of her selfhood. So Meera emerges as a new woman as her marriage is splintered on the rock of the infidelity of her husband.

Meera gropes within herself, searching for some clue that will tell her how to react. Grief. Betrayal. Anger. Fear. Loss. Resentment. Hatred. What is she to feel? It would come to her soon, the knowledge of how to decipher the significance of this moment. It would reveal itself and take precedence over the hammering in her forehead that demanded with every throb. (73)

Meera also transforms herself with short hair cut and wearing starched cotton saree. She tells the woman at the saloon to give her a new short hair style. She changed herself in to a new woman. She decides to put aside her cursing life and her predicaments and decides to face life with love. Meera realizes what it means to be a single woman, a woman forsaken by her husband. Now Meera realize her potential and she emerges as a career woman.

Meera changes herself from weak woman and becomes an enlightened self. Meera left with no choices but to decide her life further from where she is left alone by Giri. Her decision to accept the job as a research assistant of Professor Jak, in his studies and household responsibilities gives her confidence. As a secretary to Jak, Meera decides to be on her guard about how far she can go in her relationship with jak and his household. Meera now becomes a cautious woman. Betrayal of Giri also empowers her in the sense that she has become emotionally independent and also economically responsible for herself and her family. Meera is an example of a new woman, the result of the growth of educational and employment opportunities. She is also an emancipated woman. She is an educated middle class woman in an urban area, who can avail of employment opportunities and can be self dependent.

All her aches to rush forward and give herself to him. To make his battles hers. To mesh their lives and hopes. To fashion something out of nothing. But she knows that if she does this, the Meera she has become will wither and die forever. She will be there for him, Meera decides. But to keep herself alive, she will need to dredge all the selfishness that lies deep within her. (325)

Meera decides to give up her old identity as Hera as there is no Zeus. She starts her second life as Giri does. She realizes that Giri is entombed in a past and no



one has interest in him. Nair suggests that women have to be there for women. Sisterhood is a key to the woman who is alone. Nair also describes marriage as the circle of security that has enchanted the husband and life. It is not the house of the money, the sex, kids or companionship.

A woman by herself at a party is like a man by herself. She knows who she reminds herself of. Some trace of sentiment makes you keep it instead of throwing it away, but each time you see it you wonder what you are going to do with it. (183)

Kala Chiti is another example of woman's resistance against age old traditions. She is renamed as Vaidehi. The name is associated with the qualities of an ideal woman and ideal wife like loyalty, humbleness, scarification etc. Kala is also the victim of patriarchal attitudes. Her husband is happy with her long hair. But her voluminous hair was the cause of her neck pain. Her husband ordered Kala not to cut her hair. This is typical patriarchal attitude that dictates a woman what to do, wear, where to go and whom to be friend.

What am I to do then? Live with this pain till I die? I snapped, angered by her inability to see my point of view. You don't have to tie it up every night, she said, opening my braid and unravelling it like it was a skein of rope. The pain will go away, Kala. Besides, there is much greater pain waiting for us woman in our lives. (195)

Kala does not believe in age old traditions. When her sister, Sarada, is considered responsible for her husband leaving the home, she strongly raises the question about how she is responsible. Kala subdues her pain with the help of Jak. Jak advised her to cut her hair to find relief from her headache. When she cuts her hair, her husband Ambi punishes her by not speaking to her. Then Ambi decides to



rennary, because after seven years of marriage they do not have a child. She cuts her hair and offers to him and decides to leave him and her married name, Vaidehi. She starts to live with Sarada with her old name Kala Chiti.

I finally had a reason to leave him. Not even my father could fault me for this. I was the wronged wife. So I left him. Before I went, I cut my hair at the nape of my neck. I gave it to Ambi. A long braid woven with Jasmine and Kanakambaram. 'this is all you ever wanted of me. Keep it. And let me go.' I said, walking out. (206)

Meera and Kala, face the same fate in their marital life. Kala decides to leave her husband and defies her tyrannical behaviour. She sets an example for modern women by asserting her individuality. In a patriarchal Indian society a woman is to carry the burden of any failure. After the abandonment by her husband, Kala becomes an independent, strong woman and is able to think of her own life. Kala would be different from her mother who is self sacrificing obeying her husband's wishes for the whole life.

'I am not going back. And I will never grow my hair again,' I said. If you force me to, I'll leave home. I will be a whore but I won't be a wife. Not Ambi's wife. And don't call me Vaidehi ever again. I am Kala, do you hear me? (206)

Smriti is also the victim of the patriarchal society. She is the most important character who rebels against the existing social orders such as dowry system, female foeticide, etc. Through Smriti Anita Nair presents the image of a new woman who is educated and courageous. She is capable of creating a path of her own in this patriarchal world. Moreover Smriti's plight cautions the young mind against the containment and explosion. Smriti makes her life down for the noble cause.

Despite the laws and regulations, women still find a way of discovering the sex of their unborn babies, if not the woman, their families. They abort the foetus if it's a girl. Soon there may come a day when there are no women left. What is need is awareness. To make the women realize that the girl foetus has to be given a chance. (285)

Smriti, the daughter of Jak and Nina resides with her father after the legal separation of her parents. Inspired by her father's Indian stories, she comes to India in pursuit of her higher studies. Smriti represents the mistaken identity. India makes her an active member of the forum. She is inspired by the slogans of the forum like "The dying daughters of India need you" (153). This slogan creates awareness on dowry, burning the women and female foeticide in little towns.

Think about it. You would be truly seeing India. The India that worries you. Here is your chance to do something. To talk to these women who kill their daughters in their wombs without a qualm. It is not awareness that is needed here. It is to be able to stoke up guilt, regret, remorse, the works. (152)

For an awareness campaign she goes to her father's village, Minjikapuram in Tamil Nadu with her friend, Rishi Soman. When she visits a hospital there for treating glass injury she is shocked to see there, many pregnant women who have come for scanning to find the gender of the foetus. If it is a girl child, they do abortion either willingly or forcefully. Smriti finds it illegal.

'It's illegal!' Smriti's voice rose. They do it here. Why do you think we came here? The scan doctor is not from this town. They bring him from somewhere else, and he tells us if we ask him, the woman whispered. All these pregnant women, they come from various parts of



the district. Do you think there are no hospitals where they live? It's because of the scan doctor. (292)

Smriti tries to collect proof against all this for making a report. She meets a woman, Chinnathayi whose daughter dies at the nursing home after an abortion. Smriti wants some paper regarding this issue from Chinnathayi. Dr. Srinivasan and his men pass a wrong message to Smriti using Chinnathayi's name and call her at sea beach. When Smriti comes there, three of them destroy her. She becomes a motionless, pathetic and frozen figure. Smriti, a girl brought up in the United States has got into the troubles when identifying her with the fellow Indian women. She considers it as her duty to amend the social injustice. Maya Vinai in *Interrogating Caste and Gender Anita Nair's Fiction: Prestige Books International* says,

Smriti in *The Lilac House* is a victim of such a mistaken identity. Men in India are still unequipped to face such a kind of modernity, which is an shoot of progressive western education and upbringing. Smriti with all her frivolousness is also a girl who wants to bring about a reform in the society by her social activism. (118-119)

Then Anita Nair gives the image of Jak's mother Sarada, who want to be free to unburden their life. Her husband deserts her with a son for attaining sainthood and her parents blame her for his disappearance. So she starts to live on her own with her son Jak. She begins to work in a small school as a primary teacher in Math in the neighbourhood. Later she completes B. Ed to economically independent. When her husband sends her a letter narrating the impossibilities of his return, Sarada understands the real facet of her life and determined to lead a life for hers. So she remarries Physics teacher from Hyderabad. Thus Sarada stands as a fine epitome of woman's struggle to lead a life of her.



Appa's dissatisfaction with everything around him- his home, his wife, his son. I clung to him. I shouldn't have. When people stop loving each other, they shouldn't stay together. It doesn't do any good, Amma continued. I should have understood his unhappiness. I should have let him go when he first wanted to go. (149)

*The Lilac House* is a story of women's quest to move on in life. Moreover they design their future for themselves. Anita Nair writes about the search of identity of her woman characters and their assertion of the individual self. Her novel represents the new Indian women's voice. A new woman is in search of self identity and replacing the traditional image of Indian woman. Anita Nair's female protagonists are more intelligent and they are more capable than men. Anita Nair is fascinated towards the complexities of human relationships.

Anita Nair's writing gives expression to personal emotions. When this personal emotion becomes public, it becomes universal and symbolizes human emotion itself. Her women are aware of the cultural and social shortcomings to which they are subjected in this male dominated society. They rebel against their men in search for freedom and identity. Anita Nair's women stand at the cross roads of tradition. They challenge their victimization and find a new balance of power between their men. They strongly believe in conformity. Women strive hard to get their self identity as a better position by shifting their thought from why to why not. In this society, resuscitation can happen only when such longing ideas come into existence.

## Chapter Four

### Mythical Expressions

For the Indian English novelists, a novel is a means of expression borne of their total understanding of their men, nature and God. Their expression becomes effective and appropriate through language, form and technique. Writers use different techniques and styles in order to describe their experience. Women writers are faced with a double bind situation while writing out their novels, because women writers write about unique experiences and feelings that is different from ordinary men. When they aspire to succeed in their writing, they have to rise above their feelings of gender inequality. This is more applicable to a feminist writer who tries to give expression to the strong feelings of anger and intolerance against the injustice and oppression of women she sees around her. In order to render such observations authentically the women writers resorts to various strategies. They use various techniques in order to create spaces for themselves at various levels.

To make the novel a working model of life and portrayal of real life the novelists employs narrative techniques. Technique means the pattern, coherence and sense of perspective imposed by the novelist in selection and explanation. Narrative techniques refer to the particular aspects of a text which one can identify, comprehend, interpret and analyse. It helps the authors to create meaning with the help of language. Anita Nair's narration is natural and convincing. Anita Nair has used the narrative technique in portraying the problems of modern Indian woman.

The concern with the technique has been slow to evolve in the Indian English fiction. The Indian English fiction has attained its maturity in the thirties. During that time, the novelists started employing new experiments in the techniques of novels by assimilating the innovations of modern European novelists and adapting them to suit



the treatment of Indian traditions. In the post independent period the novelists is attracted to new techniques in plotting, narration and characterization. Anita Nair has been recognised for her skill in handling the modern fictional techniques such as flashbacks, interior monologue and stream of consciousness. Indian Writing in English has a very few writers dealing with the stream of consciousness technique.

The stream of consciousness technique is employed by writers like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Shouri Daniels, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Attia Hosain and Anita Nair. Anita Nair uses this technique to portray the inner nuances of the consciousness of her characters. Like Anita Desai she has given a typically Indian stream of consciousness revealed through the inner confusion of an Indian character in a typically Indian situation.

Stream of consciousness is a narrative device used in literature to depict the innumerable thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind. In a psychological sense, the stream of consciousness is the subject matter, while interior monologue is the technique for presenting it. Interior monologue always presents the character's thoughts directly.

Anita Nair uses metaphor as a literary device in her novel *The Lilac House*. Metaphors are used by writers for the purpose of conveying complex concepts in an easy way. Language is deeply metaphorical because people find it difficult to grasp new concepts unless they are expressed by a real model. Metaphor is the co operative fusion of meanings which appears to be the most important device for creative literature.

In *The Lilac House*, Anita Nair uses myth as a metaphor to interpret man and his emotions in various situations of life. Myth is a device for meditating contradictions or oppositions as experienced by men. It recounts certain events. By



using myths Anita Nair recounts various experiences in life. Her quest for classical myths is revealed in the novel. Myths with their predictable standard connotations are helpful in interpreting the peculiar permutations and combinations in which human mind reacts and responds to various situations in life.

In *The Lilac House* Anita Nair uses Greek mythology of Zeus and Hera to interpret the material life of Giri and Meera. Zeus and Hera's marriage is similar to Giri and Meera's marriage. Zeus and Hera's marriage is tumultuous. Meera compares herself to Hera, who has always been silent against her husband Zeus words. Meera thinks that she is like Hera who can blow the sails and winnow the fields against him but it is of no use with woman like her, as women are same everywhere.

The wind is Hera's own. But it is only when Zeus smiles that Hera can puff the sails and winnow the fields. Or what use is the wind to Hera? Wives are the same everywhere. When Giri smiles, so does she. A wife in love. Meera Hera.(5)

Giri starts to create his own laws at home. When he chooses things for Meera, he never thinks about her desires. And Meera is silent and quite, pushing aside all her desires because she is frightened of his fanged words.

Zeus spoke as he worked his way through the Sunday newspapers. Zeus, whose bidding even the heavenly bodies obeyed, would tolerate no interference. He made the laws. She, Meera Hera, listened. Or he would hurl that vicious thunderbolt of sullenness. Silence and quite, but determined pacing through the rooms, which frightened her more than any fanged words could.(4)

Meera never realizes the true colour of Giri until he demanded her for her Lilac House. But Meera always nurses him with her love as she believes that Giri too

has the same love for her. Like Hera she has wooed the cuckoo warming it in her bosom, without knowing its true shape until Zeus took to his own shape and ravished her.

Where is her Zeus by the way? She hasn't seen Giri since they got here. Meera thinks again of Hera. How strange that the trajectories of their lives have followed almost the same path. Like Hera, she too has gathered a bedraggled cuckoo into her bosom. It has eaten and drunk its full, nestled in her warmth and love, and now it wants her home. What is she to do? Be Hera who wised up to what Zeus in the disguise of that cuckoo wanted of her? Or allow herself to be manipulated like a guileless crow mother with a cuckoo child in its nest? (4)

Meera does not suspect Giri when his colleagues Neruda and Pushkin sit on Giri's beside. Giri step out for evening walks out of her sight by hiding his mobile phone in his breast pocket as if it has contained a rare pearl. She pretends not to see the changes in his wardrobe or to hear his mobile. Meera believes that no one else could offer such love and elegance as Hera thought that no other Goddess, nymph or mortal creature could do as she had offered unto Zeus.

Hera, who had a wedding night that lasted three hundred years. Hera had known how to core the golden apple, scooping a hallow in each half. Into it she had poured all of herself: her fragrance and breath, spit and mucus, milk and wellness, sweat and soul. She had cut a quarter off the half and run it along her limbs, gathering into its juice all the sweetness of her youth and hope, and fed it to Zeus with her lips. His tongue snaked out of his mouth, and fed from others. They feasted off



each other and Hera thought, what other woman will offer him this?

(39)

Meera is an abandoned wife. But she becomes the protectress of the family. And she also longs for protection from Giri. Though she is the protectress, the winds are the original property of Hera. In the battle between giants and the Olympians, Hera is strangled by porphyron and she searches for Zeus. She forgets that she is a protectress and longs for her husband Zeus to protect her. Meera is also in the same position as Hera. She wishes that Giri should come to rescue her as Zeus did for Hera.

For Zeus had always been there to rush forth to her rescue. And so in the battle between the giants and the Olympians, when Porphyron placed his enormous hands round her neck and began strangling her, Hera's last thought wasn't: I am dying. Instead, it was the harried but secure wife's anger that made her wriggle: 'Where is Zeus when I need him?' Hera couldn't even consider the possibility that Zeus wouldn't rush to rescue her. (100)

In the absence of Giri, Meera lets Soman into her and she is ashamed of her passion. Meera has a conflict whether to indulge in such pleasure or not. She even tells herself that it is the false Meera like the false Hera. Then she decides that whether Hera or Meera, no woman could be unmoved of such passion. Anita Nair has employed this metaphor to bring out the inner conflicts of Meera in her relationship with Soman.

This isn't her, Meera, she tells herself. This is the false Meera. Like there once was the false Hera. When Ixion the ingrate planned to seduce Hera, to pay Zeus back for his perfidies, Zeus created a Hera



from a cloud. It was this Hera whom Ixion pleased and sought pleasure from, while the real Hera lay untouched elsewhere. (220)

In *The Lilac House* Anita Nair has used the metaphor of cyclone to bring out the unpredictable turn of events in one's life. In *The Lilac House*, one of the protagonists Jak is a cyclone expert. By making Jak to say about the facts of cyclone, Anita Nair makes use of the cyclone metaphor effectively. The intensity of a cyclone cannot be predicted. Cyclone is an unexpected disaster. Both Meera and Jak are caught up by that unexpected disaster. Meera never expected that Giri will leave her and move somewhere.

Jak also never expected that his daughter Smriti would meet with such a tragedy. He doesn't know what happened to Smriti on her holiday in a small beach side town in Tamil Nadu. By a series of coincidences, Meera and Jak find their lives turning and twisting together. The human mind is capable of self deception that hides the forth coming disaster. Jak says that the human beings are deceived by the bands of convective cloud spiralling from which heavy rain emerges. The spiral bands are the master deceivers and it is the extent of the storm.

Hidden within the cirrus canopy is a distinct pattern: bands of convective cloud spiralling into the eye wall. From these bands emerge heavy rain and squalls. But that isn't where the real danger lies. For the spiral bands are master deceivers. They make us believe this is the extent of the storm. How utterly gullible we are when it comes to celestial forces and acts of god! The tipping point is yet to come. (165)

Jak owns a painting which has the fantastic swirl of colour trapped with geometric forms. It is the representation of the unconscious self. But Jak cannot achieve the wholeness of the emotionally when he meditated on it. Instead he

achieves the penultimate stage of a cyclone. Jak is afraid that the storm would blow on him furiously. As he is afraid of the storm, his daughter Smriti has been furiously attacked in her life.

But the truth is, my Buddhist painting frightens me. When I look at it, what I see is the penultimate stage of a cyclone. Its most terrifying aspect. From the heart of the storm spins an outward directed force of fury. Vicious as a herd of monsters, it raises a ring of violent storms. Sometimes twice as many. It is here that danger awaits. For the eye wall winds have no soul, know no mercy. (241)

At the end Jak defines the state of calm. He calls it either quite before the storm or after the storm. Both Jak and Meera experiences stillness in their life and they step ahead to take second chances. Therefore *The Lilac House* is crafted by Anita Nair to echo the instability of life by comparing human life to the stages of a cyclone. In the novel *The Lilac House*, Anita Nair uses the symbol of pomegranate. According to Greek mythology, pomegranate is a symbol of death and promise of resurrection. Pomegranate is the favourite fruit of the protagonist Meera. It symbolizes the death of Meera's agonies, misery and tragedies and the rebirth of a new life.

Meera thinks of her favourite fruit: the pomegranate. Of how she savours it best when she eats it seed by seed rather than as a handful thrown into her mouth. She will take a cue from that. Of how resurrection is to be fashioned one day at a time. (325)

Anita Nair has a skill of framing natural dialogues. She changes the tone and style of the dialogues to match her characters and situations. This technique matches the dialogue spoken by Giri to Meera. Giri is depressed when Meera doesn't understand his needs. The dialogue sounds as if Giri hates Meera because Giri had



never spoken to Meera like that. Giri's tone is that as if Meera trapped him in an unbearable situation.

You know what your problem is, Meera? You want to make life fit those lists you are making all the time. You don't see it, do you? That your lists are all about the past or the future. Pending chores. Things to do. What about the present, Meera? What about now? That's what I am worried about. That's where I want to live. (109)

In the novel *The Lilac House*, the narrative style of Anita Nair is different. It is a story of people who are caught up in the hands of destiny. Both Jak and Meera are affected by the deep crisis. The raging cyclone turns into a metaphor, which creates the appropriate background for a story to form shape. Disaster happens without an announcement. The unpredictability of nature is the central character. Anita Nair makes her narrative appealing with the destructive effect of cyclone.

Anita Nair has thus showed off her mastery of an alien language by enriching her novels with new forms of narration, technique and with different forms of expressions such as myth, metaphor and symbols. She presents a poststructuralist narrative technique in *The Lilac House*. It is a study of individual characters and it also dwells deep into the cultural aspects of a region. Anita Nair's *The Lilac House* confirms her extraordinary power as graphic visions generated in her mind. Her novels are suggestive of impressive descriptions and effective affirmations of the unified impressions of the artist.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

The beginning of Indian literature in English is traced to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> by which time English education was more or less firmly established in the three major centres of British power in India: Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. English literature in India is also intimately linked with the works of association of the Indians; this creative writing in English is looked at as an integral part of the literary traditions in the Indian perspective of fine arts. The truthfulness and honesty of the writer writing in English is often made a theme of suspect in their own country.

English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language can be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. It is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglian literature. The first book written by an Indian in English is by Sake Dean Mahomet, titled *Travels of Dean Mahomet*. Mahomet's travel narrative is published in 1793 in England. In its early stages it is influenced by the Indian Western art form of the novel.

Even though other women novelists are more famous for their style and for their approach in handling fiction, Anita Nair has taken up an outstanding place as a novelist in Indian Literature. Anita Nair stands unique in her style, character portrayal, uplifting woman's rights and duties in their life. She vividly portrays their sufferings in the society. Anita Nair is particularly good on the domestic details such as lazy Sunday lunches, a family row, the sights, sounds and smells of a busy railway station, which make up her characters, live.

Anita Nair is a writer of different genres like novels, poetry, prose, essays, articles, book reviews, travelogues and non-fiction. She is also good at translations. Her first book published in 1997, *Satyr of the Subway* consisted of twelve stories, and each worked around a dramatically different situation ranging from the mundane to the bizarre. This revised edition includes three new stories and incorporates occasional alteration to text, some marginal, some significant, where the writer has revised her characters or situations long after she first created them. The result is a fascinating collection of stories that traverse the entire gamut of human emotion, penetrating in their insight into male-female relationships and seriously funny in their take on the futility of expectations from life or from lovers.

Anita Nair is considered to be one of the most successful writers. She is able to convey her characters and settings so realistically which draws the readers so well. Being a woman she is more interested in the predicaments of women. She presents the vital reality and makes us aware of the miseries of women and injustices done to them by counterparts in the patriarchal society. However it is an important fact that though Nair's novels are crowded with female characters, the analysis of the novels reveals her focus is only on the women protagonists, and the other secondary characters are simply mentioned.

Nair's novel *The Lilac House* is published in 2010. The novel set in India, traces the intersection of the lives of two individuals undergoing devastating personal tragedies. Meera is the protagonist of the novel. Her husband Giri fell in love after spying her in the yard of her family home, the Lilac House. After marriage the couple lived there with their two children and Meera's mother and grandmother. As of late, Giri has been pressuring Meera to sell the house, but she refuses and won't tell him why the house cannot be sold. Meanwhile Jak, a professor who has been living in the



United States, is back in India to determine how his beloved daughter, a University student, is injured. Smriti, bedridden and unable to communicate, must be cared for around the clock.

Meera does not have big dreams. She will not crave for designer clothes or ornaments and expensive holidays. She is happy with what she gets. But she realizes that her husband is not satisfied with what he gets. And one day Giri vanishes from her life, leaving her with her children. Meera feels the sorrow and pain of being betrayed. When she suspects Giri of having an affair, she tries to console herself thinking that he is not a compulsive philanderer.

Anita Nair portrays the character of Meera as an organized person. She does not have any identity for her own, because she assumes different roles as a granddaughter, daughter, wife and mother. She submerges herself into the identity of her husband and allows her to the other roles to contain. The absence of Meera's identity reveals that she has gone through an identity crisis in her marriage with Giri. She is basically conservative in the sense that she cannot enjoy the party culture of the high middle class society. She tries to become a corporate wife merging herself into the life of her husband. But when Giri leaves her abruptly, she is at a loss to know what to do with herself. There is deep crisis in her life, as she has merged her identity into her married life. Her attachment is the barriers for the realization of her selfhood. So Meera emerges as a new woman as her marriage is splintered on the rock of the infidelity of her husband.

In the novel *The Lilac House*, Meera is the victim of Giri's patriarchal attitude. Men like Giri implicitly believe that after the marriage the husband automatically gets a right over the wife's property. Anita Nair shows this feminine problem as a result of the socio cultural practices which give right to men over what women own. Women



like Meera who are emotionally and in practical life totally dependent on the husband suffer traumatic experience when the husband suddenly leaves them.

Meera is a manifestation of motherhood in *The Lilac House*. She turns out to be a humanist in taking care of her children and her parents which is the actual empowerment. In Indian scenario, male is connected with ideologies and philosophies yet female shoulders her responsibility of her family. In view of this fact Meera with a new spirit meets her adversities with a new hope. Despite her betrayal Meera undergoes pains and tribulations and transfigures as an angel. Meera is unique in her actualization. She takes care of her own children and at the same time Jak's daughter Smriti who is in coma stage.

Anita Nair's *The Lilac House* is about losing family values. It is about the perspective of maintaining the institution called marriage. Giri marries Meera with an eye on her ancestral property. Jak on the other hand was nurtured his feelings for India but he doesn't consider the International life his wife was looking for. Jak unravels the mystery behind his daughter's coma state and finds that her life is indeed highly commendable. The self actualization of Jak originates from the spirit of the traumatic past.

Owing to interest in social awareness programmes Smriti becomes a victim in *The Lilac House*. Her audacity in finding the truth behind female infanticide pushes her in darkness. Though Smriti is economically independent, her interest in women's welfare programmes turns her as a sacrificial victim. Similarly her heroic deeds are overwhelmed by the male goons. Though her coma state is piteous, she is found voicing the problems of women. As a woman, Smriti undergo a lot of excruciating moments in her life such as humiliation, uncertainty and terrible realities. As the victim of patriarchal society, she makes an attempt to discover her identity.

Kala is ensnared in the traditional setup where she has no voice in her father's and husband's houses. Throughout her life she has been treated as an alien in her life. Even though she lives with the pain of her hair, Kala satisfies the needs and desires of her father and her husband Ambi. Amidst her difficulties, she meets the challenges in the disguise of second marriage. If Kala is given the rights to decide to cut her hair at the right time without being afraid of her father, her father would have been unhappy with her but she would have ended up with the person who loves her for who she is instead of her long hair. All these are because of preventing her from deciding at the right time by her father.

Emotionally Kala breaks her conjugal bond in the process of liberating from the clutches of her tyrannical husband. She neither cries nor argues with Ambi. Here Kala is an icon of new woman, who victoriously comes out of her traditional inhibitions. Triumphant Kala cuts her hair and gives to her husband. Ultimately Kala is unique in asserting her individuality in rebelling against the hierarchical forms of the society.

Despite her victimization Sarada Ammal challenges the male authority. Apparently education brings a remarkable change for her survival. Being a conservative woman, Sarada Ammal performs religious rituals without fail, yet her husband deserts her. Through Sarada Ammal, Anita Nair depicts the disruption of marital life which never dismantles women. With confidence Sarada Ammal excels in her studies and works as a teacher. Her second marriage changes the norms of tradition. As an empowered woman in a meaningful way, Sarada Ammal originates out to be independent. These women protagonists transpire the traditional perspectives and acclaim their voices in the male patriarchal society. As an individual they achieve their self actualization with fortitude.



Empowerment of women in middle class families is a challenging task. Throughout the ages, the male supremacy shapes the lives of women. Undeniably the male suppression traumatizes the lives of women. Yet women in this globalized scenario change the destiny of their lives.

Anita Nair uses metaphor as a literary device in her novel *The Lilac House*.

Metaphors are used by writers for the purpose of conveying complex concepts in an easy way. Language is deeply metaphorical because people find it difficult to grasp new concepts unless they are expressed by a real model. Metaphor is the co operative fusion of meanings which appears to be the most important device for creative literature.

In *The Lilac House*, Anita Nair uses myth as a metaphor to interpret man and his emotions in various situations of life. Myth is a device for meditating contradictions or oppositions as experienced by men. It recounts certain events. By using myths Anita Nair recounts various experiences in life. Her quest for classical myths is revealed in the novel. Myths with their predictable standard connotations are helpful in interpreting the peculiar permutations and combinations in which human mind reacts and responds to various situations in life. men protagonists Meera, Kala and Sarada Ammal in *The Lilac House* voice their voices and create space for them. Amidst their pains and troubles in their lives, they transpire their lives. All the women characters in this novel were well educated except Chinnathayi and decided wisely at their second chances.

Anita Nair uses Greek mythology of Zeus and Hera to interpret the material life of Giri and Meera. Zeus and Hera's marriage is similar to Giri and Meera's marriage. Zeus and Hera's marriage is tumultuous. Meera compares herself to Hera, who has always been silent against her husband Zeus words. Meera thinks that she is



like Hera who can blow the sails and winnow the fields against him but it is of no use with woman like her, as women are same everywhere.

Anita Nair also uses the metaphor of cyclone to bring out the unpredictable turn of events in the life. In *The Lilac House*, one of the protagonists Jak is a cyclone expert. By making Jak to say about the facts of a cyclone, Anita Nair makes the use of the cyclone metaphor effectively. The intensity of a cyclone cannot be predicted. Cyclone is an unexpected disaster. Both Meera and Jak are caught up by that unexpected disaster. Meera never expected that Giri will leave her and move somewhere.

Jak also never expected that his daughter Smriti would meet with such a tragedy. He doesn't know what happened to Smriti on her holiday in a small beach side town in Tamil Nadu. By a series of coincidences, Meera and Jak find their lives turning and twisting together. The human mind is capable of self deception that hides the forth coming disaster. Jak says that the human beings are deceived by the bands of convective cloud spiralling from which heavy rain emerges. The spiral bands are the master deceivers and it is the extent of the storm.

The narrative style of Anita Nair is different. It is a story of people who are caught up in the hands of destiny. Both Jak and Meera are affected by the deep crisis. The raging cyclone turns into a metaphor, which creates the appropriate background for a story to form shape. Disaster happens without an announcement. The unpredictability of nature is the central character. Anita Nair makes her narrative appealing with the destructive effect of cyclone.

*The Lilac House* is a story of real people in a real world but far from perfect country, where female infanticide still happens with impurity. It is also a story of forgiveness, redemption and second chances. It is about the individuals in deep crises

together to offer succour to each other. Nair's female characters have no identity. But they are bold enough to fulfil their desires by negating family bond to go to the extent of establishing physical gratifications with other men. Women are kept in silence in the male dominated society as they have no rights to do anything and this is portrayed in *The Lilac House*. This novel has a strong feminine flavour where the author portrays her female protagonist as a strong woman.

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**Cross- Cultural Confrontation in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**SERNISHA A.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN25)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Cross- Cultural Confrontation in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**


**THOOTHUKUDI**

*Sernisha A*

**SERNISHA A.**

## CERTIFICATE

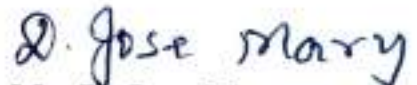
This is to certify that the project entitled **Cross- Cultural Confrontation in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Sernisha A. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Cross- Cultural Confrontation in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*** analyses the protagonist's struggle for survival against the existential destiny and communal violence.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with a short biography of Bapsi Sidhwa discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in the realm of Pakistan Literature.

The second chapter **Women's Journey through Violence** throws light on how women try to cope with the parental, societal and cultural pressures in their life as much as they can but when they find their very life or identity in danger, they throw off all shackles and fight with full force to foil the foul attempts of their adversary.

The third chapter **Existential Alienation and Self- Estrangement** depicts the cultural dislocation and quest for identity.

The fourth chapter **Expatriation to Immigration** throws light on the harsh realities of partition between India and Pakistan.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters and supports feministic concept and gives optimistic ideas for women to overcome problems in patriarchal society.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Post colonialism rose since the late 1980s and the key words of post colonialism are 'Race', 'Identity', and 'Diaspora'. The literature observes two or more cultures known as multicultural production. Postcolonial writers experienced 'diaspora' which refers to 'hybridity' of cultural identity and confusion of national identity.

The word 'diaspora', derived from the ancient Greek roots *dia* and *speirein*, literally means scattering or dispersion of people to an alien land, away from their traditional homelands. A diaspora is a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland who have since moved out to places all over the world. Diaspora is displacement of community or cultural purposes of livelihood, education, business or acquiring higher skills of knowledge. It is applied to a number of ethnic and racial groups living in an alien land. 'Diaspora' carries the connotation of forced resettlement, due to expulsion, slavery, racism, refugees, war, especially nationalist conflict.

Diaspora is an emerging word in literature. It means the dispersion of people from their homeland. The word 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek word 'diaspeiro'. The American Diasporas were found spread across regions such as Pakistan in the world representing their American regions, languages, culture and faiths. In crossing over borders, the diasporic subject has carried his cultural identity transnationally, and translated it into new cultural terrains. Therefore, his identity is a process of evolving or 'becoming'. They live in an imaginative



geography and history which lies at the centre of their cultural identity and gives meaning to it. They are caught between two worlds- homeland i.e. America and adopted land i.e. Pakistan. They are traditional beings or luminous personages. In this state of transition some respond ambivalently to their dual, often antithetical culture societies. Some attempt to assimilate and integrate.

The diasporic writing is known as 'expatriate writing' or 'immigrant writing'. 'Expatriates' belong to the category of 'exiles' and 'Immigrants' belong to the category of 'refugees'. Diasporic writing becomes a response to the lost homes and to issues such as dislocation, nostalgia, discrimination, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community. There are several factors which are the reasons for the dislocations of a community from their home country to a foreign land. Through reminiscence they try to escape from the reality of life in the settled land. The first generation of diasporic community faces loneliness and alienation in the settled country and due to this they do not mingle with others in the new society. A sense of alienation, loneliness and feeling of failure are inextricable for the diasporic people. Migrations have resulted in building up a Diasporic community who share a common sense of rootlessness, pain, and agony of homelessness and who experience the anxiety and turmoil in a new land and the nostalgia for their homeland.

A Diasporic writer is always active in retrieving, registering and preserving vicariously in the face of opposing social reality. Migrant writers living away from home are victims of the 'in-between' syndrome. This situation



of riding two cultures simultaneously leads to schemes and bipolarity of behavior on the part of not only individuals but also groups and communities in the host society that in its extreme form, at times, causes societal instability and disorder. In many diasporic writings, the readers can find the feeling of insecurity, separation, loss of identity, compromise, adjustment and struggle between two or more cultures.

A very marked feature of Pakistani English Literature has been the diasporic nature of its existence. Almost all the major Pakistani English novelists live a hyphenated survival. It may account for the fact that there was an almost complete negated of English novel literary tradition. Sidhwa was writing but she seemed to be an exception rather than the norm. Also, the writers did not have a conducive environment to breathe free, to give expressions under military regimes; they did not really have a voice and no previous inheritance of literature to draw inspiration from. Thus the earlier writing-inclined people found themselves hanging uncertainly in this set-up. Also, western education and living experience of the later writers provided them with a faculty of mind which they utilized to write from the twin viewpoint of both the East and the West. On the periphery of their country being termed a 'failed state', the various forces pulling and exerting their force, Pakistan lends immediacy to these writers who write to make sense of all the confusion around and also to bring about understanding of the distinctive nature of their country to the West.

In the diaspora, Hanif Kureshi commenced a prolific career with the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), which won the Whitbread Award. Moniza

Alvi published several poetry collections and won British literary prizes. Tariq Ali published numerous novels, plays and broadcast TV scripts. Aamer Hussain wrote a series of acclaimed short story collections. Sara Suleri published her literary memoir, *Meatless Days* (1989). Many short story collections and some play scripts were also received well. The Pakistan Academy of Letters has awarded its prestigious prizes to a number of English writers. In the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a number of Pakistani novelists writing in English won or were shortlisted for international awards.

Stephen Gill, a poet, was born in Pakistan and migrated to Canada in search of better opportunities but finally the effort turned out to be a struggle for identity in the hostile environment. His verses make the readers feel the pain and anguish with which he has written poems. One can feel the Indian nostalgia in his writings. The memories he tries to survive them through his poems. He tries to cope up with the changes, the uncertainties of the new environment. He strives hard to make people understand the harsh realities of life. He wants to make the society friendlier and more rational. He wants to rescue them from falling down, and to reach his goal he tried writing poems like, *The Flowers of Thirst*, *The Dove of Peace*, *Songs for Harmony* and so on.

Pakistani English Literature is a distinct literature which eventually came after Pakistan gained nationhood status in 1947. It is significant that Pakistani English Literature refers to English literature that has been developed and evolved in Pakistan, as well as by members of the Pakistani diaspora who write in the English language. English is one of the official languages of Pakistan and has a



history going back to the British colonial rule in South Asia; the national dialect spoken in the country is known as Pakistani English.

Today, it occupies an important and integral part in modern Pakistani literature. Dr. Alamgir Hashmi introduced the term "Pakistani literature in English" with his "Preface" to his pioneering book *Pakistani Literature: the Contemporary English Writers* as well as through his other scholarly works, seminars, and courses taught by him in many universities since 1970's. It was established as an academic discipline in the world following his lead and further work by other scholars, and it is now a widely popular field of study.

English language poetry from Pakistan from the beginning held a special place in South Asian writing, on account of the new trends represented by Shahid Suhrawardy, Ahmed Ali, Alamgir Hashmi, Taufiq Rafat, Daud Kamal, Maki Kureishi and others. Fiction from Pakistan began to receive recognition in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The early success of Pakistani English poets was followed in fiction by the prose works written by Ahmed Ali and Zulfikar Ghose, and by such figures as Bapsi Sidhwa, the Parsi author of *The Crow Eaters*, *Cracking India* and other novels. Pakistani writers let out their emotions in Mumtaz Shahnawaz's *The Heart Divided* and later Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, apart from numerous renderings in other languages.

Pakistani women's writing in America has renewed with interest in South Asian Women's writing and in Muslim women. Existing Muslim Pakistani women's writing has come to the front with their distinct voices, expressed in their novels full of diasporic worries and individual desires. Their distinct voices



exist in Pakistani American women, balancing both socio-cultural associations and immigrant American lives. But before such attention was accumulated towards Muslim Pakistani women's individual voices in fiction, one of the first authors to generate interest in Pakistani women's writing was Sara Suleri with her record, *Meatless Days* (1989). Suleri's mixed Pakistani experience of growing up in Pakistan in a governmental conscious family with a governmental active father details Pakistan's changing political landscape and her journey of self awareness in an upper-class Pakistani household. Suleri's mixed race identity makes her record of experience as an interesting addition to the already popular fiction by Bapsi Sidhwa. As a novelist who originates from Pakistan and resides in America, Sidhwa's novels have recorded the lives of Parsees in Pakistan and in America. Her religious views, different from that of Muslims in Pakistan, and her family's position within the higher class of society, once again singles out her fiction as Parsee Pakistani fiction, rather than that of trialng Pakistani Muslim identity. *displays her own strength as an individual. At the same time, the novel*

*analyzes* Nausheen Pasha-Zaidi's first novel *The Colour of Mehndi* (2006) examines the life of a young Pakistani American woman struggling depression. Her social responsibilities and her own understanding of her duties to her family, together with the friendly stigma against mental health issues, drives Nazli, the main protagonist to suicide. The protagonist, who fights to maintain her innumerable responsibilities to her family and her community finally surrenders, not only because the requests were high, but also because her sob for help are ignored. Through recollections, Nazli documents her life in emails and tape

recordings Pasha-Zaidi tells the unseen burdens of balancing both the American way of life and Pakistani Muslim traditions when individuals lack inner strength and ancestors support. The exquisite criticism against stereotyped expectations – to appear fragile and submissive, while at the same time being a competitive career woman: to be an American and a tradition remaining Pakistani Muslim at the same time – comes through Nazli's life and its many pains.

Shaila Abdullah's launching novel, *Saffron Dreams* (2009), investigates the life of a young Pakistani American woman in the impact and the misfortune of her husband. Socio-cultural disputes of being a single parent to an autistic child, and the emotional shock of losing her husband in a place where she is treated as the other is represented through Arissa, the main protagonist. Arissa, facing racial bias and disbelief due to her hijab, decides to change her life and carve out her own place while balancing her many responsibilities. Her journey from being a very scared, newly widowed young woman to a liberated working woman in America displays her own strength as an individual. At the same time, the novel analyzes the importance of socio-cultural networks of family, friends and communities that help Pakistani American women in their passage to becoming American: by "fit[ting] two lands in [their hearts and lives and loving] them equally." (Abdullah 2)

While both Pasha-Zaidi and Abdullah write about immigrant women's experience in America, Nafisa Haji presents the call of the roots and contradictory cultural affiliations of a second-generation young Indo-Pakistani American woman's experiences through her debut novel *The Writing on My Forehead*.



Family secrets, re-visiting the past, and compromise with the rehabilitated Otherness that was thrust on the second-generation of ethnic American groups, especially those belonging to Islamic faith in the penalty are traced through the novel. One young woman's voyage to expose her family's secrets and understand her heredity becomes a socio-cultural passage to understand Pakistani identity, and second-generation Pakistani American identity.

Adam Zameenzad portrayed the lives of social outcasts, loners, losers, the deprived and the dispossessed in his work. His novel, *The Thirteenth House*, published in 1987, gives a cross-section of Pakistani awareness, which connects the past with the present, and also opens inroads into astrology and mysticism. It mixes desire with disgust and attempts to regain the creative seize of a child's perception through the telling of its story. The novel won the David Higham Award in 1987.

Pakistan-born English playwright, screenwriter, film maker, novelist and short story writer Hanif Kureishi is known especially for an Oscar nomination for his screenplay of *The Beautiful Launderette*. His novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) won the Whitbread Award. The themes of his six novels were on the topics of race, nationalism, immigration and sexuality.

Kamila Shamsie seems to substantiate the approach when she says, "I think when you grow up in a city that's under attack from within, it makes you much more conscious of the nature of the city as a city" (Ahmad 2). Their Pakistani inheritance with an international identity has specified them a realistic and cosmopolitan understanding with which they are tempering their narratives.



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The themes that they have tackled are wonderfully diverse, yet all socially and culturally applicable, boom out of post Pakistani literature, considering boundaries as fluid and identities more complex than just that of immigrant or expatriate. This integration of political developments while processing through the fiction has cultivated poignant pieces of writings with a definite explanation of the country's turmoil. Pakistani writers draw critical concentration and claim basically due to acceptance of political nature of fiction and their engagement with their country is deep and complex.

Pakistanis have been let down by our government time and again, by geopolitical events, and by the many wrong turns our history has taken since 1947. We have plenty of national angst and it tends to come out in our writing (Anjum 1).

In the 70s, 80s and 90s there were little influence of Pakistani English writers pioneered by Bapsi Sidhwa, who bore the flag of Pakistani English fiction writing on global scene almost all alone. Sidhwa is an enormously popular Parsi author and a recipient of Germany's 1991 Literature Prize, Readers Digest Lilla Wallace Award along with many Pakistani Literary Awards. Bapsi Sidhwa's ground-breaking novel remains *Ice Candy Man*, later titled *Cracking India* which highlights the terrible catastrophic events of Partition as seen through the eyes of a young onlooker. Her other novels *The Crow-Eaters* and *The American Brat* describe the life of Parsi families in Pakistan in a trans-cultural setting while *The Pakistani Bride* dealt with suppression of women in a patriarchal set up. "The



publication of Sidhwa's novels also coincided with a strong politicized women's movement in Pakistan" (Shamsie xii-xiii)

One of Pakistan's most prominent fiction writers, Bapsi Sidhwa is certainly one of the finest Anglophone novelists of South Asia. There was no tradition of women's literature or of English language literature in Pakistan, when Bapsi Sidhwa started writing, so she may be considered as pioneer in both literatures. Here protagonist is mainly women and they invariably win against men in their struggle for survival and honour. Sidhwa's women are strong willed, assertive, courageous and capable of solving their crisis. They try to cope with the parental, societal, and cultural pressures in their life. They fight against injustice and oppression with women and show path to other women.

Bapsi Sidhwa, a leading Pakistani writer, was born on August 11, 1938, in Karachi to a prosperous Parsi couple Tehmina and Peshoton Bhandra, and then moved to Lahore with her family who belong to the Parsi minority group. In 1956, she earned her B.A degree from Kinnaird College for Women. Then she fell in love and married a Bombay Parsi, Gustad Kermani. After her divorce from Kermani, she married Noshir R. Sidhwa in 1963. Much of her early adult life was spent as an upper-class Pakistani wife and mother of three children. Inspired by a story she heard on a family vacation about a young woman who was forced into a marriage and when she tried to escape, was hunted and killed, Sidhwa began to write her novel, *The Pakistani Bride*, followed by three more novels and various short stories and essays. She engaged herself in women's emancipation



is exposed to the prejudices and rising clash between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis. Sidhwa depicts the

violation of Ayah as exclusively the province of rabid lower class maleness. It fails to acknowledge its own complicated fascination for and repudiation of that figure- the very figure that it seeks to ally itself with but needs to differentiate from (*Cracking India* 416).

The novel *Ice Candy Man* reveals actions adjoining Partition through Lenny's eyes who were disabled due to Polio. The novel *Ice Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa is inconceivable for giving voice to the Parsi community who are left less than a million in the world and who are gone from the general flow of history as well as the discourse of the Partition of India. Sidhwa through the spokesperson of an eight year Parsi girl child narrator Lenny narrates the disturbing and agonizing experiences of violence during the Partition of India. The novel throws light on the concerns and dilemma of Parsi people in the contemporary sub-continent and their feelings of alienation and loss of belonging in a foreign land amidst different warring communities. The novel also acquaints us with the Parsi ethos, way of life, their culture, hopes, aspirations, disillusionments, and an unconquerable will to survive and do well.

*An American Brat* is set primarily in the United States and explores issues of intercultural conflict and the difficulties of maintaining a sense of one's community in the global context. *The American Brat* was written after Bapsi shifted to America and alarms the increasing Pakistan fundamentalism in 1970's. It follows the story of sixteen year Parsi girl called Feroza Ginwalla. Feroza's

mother named Zareen decides to migrate Feroza to USA for staying with her uncle. She was hit by an internal cultural shock and Feroza wills to reside in America where she gets strongly involved with a Jewish man. She becomes heavily politicized regarding issues for instance global relations, imperialism and gender. Feroza's revolutionary attitude was alarming for Zareen who traveled to America to spare her daughter who has turned out to be an American brat.

*The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa's second published novel is set in the Himalayas and Karakorams and focuses on issues of women and marriage. It is the story of a Muslim Punjabi girl, Zaitoon who is orphaned by the partition conflict and is adopted by a Kohistani tribesman, Qasim who has also lost his family. Rescuing Zaitoon, Qasim escapes to Lahore but in an effort to re-establish his ties with his people, he arranges a marriage for Zaitoon with a tribesman. Fearing for her life, she decides to flee from her offensive husband, Sakhi, but is required by the tribe until she narrowly escapes. Interwoven with Zaitoon's story is that of Carol, an American woman who is married to Farukh, works in Pakistan and faces various cultural and personal conflicts. *The Pakistani Bride* explains events of partition through the story of a Kohistani tribesman and a young lovable girl he adopts soon after sighting the deadly massacre in which the girl's whole family was killed. *The Pakistani Bride* interpolates Zaitoon's story with that of Carol who was a beautiful American woman not joyful with her marriage to the Pakistani engineer.

Women are subjugated by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically in every sphere where patriarchy reigns, woman is other: she



is marginalized, defined only by her variation from male norms and values. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the suppression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. In this novel, no woman character is pessimistic, they never yield. Her novel is a manifestation of her vision for a new awakening in society.



*Purdah in Bapsi Sidhwa's Novels* stresses that "Zaitoon lives in the highly charged atmosphere that emerges from enforced segregation." (163).

*The Pakistani Bride* is written in the stratum of realist narrative. *The Pakistani Bride* not merely chronicles the events; it does explore the feminine consciousness. The subject is a significant woman experience. She makes it a current issue concerning the extent to which women are psychologically free to modify their lives. Sidhwa counters the dominant patriarchal discourse of Pakistani literature, revising a different image of a strong and confident female. Women are predictable to have silent voices mysterious by the shadows of their husbands, fathers and brothers. Sidhwa presents the view that Pakistani family home denies women their identity and makes them nobody. Sidhwa presented the plight of a Pakistani woman through the eyes of an outsider. As Suman Dhull writes:

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the repression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The novel related how Zaitoon, a Punjabi child, orphaned by Partition, is captivated by the fantasies of her protector father's visions of the lost mountain paradise. Married eventually to a tribal man in the north-west regions of Pakistan, Zaitoon rapidly discovers that reality is harsh and her romantic dreams erroneous (21).

Sidhwa exposed two brides, Carol and Zaitoon but both with the same fate. Both are exploited by men. Zaitoon "unlocked a mystery, affording a telepathic peephole through which Carol had a glimpse of her condition and the

fateful condition of girls like her" (Alvi 91). The stories of Zaitoon and Carol highlight focal issue of women's position in male dominated and conservative society which have been manipulated and controlled by men for a long time. The picture of the oppression of women, which emerges with the progress of the novel, is strengthened by numerous other images of violence, oppression and subjugation of women. The villagers of tribal society consider women to be an invaluable commodity which is used as material of marriage to be transported from one man to another. The patriarchal view of men is that women are not equal in comparison to men. Men have always remained superior to women. Suman Dhull says about the status of women in society: "Until now the concept of inequality between man and woman has been so deeply rooted not only in the lesser educated people but also in the highly educated people..." (25).

*The Pakistani Bride* is gynocentric. Gynocriticism is concerned with woman as writer- with woman as creator of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literatures of literature by women. Its subjects include psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and problem of a female language; the route of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and of course, studies of particular writers and work. It is an exclusive paean to women's zest for life, their adaptability and unconquerable courage. The prime concern of Sidhwa's women such as Zaitoon, Carol, and Afshan are conservation of their life. It brought recognition to Bapsi Sidhwa wholly as a novel of seriousness. According to Sidhwa, the novel is about the identity of Pakistan women and also an event that occurred in Pakistan. The description



depicts the resist for the continued existence of Zaitoon, a tribal girl. Bapsi Sidhwa's recognition with the hapless Pakistani girl is real and it leads to a change in the end. This novel deals particularly with patriarchal society and old traditions.

Bapsi Sidhwa reinforces this horrid image of woman graphically in various sections of the novel. One of the basic reasons for the sufferings of women is the concept of honour for men. In order to protect his honor and ego, a man will use women, and hence he becomes the biggest source of psychological disturbance for women. Sidhwa has highlighted this idea of sufferings of women in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*. Sidhwa provides a dissimilarity at all levels between the lives of women in Punjab and those of the segregated border of the Indus River. *The Pakistani Bride* is a woman's lyric sob in prose against the existential destiny and communal violence. Sidhwa has fashioned complex metaphors to organize the numerous agonies of a woman, a successful portrayal of pain and suffering in the character of Zaitoon.

Virginia Woolf in her celebrated work, *A Room of One's Own*, presents the pitiable and conflicting position of women in history:

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of anybody whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired



words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (Woolf 43)

The moans and shrieks of sobbing women disturbed Sidhwa. Talking of the pathetic condition of women Sidhwa says in an interview that Victory is celebrated on a woman's body; vengeance is taken on a woman's body. That's very much the way things are, particularly in my part of the world. According to the Hindu tradition, once widowed, a woman was deprived of her useful function in society- that of reproducing and fulfilling her marital duties. Thus, Sidhwa seems to give a message to women that life must be conserved at all cost, since one can struggle oppression only when one is alive. Through her various marginalized narrators and through experiences of the marginalized characters in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*, she gives voice to till now silenced groups of India, Pakistan and America.

Though there is a fast growth of science and technology, the status of women remains in a miserable state in a male chauvinistic society and all conflicts overcome by women in turn lead to women's oppression. The author being a woman looks at the world and its writing with an understandable purpose and design. She depicts the world with which she is most known, and this world can be no other than the feminine world of her times. The voice of Sidhwa is the voice of thousand women in various places. The ill-treatment of women in various levels is sketched skillfully in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*. The central consciousness of her work rests on the stable development of women's essential



feminine identity and the quest for selfhood. The core idea of her novel *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the victimization of women.

'Plight of Women' takes up the issue of the travails of other gender, 'the soft-target'. The principal concern of the novel *The Pakistani Bride* where the plight is not merely the Pakistani Zaitoon but that of an American girl, Carol has also been taken up. Zaitoon, a young girl is victimized by the debilitating patriarchal prescriptions of an insular tribal society.

Oppression of women is central to the narrative in *The Pakistani Bride*. The novel is deeply concerned with gender inequalities and oppressive practices under Islamic rule in Pakistan. Bapsi Sidhwa very realistically illustrated women's plight and exploitation in the patriarchal society. Men establish their masculine powers and hence fulfill their desires by brutally assaulting women. Men as aggressors feel elated and victorious whereas women endure the pain and humiliation of the barbarity enacted upon them. As Sidhwa is in her real life, so are her women characters in her fictional world. They are fairly beautiful, intelligent, modest but strong-willed, and courageous. They try to cope with the parental, societal and cultural pressures in their life as much as they can but when they find their very life or identity in danger, they throw off all shackles and fight with full force to foil the foul attempts of their adversary.

Sidhwa is a very optimistic writer. She seems to give a positive message to women that life must be preserved under any circumstance since one can fight oppression only when one is alive. It is noteworthy that no woman character dies in any of her novels. Zaitoon in *The Pakistani Bride* manages to save her life



despite the looming threat. Carol, an American girl who is equally oppressed in her married life, decides to break free and returns to her own American culture. Hence we find that Sidhwa's women are strong-willed, assertive and courageous. They resolve their crisis in their own way. But she always sympathizes with her characters in their trials and tribulations in her works. Carol and Zaitoon meet coincidentally and Carol identifies her own fate with that of Zaitoon's. Here Sidhwa reveals the plight of a Pakistani woman through the eyes of an American woman. She presents two brides from two entirely different cultures but with the same fate. Both are the victims of patriarchy. Through these stories, Sidhwa mocks at the institution of marriage in which women are mere puppets at the hands of men. Zaitoon's escape from the chain of her marriage should be regarded as her triumph over the male chauvinism. But her main focus in *The Pakistani Bride* is always on the plight of women.

Domination and discrimination against women is central to the narrative in *The Pakistani Bride*. Sidhwa depicted the patriarchal and tribal social practices, standards and conventions in her work. She watched that woman is just an image of honor or disgrace for a family, particularly in tribal ranges. It is a thing and treated like creatures. She has no rights, emotions and the right to speak freely. Zaitoon was the play thing in the hands of her men. Their family heads can choose their destiny. The mentality of the society towards female is projected through the words of Miriam, when Zaitoon turns ten, Miriam is of the opinion that "Poor child...had she a mother she'd be learning to cook and sew... does



Bhal Qasim think he's rearing a boy? He ought to give some thought to her marriage...who'd want an educated..' She'll be safe only at her mother-in-law's ...A girl is never too young to marry (53).

Sidhwa paints or reflects a genuine picture of the tribal society and their treatment of women for the sake of Shame and Honor. It describes the survival battle of Zaitoon, the protagonist of the novel. She needs flexibility from the coldblooded Pakistani tribal society where she has been hitched. This novel highlights the genuine picture of female how the character of Zaitoon is obviously connected with tribal convention, for example, Honor and Shame. Female figures are powerlessly caught inside the hands of male and compelled to obey them. Saki is incited by his brother Yunus Khan to control "His woman" and his words were sufficient to arouse Sakhi who later on leaves no chance to demonstrate his "masculinity". At that point Zaitoon fled from that pitiless society that is the matter of disgrace for tribal society. "I have given my word. On it depends my honor. It is dearer to me than life. If you besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands" (158).

The social structure and tribal traditions focused on the female gender and confined women are hard to challenge these traditions and customs of the tribal society since it is a matter of Honor and Shame for tribal men. Another resultant of 'disgrace and respect' philosophy for women is the demonstration of constrained marriage. Marriage oppresses and subjugates female and it drives her to heedless days inconclusively rehashed, life that disappears delicately toward



death without scrutinizing its motivation. *The Pakistani Bride* delineates the use of such unlawful act. Bapsi Sidhwa has investigated the middling position of women suffering for the sake of Honour in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*. The position of women as wife is described as, "A wife was a symbol of status, the embodiment of a man's honour and the focus of his role as provider. A valuable commodity indeed and dearly bought. He glanced at the girl. Her head was bowed" (138)

Honour killing and family respect are the prominent words to describe women in *The Pakistani Bride*. Woman as a daughter, wife and mother struggles all her life to accomplish admiration and quietness, yet in every one of these positions, she is subjected to persecution and misuse. Woman can't question the male power. However Sidhwa expresses her sympathies for the troublesome existences of women, it is apparent that the critical part of women in the upkeep and proliferation of this general public is difficult to change. But by giving them moral support and proper voice, a radical change in behavior and society can be seen.

Feminism, as a movement, has played a very vital role in projecting the suppressed status of women in the patriarchal society. The term 'feminism' signifies the emergence of female power in order to get rid of their excessive dependence on men. It is a worldwide movement to secure equality of women with men in enjoyment of all human rights—social, political, economic, moral, religious, educational, legal and so on. Feminism argues that woman should be left alone to live on her own strength and means to fight against the unjust system



and obtain her own subsistence and thereby remove her dependent status. Women are slaves to the men of the family, and they torture her at their fancy at any time even without reason. No laws of civilized life appeal the tribal men. They may kill their women for the dishonour caused to them. Niaz Zaman writes

In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa combines her feminist concerns with a compulsion to explain the culture of Pakistan to audiences unfamiliar with that culture. It is this combination that gives the novel its structural weakness but also its perceptive insights. (107)

Feminism is the most roaring current issue that involves denial of male supremacy and objects female subordination in patriarchal setup. Differentiation of gender is not only biological but bears social imprints as well. The contemporary writings involve women perception of the world and women writing it. They have enriched the literature by adding a feminine dimension to all the existing themes. Being a writer who is not gender conscious, she relies more on her imagination than on values. Sidhwa serves a delicious meal of fiction cooked in imagination with spices in form of contemporary issues. She skillfully links gender to community, nationality, religion, and class.

*The Pakistani Bride* brings the image of physical sufferings outwardly such as in garments. Apart from the tyranny of her husband, Zaitoon is further tormented by the sense of alienation, the variation in the lifestyle, rites and rituals. Her colourful clothes are in sharp contrast with the coarse dull coloured fabrics worn by the Kohistani women. Her garments lose their luster similar to her life.



She is forced to survive on the dry maize bread dipped in water, which is the staple diet of the villagers. Used to the spicy Punjabi cuisine, she feels hungry. Her physical appearance stridently conveys her alien origin; hence she has both physical and mental barriers which prevent her from assimilating into the new culture.

Women victimization is one of the evils confronting women all over the world. Women being extremely vulnerable are easy targets of any form of oppression, humiliation, deprivation and discrimination. The novel *The Pakistani Bride* thematically deals with the oppression of women by men in the conservative tribal society. In the novel, there are three major women characters ranging from Zaitoon, Carol and Saki's mother, Hamida who represent different aspects of the problems faced by women in a patriarchal world. Different types of problems become symbols of traumatic life of suppressed women. The lives of women become very worse and their families are illiterate and live in tribal society.

Sidhwa based *The Pakistani Bride* on an actual story she had heard about a Punjabi girl like Zaitoon who had entered into an arranged marriage with a Himalayan tribal man, attempted to escape, and after fourteen days of wandering in the mountains was found by her husband; he cut off her head and threw her body into the river. That Sidhwa allows her heroine to escape is significant. By altering the original story, Sidhwa sends the message to women that they must rebel no matter the consequences. Further, through the voice of the American bride she denies the male excuse expressed by Carol's husband that women ask



for it. Carol thinks with sarcastic disgust, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied and disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature. Cynthia Abrioux remarks:

Zaitoon is ultimately protected and saved, which suggests that an awesome, ancient, natural order combined with a young girl's defiant spirit can overcome the oppressive shackles of a conspiracy of men. (56)

Certainly Sidhwa's stories are always about women who dare to go beyond the limits set for them, along with her own story. They can only raise the awareness of women and of men as well. Although the men in her novel may often be weak, unreasonable, and cruel, Sidhwa sees them caught in the webs of another so-called immutable law that needs to be reversed. They, too, must rebel against the role in which tradition has placed them. In Sidhwa's view, only when this dual rebellion takes place the story of *The Pakistani Bride* be a happy one. Indira Bhatt comments that

Zaitoon's odyssey from the plains to the snow mountains and back to plains is symbolic of the inner journey of the young woman from the fantasy world of love, romance and heroes to the harsh and hostile realities of life, where man is the hunter and exploiter, cruel and inhuman treating women and animal alike. (157)

The role of women is examined from many angles, leaving the reader to develop their own conclusions rather than spoon feeding or demanding a certain view. Sidhwa walks between the Pakistani and Western worlds, casting light on



an often misunderstood and neglected region, revealing the human perspective there. Along with the cast of dynamic Pakistani characters, Sidhwa provides Carol, an American married to a Pakistani man, as further insight into the Pakistani experience. Through Carol's eyes, the reader is able to witness both the beauty and the cruelty of Pakistan. She is one of the many multifaceted female characters that allow the reader to immerse themselves in a culture of dichotomy, of joyfulness versus sorrow, and of freedom of mind and expression versus repression.

Victimization of women is the predominant and powerful theme in the novel and centres around oppression and exploitation. It depicts Sidhwa's concern over the hideous practices of age-old traditions and customs which assert the inferior status of women. It also explores how the protagonists react to their fences and predicaments, probing their mindset to the metaphor of threshold. The struggle of women and the saga of how they grapple to survive in the patriarchal society are analyzed. The individual's response to the challenges that confront them is resistance or rebellion. The various bitter experiences that the women undergo are brought to the forefront. The novel gives the various external forces which victimize the innocent women.

Sidhwa juxtaposes different cultures, be it of American culture or Pakistani culture. It results in cross-cultural confrontation due to cultural shock in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*. 'Cultural-difference' focuses on the issue of the upheavals of culture-divide presented mainly in *The Pakistani Bride*.



### Chapter Three

#### Existential Alienation and Self - Estrangement

Literature is a subsystem of a culture. It offers an illustration of some general pattern. Culture is not only a managerial principle holding together the members of a community, it means establishing its separateness from other communities. Language is more significant in the development of culture. The cultural standard depends on the use of language. Environment is also essential for the development of culture. It provides the foundation for cultural formation and its growth.

The dialectic between change and continuity is a painful but deeply instructive one in personal life of a people. To 'see the light' too often has meant rejecting the 'treasure found in darkness'. (Rich 136).

Misunderstanding, confusion and incomprehension are predictable in any cross- cultural endeavour. Sidhwa through her novel *The Pakistani Bride* suggests the difficulties of way in and out of Pakistan and America and points at bridge that cannot be built between cultures. Way to and out of Pakistan and America will lead to pain and confusion. Sidhwa as a Pakistani focuses her critical lens on the many cultural conflicts and divisions that she sees as part of life in Pakistan, especially, the cultural conflicts faced by women in Pakistan. The atmosphere of dislocation and partition is continued throughout the novel *The Pakistani Bride*.

Sidhwa portrays that her women and men characters are caught in the huge web of cultural shock. In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa portrays the young



American woman, Carol, who is married to a modern, western educated Pakistani husband. Her existence in the novel emphasizes the cross-cultural differences between West and East. It shows the cross gender differentiation that exists within Pakistani society. Sidhwa also makes a contrastive picture of the atrocious ways of cultural behaviour of Qasim's people with the gentle life in Lahore where Zaitoon lives. Sidhwa sees the discovery of the culture divisions within independent Pakistan. Sidhwa in *The Pakistani Bride* by presenting Carol in Pakistan explores the complexities of cultural confrontation and the politics. Carol presents the difference between the old world and the new world represented by America and Pakistan. By presenting the clash of value systems, a confrontation between a strict, harsh society and culture in which nothing is important than the celebration of beauty she presents the fluid identity of her women. Carol's arrival in Pakistan is set against a period of disorderly political and economic activity.

In *The Pakistani Bride* Zaitoon is projected to be a silent woman in her alliance to Sakhi. She is a compound blend of 'silent woman', the speaking person and teller of tales of past glory. Zaitoon similar to silent woman in the beginning of marital life accepts the almost preplanned journey of a certain way of life with her man- Zaitoon with Sakhi Ripplemeyer. But her overpowering world is heightened by her inability to share her memories or reflections of the past, which is as much an element of her identity as the present. Sakhi does not want to share anything with Zaitoon about her past life. Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* is to be interpreted as search narratives written to point how lives have intertwined and can be intertwined across space and time. The theme of slight



relatedness of lives is a development of the theme of immigration. It reminds one of the interconnections between cultures. Sidhwa explores other ramifications of cultural conflict in this novel *The Pakistani Bride*. It is a tale about dislocation and transformations arising when two cultures come to make contact with each other. The quest is for identity, transformation and translation of protagonist's personality under the pressure of the situations of meeting of two different worlds- America and Pakistan- in the character of Carol and Farukh in *The Pakistani Bride*.

Cultural alienation is a world occurrence today. The fabulous difference between two ways of life leads a person to a feeling of depression and frustration. This could be called cultural shock. When an individual leaves his/her own culture and enters another, his/her values come into conflict with the new ones, he/she finds.

In *The Pakistani Bride* the cultural and social gap dividing the two worlds- Pakistan and America- makes Carol feel disturbed and lonely. Carol is a character in dislocation with her atmosphere in Pakistan and in a way 'Partitioned' from her home and culture in America. She is entirely an alien to the culture and her surroundings. She had left America but is unwilling to adapt to the way of life of the strange customs and tradition of Pakistan. They are inferior to her refined way of life. Carol feels ignored by her husband, Farukh. Carol seduces Major Mushtaq knowing that he will not wed her. It becomes a shocking experience for Carol, who feels altered after her act of disloyalty to Farukh. It gives her power to reject Pakistan.



It is true that her isolation is not rooted in solitude or in cultural differences but in her separation from her own past and her own inner being. But when a person visits an unfamiliar land, she is an outsider in a no-man's land. There she has to fight a lot for her survival. She recreates herself into a new personality and forms emotional ties with the place she lives in. The invention of a new self makes her forget her own native culture. On her revisit to her native lands she finds herself alien in her native land by having lost her native roots. Her mind is again worn apart between the cultural clashes of two environments. She is enforced to fight with her split personality. Carol's case is correlated to this alienness in a new culture with her split personality which is the result of cultural void or divide.

An important concern of the post colonial literature is interrelated to place and displacement. The concern with identifying a relationship between self and place leads to a catastrophe of identity. The self may be battered because of cultural dislocation. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft says,

Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all Post-Colonial literature in English (9).

The theme of exile is habitually concerned with place and displacement and establishing of new relationships. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft maintains,



the theme of exile [...] is manifestation of the ubiquitous concern with place and displacement [...] as well as with the complex material circumstances implicit in the transportation of language from its place of origin and its imposed and imposing relationship on and with the new environment (29).

Sidhwa suffered a literal geographical displacement and confronted with social and cultural alienation. In her novel *The Pakistani Bride* expatriation becomes a symbol for deeper levels of alienation like existential alienation and self-estrangement which results in exile. The word 'identity' implies certain assimilation. Identification can be on many levels; psychological, sociological, linguistic, cultural and emotional. The degree to which identification has been achieved on all these fronts will qualify how complete one's identification has been to the new surroundings. The quest for identity by marginal groups in developing multi-racial societies emerges as one of the chief concerns in literature. In Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* one can find a common, shared focus on ethnic groups struggling for identity. Sidhwa shows how the ethnic group, Parsees, strive to keep hold of their identity by upholding traditional values and customs as well as searching assimilation in multi-racial, modern, and changing society. Sidhwa reveals the process of change and the contradictions that stem in the period of instability.

Diasporic experience is a double identification that constitutes mixed forms of identity. Such forms of identity vary from the essentialised notion of national and ethnic identity. Sidhwa's diasporic experience led to identity-crisis



and evocation of Parsiness, which aroused due to partition. Sidhwa's women such as Carol and Zaitoon find their ethnic and American identities. They have to find their identities with self, with tradition, and with the wonders and horrors of a new culture with growing aspirations, hopes and desires. Her growing concern is that these new born identities should not suffer from the horror and terror of marginalization. In *The Pakistani Bride*, Zaitoon decides to escape to Lahore and Carol decides to go back to America. In this, Sidhwa talks about the changing social setting and identity crisis.

The self is the distinctive and characteristic individuality of a person. The human self is a self-organizing, interactive system of thoughts, feelings and motives that characterizes an individual. The self or self-concept is defined as organized, consistent, conceptual gestalt composed of perceptions of the characteristics of the 'I' and 'me' to others and to various aspects of life, together with the values attached to these perceptions. Self is the result of man's awareness of himself and his own integrity and identity in relation to his past, present and future. Self and society are interconnected and this link is a kind of web, the construction of which is partly under guidance from self and partly the prevailing social pattern. The subtle by-play between society and the individual by which the individual develops a sense of self through participation in social interaction, and yet possessing a feeling of separation from others is a fundamental social process which perpetuates culture and society. This inability to connect the self and society results in alienation of self is evident in *The Pakistani Bride*. In *Glimpses of Indo-English Fiction*, Saxena says,



self alienation means the loss of contact of the individual self with any inclination or desires that are not in agreement with the prevailing social patterns, as a result of which an individual is forced to manipulate in accordance with the social demands or feels incapable of controlling his actions (71).

The issues of diaspora globalization, consumerism, transnationalism, cultural hybridity, alienation and identity crisis have become the leit-motif due to cultural dislocation. In the quest for identity, the self is dislocated in space and time from its roots and has the desire to discover its 'in betweenness' in a transnational and trans-cultural space.

Whereas Jerbanoo feels lonely in an alien land, Qasim in *The Pakistani Bride* finds himself an unusual man out in his own country. He is a Kohistani tribal man. After the unfortunate death of his wife and children caused by a smallpox epidemic, he leaves his mountain village and goes to Jullundur where his cousin finds him a job as watchman in the National and Grindlays Bank. Every ordinary object in Jullundur is a surprise to Qasim. Torches, safety pins, electric-lights, cinemas and cars whirl magically prior to his senses. The view of women walking with brisk buttocks and bare midriffs is a new practice to him. A meal of spicy curries and vegetables is a distant cry from his daily mountain diet of flat maize bread drenched in water. He finds an outstanding difference between his native place and Jullundur as regards their basic values:

The men of the plains appeared strangely effeminate. Women roamed the streets in brazen proximity. These people were soft,



their lives easy. Where he came from, men—as in the Stone Age—walked thirty days over the lonely, almost trackless mountains to secure salt for their tribes. (21)

Qasim quickly adjusts himself to the mode of life in Jullundur. Everything goes on well for a few months and then, he gets into an argument with the bank-clerk, Girdharilal. Besides his clerical work, Girdharilal has charge of sanitation in the bank building, right down to the toilets. Qasim uses the bank toilet very rarely but whenever he uses it, he leaves it blocked with stones and waste of smooth-surfaced glass. It causes much problem to the employees visiting the lavatory later. One day Girdharilal catches him. When he asks him if he threw the stones there, Qasim simply smiles as he doesn't follow his words. When someone explains the accuse to him, he admits the fact but still smiles because he doesn't realize that he has done anything wrong. He has done what all hill-men do. They not at all wash their bottoms. Girdharilal irritably calls him "filthy son of a Muslim mountain hog" (22). Qasim tries to strangle him for abusing his tribe, blood and religion. They are wrenched separately. Qasim is ordered to say sorry but he apologizes only when his cousin persuades him to do so. He later tells Qasim that murder is against the law of the plains and one found guilty is caught and hanged.

Qasim gets the chance after three years in 1947 when violence erupts in almost every street in the north Indian plains in the wake of partition. One night, defying the curfew, he goes to Girdharilal's accommodation, shoots him down and the next day, boards a train to Pakistan. The train is ambushed near the



boundary by a murderous mob of Sikh rioters. Qasim jumps off the train in the nick of time and takes shelter in the deep shade of a clump of trees. He watches the massacre of Muslims as in a movie. Although he is shocked by the murder, he feels no force to sacrifice his own life because these are people from the plains, not his people. When the bloodshed subsides, a little girl Munni, whose parents have been killed, clings to his legs calling him Abba. After some hesitation, he picks her up, names her Zaitoon after his own dead daughter and takes her to Lahore.

Though Qasim has been living in cities far away from his mountain village for a pretty long time, he still feels melancholy for his native world of wilderness. In order to re-establish the lost connection with his homeland, he marries Zaitoon to one of his kinsmen in the mountains. But Zaitoon, having lived first sixteen years of her life in cities like Ludhiana and Lahore, is little matched for the harsh life in the hills. Her husband beats her brutally on the least pretext. At the end of two months, she rebels and runs away from her husband.

While Zaitoon, a city-bred girl, runs away from her husband in the hills, Carol, an American girl, married to a western-educated Pakistani engineer Farukh finds Pakistan unfriendly and returns to her own culture and land. Carol is another character in dislocation with her environment in Pakistan, and in a way separated from her home and culture in America. She is entirely alien to the culture and her surroundings. She has left America yet is unwilling to adjust to the way of life that people lead in Pakistan. What she had imagined to be unfamiliar has failed to live up to the harsh image of reality as it is evident in her personal relationship



with her husband, Farukh. But in spite of her husband's morbid jealousy, Carol decides to settle in Pakistan. But her resolve is shaken by the news of Zaitoon being hunted down by her husband and his clansmen. Through the telepathic knothole of Zaitoon's plight, Carol catches a glimpse of her condition and the critical condition of girls like her. Her encounter with a chopped off head balanced in the river is the last straw. Carol gets certain that her independent attitude will get her killed sooner or later. To live in Pakistan one wants "an inherited memory of ancient rites, taboos and responses: inherited immunities: a different set of genes. . ." (227). As she doesn't have any of these, she decides to get back. She tells Farukh,

I think I'm finally beginning to realize something...Your

Civilization is too ancient...too different...and it has ways that

Can hurt me... really hurt me...I'm going home (229)

Zaitoon's running away from the hills to the plains and Carol's going back to America appear to suggest that it is very complex, almost impossible, to overcome the cultural barriers. Thus Bapsi Sidhwa has placed the theme of inter-community marriage and cultural difference in a non-Parsi context in *The Pakistani Bride*. The two inter-community marriages depicted are between the white American woman Carol and the Pakistani Muslim Farukh and between the girl from the plains Zaitoon and the tribal from the hills, Sakhi. Both marriages are unsuccessful. Both Carol and Zaitoon are mistreated and the marriages cause them intense agony and unhappiness. So in this novel, Bapsi Sidhwa shows that marriage outside the community can be self-damaging, thereby outwardly



endorsing the traditional Parsi construct of exclusion of inter-community marriages.

'Cultural-difference' focuses on the issue of the upheavals of culture-divide presented mainly in *The Pakistani Bride*. This novel is the story of a young woman who journeys through two cultures. The novel talks particularly of Carol's understanding of her own and other culture that distance offers. The novel deals with the change that Carol undergoes in the West and how her perspective on life changes. Carol's mental confusion typifies the dilemma of the modern multicultural society. She also represents the youngsters, especially the expatriate ones striving hard to strike a balance between convention and modernity, past and present, dependence and freedom.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* has investigated the theme of cultural difference. Carol and Zaitoon meet accidentally and Carol identifies her own destiny with that of Zaitoon's. Here Sidhwa reveals the plight of a Pakistani woman through the eyes of an American woman. She presents two brides from two completely different cultures but with the same fate. Both are the sufferers of cultural dislocations. Through their stories, Sidhwa mocks at the institution of cultural differences in which women are mere puppets at the hands of the society. Zaitoon's run away from the chain of her cultural differences should be regarded as her triumph over the society.

Sidhwa emphasizes the differences of two cultures which by no means can meet, be they of Pakistani, and American or the mountains and the plains. Zaitoon who was brought up in the liberal atmosphere of Lahore can never cope with the



tribal savagery. Similarly, Carol, an American woman cannot adjust Pakistan's fundamental and traditional outlook. The novelist also brings the theme of partition crisis which killed Zaitoon's own parents.

The two cultures cannot get together, be they of Pakistan and America or the mountains and the plains. Sidhwa feels that the set of laws of the society, the old conventional male made rules, should be followed by women only. Carol's conflicts are determined when she decides to accept her failure in her marriage to Pakistani Farukh and bravely decides to return to her own culture and land. Thus, Bapsi Sidhwa brilliantly explains the pathetic condition of cultural dislocation through her novel *The Pakistani Bride*.

When geographical borders are crossed, the inflow of different cultures form a new collection to excite and threaten. It analyses the problems encountered by the immigrants from a cultural perspective. Sidhwa strongly believes that every individual's social behavior is conditioned by culture. The cultural conflicts and the sense of alienation stem from deep-rooted culture consciousness, the protagonist's quest for self-identity, transition and transformation in an alien land and their return to their cultural roots. The protagonists though confronted with threats, face the problems with challenge and endurance. It traces the struggle for survival of the ethnic Parsi community through adaptation and assimilation and records Sidhwa's concern dwindling Parsi community and the need for a change in the established norms.



## Chapter Four

### Expatriation to Immigration

The terrible declaration by the British government of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947 turned it into a diabolic region, dividing it into two separate states for Hindus and Muslims, India and Pakistan respectively, affecting millions of people, it altered the map of the sub-continent. This historical event proved very critical for the people of both newly born nations. A huge number of people were the victims of wickedness, violence, abductions etc. Millions of people migrated from both sides of borders. The violence and communal riots were uncontrollable and consumed everything that came in its path. The countries of the region still live under its shadows.

The Partition of India was the division of British India in 1947 which accompanied the formation of two independent dominions, India and Pakistan. The partition involved the splitting up of three provinces, Assam, Bengal and Punjab, based on district-wide Hindu or Muslim majorities. The boundary demarcating India and Pakistan became known as the Radcliffe Line. It also concerned the division of the British Indian Army, the Royal Indian Navy, the Indian Civil Service, the railways, and the central treasury, between the two new dominions. The partition was set forth in the Indian Independence Act 1947 and resulted in the dissolution of the British Raj, as the British government there was called. The two self-governing countries of Pakistan and India legally came into existence at midnight on 14–15 August 1947. The violent nature of the partition



created an atmosphere of hostility and suspicion between India and Pakistan that plagues their relationship to the present.

Sidhwa was highly influenced by this partition which leads her to write on this theme. Sidhwa has her own individual and independent perception on Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa was born and brought up in united India. In this age of globalization, it is really very difficult to categorize few writers; Bapsi Sidhwa is one among them. She likes herself to be described as a Punjabi-Pakistani-Parsee woman. *The Pakistani Bride* deals with both the pre- and post-colonial period of the Indian sub-continent. The most remarkable about her work is her double perspective which is based on both the Pakistani and the Parsee point of view. She talks both for the Pakistanis and the marginalized Parsee community. She picks some important incidents from her own life or from the lives of other people and flashes them out to create a larger reality of fiction. Her writing career began at the age of twenty-six.

She tells the atmosphere that prevailed before Partition, there exists love and affection. Sidhwa's portrayal of the Partition is not influenced by the official principles of Pakistan. Sidhwa is conscious of the troublesome forces and factors between the Hindus and the Muslims, in the form of social and cultural difference and biases. She shows the Brahmin ideology of clarity contributing towards Partition of the sub-continent. She makes it clear of the co-existence of Hindus and Muslims for centuries, the mountain high social and cultural barriers separating the two communities remained as insurmountable as ever. A caste Hindu would not even touch his food in the presence of a Muslim. A Muslim



entering a Hindu kitchen would contaminate it. This reflects the extreme dislike of the caste Hindus for the Muslims, who were driven by their ideology of purity. The Brahmin thrust on the ideology of purity made Muslims aware of their own separate identity. This contributed to the Muslim demand for a separate homeland.

Sidhwa offers her most eloquent and comprehensive response and viewpoint on the philosophy, ideology and rationale of Partition through the use of an image of the partitioning of a Punjabi Sikh, again by the Muslims resulting in the unnatural, aggressive division and death of the Sikh.

God give our arms strength,'... Their cry, 'Bole so Nihal, Sat siri

Akal', swells into the ferocious chant: 'Vengeance! Vengeance!

Vengeance!' The old Sikh sinks to his knees. (16)

Sidhwa, also portrays that all the diverse communities in India live in peace and harmony, before politics of Partition shatters it. Bapsi Sidhwa highlights the controversial role played by the British government and officials during the days of partition. Sidhwa raises questions on the image of Britishers being proficient, capable and neutral. She blames the rulers of the empire for not paying enough attention to issues relating to partition. Post-colonial Sidhwa holds them responsible for the bloodshed and massacres, staining the dawn of freedom with the blood of millions of people. Bapsi Sidhwa shows the British in rush and speed to wind up and quit. Sidhwa is extremely conscious about the unlawful neglect and lack of seriousness by the British, while undertaking and supervising



the partition. This horror can be exposed through the speech of an old Sikh, Moola Singh,

I thought we would stay by our land, by our stock, by our Mussalman neighbours. No one can touch us, I thought. The riots will pass us by. But a mob attacked our village- Oh, the screams of the women, I can hear them still... I had a twenty- year- old brother, tall and strong as mountain, ...This is what they did: they tied one of his legs to one jeep, the other to another jeep- and then they drove the jeeps apart... (16)

Bapsi Sidhwa repetitively projects the price of partition. She wants to give consciousness and have fresh assessment of partition. She shows that the millions of victims of partition pay a horrible price for freedom. She presents the readers with continuous sufferings of human beings and their misery. However, she clutches both Muslims and Hindus responsible for partition and related violence without becoming partial. Sidhwa was not against the partition openly like Chaman Nahal in his famous novel *Azadi* but wants the reader to come up with final judgment.

Sidhwa explains the greatest migration in the history of human civilization as a result and price or impact of partition. She emphasizes miseries and sufferings of the Hindus moving towards India and Muslims moving towards Pakistan. The partition of India has to give a large amount of price in the form of thousands of lives, abductions, massacres etc. by the partition affected people of both nations. Bapsi Sidhwa assigns another price of partition in the form of train



massacres. She presents the train massacres as the most terrible association of the partition of India for inhabitants of Punjab.

Qasim is the first character exposed to the damages of "partition," the ravages of typhoid and small pox which decimate his family. In Jullunder he lives isolated for several years until he commits a murder of revenge in the middle of the partition-chaos and boards a refugee train bound for Lahore, in the newly-created Pakistan, a train with a solid mass of humanity clinging to it like flies to dung. Among those aboard are a Muslim couple, Sikander and Zohra and their child, Munni who have abandoned their land and their everything. Sikander and Zohra's story contains in it the germ of all partition stories like communal fury, bloodshed, migration, and the break-up of families as well as different types of atrocities committed. "I saw them myself - huge cauldrons of boiling oil and babies tossed into them!" (15).

The Sikhs assault the train and in that Zohra and Sikander are killed. Qasim lives and saves the child Munni. Qasim renames her as Zaitoon in remembrance of his own dead daughter. Qasim and Zaitoon thus become the reconstructed family, the unlikely coming together of two cultures, the Kohistani and the Punjabi, the tribal and the urban, the hill and the plain. Looking at Munni Qasim muses

"I had a little girl once. Her name was Zaitoon. You are so like her  
'Munni, you are like the smooth, dark olive, the Zaitoon, that  
grows near our hills...The name suits you...I shall call you  
Zaitoon.(30)



Another character in displacement with her environment is Carol who is in Pakistan and a way "partitioned" from her home and culture in America. She is entirely alien to the culture and her surroundings. She has left America, yet is unwilling to adapt herself to the way of life that people lead in Pakistan. She keenly clings to her view that the "strange" customs and traditions of this country are lower to her own people's "civilized" way of life. She adjusts herself to some aspects of her adopted culture, sustaining a balance between her American upbringing and her present state. Through Carol, Sidhwa introduces the economic class structure of Pakistan and in the process exposes its members' privileges and hypocrisies. Carol chooses to stay in Pakistan because she is able to have an identity which would have been non-existent if she had carried on to work as a shop-assistant in a departmental store. She is presented as a liminal figure in both her resident and foreign societies, neither of the "identities" fulfils her character. Afshan is forcibly "partitioned" from her family and "dislocated" from her home to a new atmosphere. The environment of dislocation and partition is maintained and the conflict between a character's location and identity is skillfully tackled by Sidhwa.

Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* is extraordinarily different in both subject and treatment. One can find variety of themes in her novel *The Pakistani Bride* such as the partition crisis, expatriate experience, social idiosyncrasies of the small marginal community, the theme of marriage, women's problems, patterns of migration. Her treatment of such wide ranging themes is a testimony to her



growth as a powerful and dramatic novelist who is both an affectionate and sharp observer of human society and a keen teller of stories.

In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa has tried to show experimentations in imagination with an aim to achieve artistic creation. Themes diverge from the conventional to the contemporary. Thematically Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* is originated in the subcontinent where she was born and brought up yet they simultaneously possess a cosmopolitan appeal beneath the characters. Thus, racial, regional, national and cultural issues of chronological as well as topical significance form the core of her novel *The Pakistani Bride*.

'Partition Crisis' is an in-depth study of the possessed communal as well as individual divide portrayed in Sidhwa's most serious novel *The Pakistani Bride* in the wake of Partition. The use of narrator is also unique, it is the second novel written on Partition. The device of child narrator allows Sidhwa to treat the holocausts of Partition without morbidity, pendentism or censure. *The Pakistani Bride* gives us a glimpse into events of disorder on the Indian subcontinent during Partition. *The Pakistani Bride* of Bapsi Sidhwa examines the inevitable logic of Partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism parked by hardening communal attitudes. It also presents the Pakistani perception of Partition. Bapsi Sidhwa subverts the Pakistani perspective on Partition in general. From the point of Bapsi Sidhwa, Partition was the result of British policies of divide and rule, Gandhi's mixing of religious conviction and politics and Nehru's Prime-ministerial ambitions. She presents Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Master Tara Singh as the builders of Partition. Her assessment of freedom movement is also observable.



she is of the view that British have been less than pale to him as well as to Pakistan. She squarely blames Gandhi for the Partition, while not caring to remember that the strongest conflict to the idea of Partition came from Gandhi himself.

Sidhwa says that Nehru got special treatment because he was young and handsome and more importantly, he was a favourite of the Mountbattens. Nehru is seen as the conflict between superficiality and worth, appearance and reality. The charm of Nehru is presented as misleading while the austerity is seen as his virtue. The novel narrates the story of the struggle of a Pakistani bride named Zaitoon. Sidhwa skilfully exposes the world of savagery into which Zaitoon is destined to enter due to partition. Sidhwa artistically describes Zaitoon's journey from the plains to the snow mountains and back to the plains replicating the inner journey of the young woman from her own world of fantasy to the stark reality.

Sidhwa in her subplot depicts the story of an American bride, Carol in Lahore. Carol falls in love with a Pakistani engineer Farukh. She accompanies Farukh on his posting at the mounts of Kohistan. Gradually Carol and Farukh's relationship turns into a bitter one due to Farukh's mistrust and doubts. Being unable to cope with Farukh's suppression, Carol eventually finds herself in an affair with Major Mushtaq. But when Carol demands a stable relationship, Mushtaq simply rejects her.

Carol and Zaitoon meet unexpectedly and Carol identifies her own fate with that of Zaitoon's. Here Sidhwa reveals the dilemma of a Pakistani woman through the eyes of an American woman. She presents two brides from two



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entirely dissimilar cultures but with the same fate. Both are the victims of patriarchy. Through these stories, Sidhwa teases at the institution of marriage in which women are mere puppets at the hands of men. Zaitoon's escape from the chain of her marriage should be regarded as her victory over the male chauvinism.

Qasim travels down to Jullundur and finds him a job as watchman in the National and Grindlays Bank. As the train is disrupted by a group of Sikhs before reaching its destination, the passengers almost exclusively Muslims, are massacred with deliberate cruelty. Zaitoon's mother is murdered before her eyes. Soon afterwards, her father is also executed by the attacking Sikhs. It is then that she blindly runs into Qasim and instantly starts calling him 'father'. Faced with a horrifying situation, she understands that the best way to protect her is to assume the role of a daughter. Thus, she is able to overcome a crushing personal tragedy, which would have been undoubtedly overwhelmed by many adults.

Partition literature such as *The Pakistani Bride* explores the sufferings and hurting experiences of women during and after the Partition. It demonstrates the inequality in cultural construct. Bapsi Sidhwa depicts the difficulties and challenges in the synthesis of Hindu-Muslim society.

In *The Pakistani Bride*, Sidhwa has succeeded in integrating the theme of freedom with the essential ingredients of imaginary tale such as plot, character and locale. Zaitoon's option for escape is an effort to resist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls, "Othering" or marginalization of lady. *The Pakistani Bride* amply reveals Bapsi Sidhwa's 'passion for history and for truth telling'. The image of Pakistan as presented by Sidhwa is authentic for she was an eyewitness to the



freedom of the nation to which she now belongs. This novel is Pakistani in deep feeling and setting. Sidhwa takes the readers back to a turbulent phase of the past of the sub-continent which to her was an 'intimate experience'.

Even men, though in a restricted sense, are marginalized in Pakistan ; but at smallest amount they are free whereas women are not. The suffering of Qasim is qualitatively unlike from that of his adopted daughter. Qasim's tribal customs and etiquette set him apart from the people of plains. During the Partition riots, he is disconnected and watches the mass executions with total objectivity. He is not prepared to give up his existence for the Muslims, who in his view, are aliens. Thus, Sidhwa delicately establishes the marginality of Qasim in the Pakistani context.

It examines the trauma of Partition from the sociological and psychological perspective. It presents the collective and individual response to the patterns of communal upheaval, violence inflicted on men and women, mass migration and dislocation, and the new identity of multitudes. It zooms on the consequences of the Partition which includes the dilemma of the Parsi community, destruction, looting, kidnapping, ravishing of women, humiliation, and the homelessness of the refugees underscoring the necessity of love based on humanitarian grounds. Sidhwa advocates peace and harmony as the panacea for religious intolerance. The feminine imagination in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa is presented with an incompatible desire to discuss serious socio-political issues of the contemporary country. In Sidhwa's work themes diverge from traditional to contemporaneity. Her concern ranges from a pre-independence social scene to

partition and its aftermath, and her time frame is fifty years. In this narrow canvas, Sidhwa who experiences the pleasures of exile is in a more advantageous position than most of the writers. Her exile has given her an opportunity to laugh at the slogan 'Anatomy is destiny.'



## Chapter Five

### Summation

Sidhwa's writings reflect distinctive Pakistani. Her sense of humour and individualism makes the woman a very refined English comic writer. But she was never titled as comic writer. Her novel *The Pakistani Bride* provides a wide glimpse of contemporary political situation in Pakistan. She gets ironical while featuring the dilemmas of fundamentalism. She exposes narrow-mindedness and insular attitude of the American society. She with her acute characterization, humour and optimistic outlook tackles some contemporary problems. Her writings show that she has been a part of cultural multiplicity. Her work has pulled together positive and bright critical attention on culture and of India's partition. She is a realist and feminist. She uses cultural and social stereotypes in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*.

Literature is an expression of various facets of human life as well as a social chronicle. A work of literature is inescapably conditioned by the choice and development of its subject matter, the ways of thinking it incorporates, its evaluations of the modes of life it renders, and even in its form by the social, political and economic organization and forces of its age. Bapsi Sidhwa, the internationally-acclaimed Pakistani Parsi writer, has secured an enviable position for herself in literary circles today. She has proved that her minority experience as the member of a tiny Parsi community in Pakistan, far from being a visible trouble spot on her creative psyche, offers her enough material and space to celebrate her talent. She feels that it has given her a unique sense of detached



attachment for her country and its people. She has grown from strength to strength in her successive works like *The Pakistani Bride*, *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat*.

In *The Pakistani Bride*, there is sometimes a clash between Parsi identity and mainstream Indian identity. This conflict produces a sense of insecurity which leads to further consolidation of identity syndrome in Parsis. Due to this clash Parsis are believed to have a strong sense of group identity and cohesiveness. Along with it, there are deep rooted reasons behind this desire for distinctiveness in communities. The first reason of it is that all communities struggle to maintain an identity of their own through ethnic practices and rites related to birth and burial as a means to connect themselves with a rich and glorious past. Their cherishing of this imaginary glorious past gives them a sense of satisfaction and superiority. The second reason for trying to attain a distinct identity may be that a minority community carries within it the unconscious fear of the majority community and this fear of losing themselves in the majority space makes them stick to their cultural rituals and rites with greater force. This fear particularly takes deep roots in a community that is endangered due to decrease in its numbers. This fear of loss of identity is not only inter-cultural but also intra-cultural. While the young members of the community remain in dilemma about past and future, roots and novelty, old and new life styles, the elders remain more conscious about their ethnic and cultural roots. The seniors expect the new generation to follow the traditional cultural and religious paths and preserve their



ethnic identity while the young ones object it on the grounds of out of sync with the times and irrationality and advocate, by and large, cultural adaptability.

If Parsis try to maintain their unique culture through the observance of rituals and maintaining the right of entry to their religion closed for other communities, there is perceptible adoption of the beliefs, customs and value system of other cultures existing with them. Bapsi Sidhwa's novelistic space provides excellent ground for these contesting claims between identity, multiculturalism and generational clashes in *The Pakistani Bride* and as a writer she is not limited by them rather her novels are enriched by all these complexities and contraries.

Bapsi Sidhwa has been highly regarded as a feminist post-colonial author who effectively addresses the issues of cultural difference and the place of women in Indian and Pakistani society. The western feminist literature has influenced Sidhwa greatly. Though by using English as her medium of expression, Sidhwa indubitably belongs to an elite circle, yet she is able to give voice to the marginalized figures of Pakistani society, mainly women. She poses a strong counter-voice to the dominant patriarchal narrative which has subdued women's roles to the absolute minimum, through silencing female literature in one form or the other. She rigorously questions the histories and the assumptions of contemporary Pakistani society and literature. The acidic attack on a number of biases and beliefs against women is somewhat softened by her candid and humour which pervades a substantial amount of her work *The Pakistani Bride*.



Bapsi Sidhwa draws her subjects from widely different aspects of life. She has dealt with issues ranging from history to contemporary reality. Ironie but objective portrayal of the Parsi community, oppression of women, religious fundamentalism, unjust evaluation of historical events, cultural difference weave different kinds of thematic patterns in her novel *The Pakistani Bride*. She is a realist and she portrays life as she knows it. She does not provide unnecessary details and even avoids passing judgement on her characters. But she always sympathises with her characters in their trials and tribulations in her works. She is not a didactic writer who preaches about anything but undoubtedly she is a good moralist. Her humorous tone, irreverence to established traditions, sense of fair play, subtle characterization and taut presentation of events impart a very specific charm to her novels. The fact that her novels have been translated into several languages and published in numerous European and Asian countries shows her popularity across the world and also the adaptability of her art. Though her literary output is meagre, she holds a very special place among contemporary writers of English fiction in the subcontinent.

Bapsi Sidhwa handles the delicate theme of Partition in *The Pakistani Bride* through subtle insinuations, images and gestures. So the stark horror of loss, bloodshed and separation is portrayed without verbosity, sensationalism, lurid details and maudlin sentimentality. The sensitive portrayal of the horrors of Partition enhances the poignancy and cruelty of the event even without the author ever appearing pedantic or pretentious. She reveals the trauma of Partition with a sprinkling of humour, parody and allegory, describing how friends and



neighbours become helpless and ineffective in the face of the mob frenzy. Sidhwa also describes how political leaders manipulate the ideals and generate feelings of suspicion and distrust in the psyche of common man. Once communal and obscurantist passions are aroused, the social fabric is torn asunder, leading to wanton and reckless destruction. Sidhwa has also commented on the historical inevitability of social process, suggesting that people who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. Bapsi Sidhwa enables the readers to understand the extent of the trauma of Partition and thus suggestively delineates the horrible impact of violence on individual and collective lives.

*The Pakistani Bride* portrays woman as a fighter, who fights against all odds to develop her individuality and who is aware of her rights for liberation from mythical and social values. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* provides excellent ground for these contesting claims between identity, cultural differences and clashes, and the resulting crisis.

Sidhwa has experienced dauntlessly with language and technique which secures her position as leading Pakistani writer. Sidhwa uses verbal jugglery in her novel *The Pakistani Bride* with the use of style nearer to modernist or postmodernist. Her language resembles the rhythms, styles and nuances of everyday speech in the sub- continent. She firmly believes in the importance of a sound plot and gripping story in *The Pakistani Bride*. It displays the novelist's purposeful control of language. Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* is a plain and supple style without ornate diction or unnecessary complications. It can rise to poetic intensity when the narrator demands it. Her writings are consistent and



moderate. *The Pakistani Bride* is very absorbing and dramatic. It controls the tension throughout. Her overall prowess over the genre is impressive. Her range of settings, plots, themes and characters makes her one of the most exciting of the recent Commonwealth novelists.

Zaitoon and Carol appear to have achieved it, even in a symbolic manner. This is a novel of "opposition" and "conflict" between masculine dominance, overtly or covertly, and feminine affirmation. The narrative is structurally located in two places - Lahore and Kohistan - one apparently civilized, though without feminine freedom, and the other, savage and barbarous. In both the cases, the cruelty towards women is unredeeming. Paying rich tributes to Zaitoon, Makarand Paranjape comments :

Zaitoon is a symbol not only of woman fighting oppression in Pakistan but of the human spirit struggling against all physical odds to survive and maintain its integrity. (102)

Through her every work Bapsi has tried to show experimentations in imagination with an aim to achieve artistic synthesis. Thus, Sidhwa becomes successful in overlapping the age-long-old gender-discrimination with the history of cultural-diversity on the basis of the partition of the sub-continent.

Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* shifts the point of view from episode to episode, from Qasim to Sikander and Zohra to Nikka, to Carol and Mushtaq to Zaitoon. The section concerning Qasim's early days is a mini-saga of the life in the hills. Qasim is married at ten to a girl of fifteen, he is handed his first gun at



that age. In few more years his whole family, except himself, is wiped out by smallpox. The cycle of harsh, brutish life in the hills is established.

*The Pakistani Bride* is about the strength of nature a force, perhaps of God, within one human being. Zaitoon is a symbol of human spirit which struggles against all odds but exists with integrity. She is a representative of the strength of a woman, infatigable, unyielding and irrepressible.

Sidhwa exposes the patriarchal practices of the society which marginalize their growth and development and also represent women's psychology that has been toned by centuries of conditioning. Thus, Sidhwa as a writer has a constructive approach towards women's predicament. By leading a contented life they paralyze their lives but if they desire they will have option to break through their plight and get opportunities for betterment.

Sidhwa vibrantly brings out multi themes through her creative works such as feminism, forced migratory problems, partition consequences and politics as projected by Sidhwa in her creative work *The Pakistani Bride*. This novel highlights the autobiographical elements which Sidhwa used in her fictional writings.

Along with prevailing expectations of women's place during that time in Pakistan, the responsibilities of raising a family prompted Sidhwa to write in secret. Although Sidhwa speaks four languages, she made a conscious decision to write in English, partly due to the increased probability of worldwide exposure to issues that concerned her within the subcontinent. She received the Pakistan National Honors of the Patras Bokhri award for *The Pakistani Bride* in 1985.



The novelist celebrates her womanhood by giving voice to the women who have been rendered voiceless since ages and *The Pakistani Bride* tends to present feminine sensibility without being anti- male. The novel is not against men, but against the social codes which create hurdles in women's life. The novel endeavours to show how society has been exploiting women for a long period. They are ignored in every sphere of life.

This novel traces the facets of struggle in crossing borders and transcending boundaries, it decodes Sidhwa's hope for the future and a positive outlook of life. The novelist is an activist. Sidhwa's opinion on the role of an author to inculcate moral values in society is highlighted. The techniques adopted as a medium project her theme. In her vision for a larger rhythm of life unfettered by borders and boundaries, Sidhwa displays timeless values. She seems to give a message to women that life must be conserved at all cost, since one can struggle oppression only when one is alive.

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**Richard Wright's *Black Boy* – A Memoir of Racial Struggles and Quest for Identity**

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the reward of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**SHAKILA D.**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN26)**



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DECLARATION

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Richard Wright's *Black Boy* – A Memoir of Racial Struggles and Quest for Identity** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

**THOOTHUKUDI**



**SHAKILA D.**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Richard Wright's *Black Boy* – A Memoir of Racial Struggles and Quest for Identity** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Shakila D. during the year 2018–2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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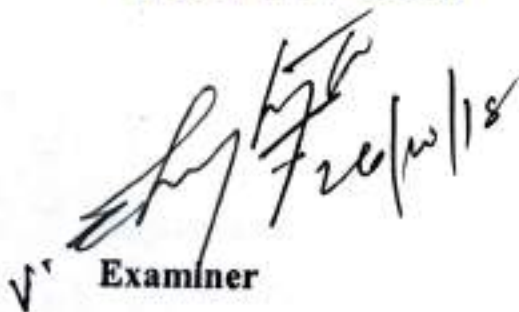
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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Richard Wright's *Black Boy* – A Memoir of Racial Struggles and Quest for Identity** gives a detailed analysis about the sufferings of racial discrimination in the African American country.

The first chapter **Introduction** presents Richard Wright's life and the general features of his novel. It deals with the importance of his works comes out from his style and technique.

The second chapter **A Memoir** deals with Wright's childhood and young adulthood. It explains the prevalent naturalism of *Black Boy*. Wright's development from a delinquent child into an intelligent is portrayed.

The third chapter **Racial Struggles** highlights the major theme of the novel. Racism, violence, oppression, crime and racial division are represented. It projects the fragmentation and identity crisis that prevailed in the American society by white domination on blacks.

The fourth chapter **Transient Loneliness** portrays the life of Richard Wright's. Loneliness is transient in nature, caused by something in the environment and is easily revealed. It deals about how Wright suffers from deep loneliness.

The final chapter **Summation** sums up all the important aspects dealt in the previous chapters, and concludes the research analyses.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

African American literature is the body of literature produced in United States by writers of African descent. The African American vernacular tradition informs African American literature of slavery and freedom. Major themes during this period are resistance to tyranny, racism, African American culture, slavery and dedication to human dignity. African American literature primarily focused on the issue of slavery as indicated by the subgenre of slave narratives. African American literature explores the issues of freedom and equality which denied to black people in United States. African American literature constitutes a vital branch of literature of the African diaspora and African American literature has both influenced African diasporic writings in many countries. African American literature exists within the larger realm of post-colonial literature, even though scholars draw a distinctive line between the two by stating that African American literature differs from most post-colonial literature in that it is written by members of a minority community who reside within a nation of vast wealth and economic power.

Slave narrative is a genre of literature that was written mostly between the mid-1700s and late 1800s by African slaves in America. The first slave narrative was written by Olaudah Equiano in 1789, titled 'Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa.' Slave narrative is an account of the life or a major portion of the life of fugitive or former slaves. It comprise one of the most influential traditions in American literature, shaping the form and themes of some of the most celebrated and



controversial writing, both in fiction and autobiography, in the history of United States. The vast majority of American slave narratives were authored by African Americans.

Frederick Douglass wrote several autobiographies. He described his experiences as a slave in his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave (1845)*. He states that "Slavery proved as injurious to her as it was to him." (48) Slave narratives can be broadly categorized into three distinct forms: Tales of religious redemption, tales to inspire the abolitionist struggle and tales of progress.

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) was the first African American to publish a book and the first to win international acclaim as a writer. Similar to her predecessor Lucy Terry (1724-1821)- whose poem *Bars Fight* is the earliest known work of literature by an African American – Wheatley was born in Africa and sold into slavery in America, and yet was able to write poems in her adopted English language. He published *Poems on various subjects, Religious and Moral* in September 1773. Writers during the post-Reconstruction period ushered in the New Negro Renaissance, also known as the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance of 1920s was a great period of flowering in literature and arts, influenced both by writers who came North in the Great Migration and those who were immigrants from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands. During the American Civil Rights movement, such as Richard Wright and Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about issues of racial segregation and Black Nationalism. Today, African American literature has become accepted as an integral part of American literature, with books such as *roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, achieving both best-selling and award- winning



Phillis Wheatley was an African slave. She was one of the best-known poets in pre-nineteenth century America. *Poems on Various Subjects* revealed that Wheatley's favourite poetic form was the couplet, both iambic pentameter and heroic. Wheatley's first poem was published in Rhode Island newspaper in 1767. *Poems on various subjects* consisted of thirty-eight poems and it could be found in London in 1773. Wheatley tended to write many religiously based poems. They all consisted of her true opinions. Wheatley tended to write many religiously based poems. They all consisted of her true opinions. They ranged from speaking about dead reverends that she respected to her opinions about the lives of Atheist and Deist.

The famous African American writers are Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Octavia Butler, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Waldo Ellison, Alex Haley, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and others. They are poets, playwrights, novelists and scholars, and together they helped capture the voice of a nation. They have fearlessly explored racism, abuse, violence as well as love, beauty and music. While their names and styles have changed over the years, they have been the voices of their generations and helped inspire the generations that followed them.

Maya Angelou was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1928. She is acclaimed as an American poet, author and activist. Often referred to as a spokesman for African Americans and women through her many works, her gift of words connected all people who were "committed to raising the moral standards of living in the United States." Her most famous work *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was published in 1969 and became the first in seven autobiographies of Angelou's life. A prolific poet, her words often

depict black beauty, the strength of women and human spirit and the demand for social justice. Her first collection of poems *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Diiie* was nominated for Pulitzer Prize in 1972, same year she became the first black woman to have a screenplay produced.

James Baldwin (1924 - 1987) spent most of his life living abroad to escape the racial prejudice in the United States. He is the quintessential American writer, best known for his reactions on his experience as an openly gay black man in white America. His novels, essays and poetry make him a social critic who shared the pain and struggle of Black Americans. Baldwin caught attention of fellow writer Richard Wright who helped him secure a grant in order to support himself as a writer.

Baldwin published numerous poems, short stories and plays in magazine. His works are *Notes of a Native Son*, *Giovanni's Room*, *The Fire Next Time*, *The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings*. Baldwin paints a vivid recollection of his time growing up with a paranoid father who was dying of tuberculosis and his initial experience with Jim Crow style segregation. *Giovanni's Room* tells the story of David, an American living in Paris who falls in love with an Italian bartender named Giovanni. In an attempt to deny the true nature of his sexuality, the protagonist proposes an American girl and leaves Giovanni, who, jilted, commits a murder and is executed. James Baldwin provided inspiration for later generations of artists to speak out about the gay experience in Black America like Staceyann Chin and Nick Burd.

Amiri Baraka (1934 – 2014) was poet, writer and political activist. He used his writing as a weapon against racism and became one of the most widely published African



American writers. His social criticism and incendiary style, Baraka explored the anger of Black Americans and advocated scientific socialism. Baraka was a prominent voice in American literature. He was accused of fostering hate while at the same time being lauded for speaking out against oppression. Often focusing on Black Liberation and White Racism, he spent most of his life fighting for the rights of African Americans. His representations of race and wisdom have made him an influential part of the Black Arts Movement along with Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez and Maya Angelou. Baraka published several books on music, notably *Blues People* (1963) and *Black Music* (1968) in which he attempted to make sense of the quintessential African- American art form. "Blues could not exist if the African captives had not become American captives," he wrote in *Blues People*.

Ralph Waldo Ellison (1913 – 1994) was a literary critic, writer and scholar. He sometimes criticized for choosing white society over his African American identity. Identifying as an artist first, Ellison rejected the notion that one should stand for a particular ideology, refuting both Black and White stereotypes in his collection of political, social and critical essays titled "Shadow and Act" it is a collection of essays by Ralph Ellison, published in 1964. The "Invisible Man" is one of the most important novels, it was published in 1952. This novel follows an African American narrator from social and political struggles in the American south up to Harlem. He learns that racism is not geographically confined, but rather pervades the American consciousness. In more recent decades, significant female voices have emerged strongly on literary scene, such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison.



Toni Morrison (1931 - ) was a Noble Prize and Prize- winning novelist. She considered the voice of African American women. Growing up in an integrated neighbourhood, Morrison was not fully aware of racial divisions until her teenage years. In 1960's when Morrison became an editor at Random House that she began to write. She had published *The Bluest Eye* in 1970 and *Sula* in 1973, *The Song of Solomon* was the book that set her on the course of literary success. The novel centres on the power of memory and history. The former slaves think that their past is a burden and they try to forget it. Sethe, the protagonist of the novel, memories of slavery are inescapable. They continue to haunt her, literally in the spirit of her diseased daughter. Eighteen years earlier, Sethe had murdered this daughter in order to save her from life slavery. Morrison borrowed the event from the real story of Margret Garner, who like Sethe, escaped from slavery in Kentucky and murdered her child when slave catchers caught up with her in Ohio.

Richard Wright (1908 – 1960) is best known for his novels *Native Son* and *Black Boy* that mirrored his own struggle with poverty and coming of age journey. “Words can be weapons against injustice,” wrote Richard Wright. These words are evidenced his own career as a successful black writer emerging during a period of racial oppression and economic hardship. A staunch critic of his literary contemporary Zora Neale Hurston, Wright’s work was overly political, focusing on the struggle of Blacks in America for equality and economic advancement. Wright’s dream of becoming a writer, when he gained employment through the Federal Writers Project and received critical attention for a collection of short stories called *Uncle Tom's Children*.

The fame that came with the publication of *Native Son* made him a household name. It became the first book by an African American writer to be selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club. His novel *Black Boy* was a personal account of growing up in the South and eventual move to Chicago where he became a writer and joined the Communist Party. While the book was a great success, Wright had become disillusioned with White America and the Communist Party and moved to Paris. He spent the rest of his life living as an expatriate and continued to write novels.

Alice Walker (1944 - ) is an American writer whose novels, short stories, poems are noted for their insightful treatment of African American culture. Her novels most notably *The Color Purple* (1982) focus on particular women. It is an epistolary novel depicts the growing up and self-realization of an African American woman between 1909 and 1947 in a town in Georgia. She won Pulitzer Prize in 1983, a feminist novel about woman's struggle for empowerment. Celie, the protagonist and narrator of *The Color Purple*, is a poor, uneducated, fourteen-years-old black girl living in rural Georgia. Celie starts writing letters to God because her father, Alphonso beat and rape her.

Richard Nathan Wright was born September 4, 1908 in Roxie, Mississippi. He was the son of Nathan Wright, an illiterate sharecropper, and Ella Wilson Wright, a schoolteacher and grandson of slaves. In 1911 Ella take Wright and one year old brother Leon Alan to Natchez to live with her family. In 1913, the four Wrights moved to Memphis, Tennessee. In September 1915, Richard entered school at Howe Institute.

Richard's mother fell ill early in 1916 and Richard's father Nathan's mother came for a while to care for the family. When she left, Richard and Alan had to live for a long



time in an orphanage until Ella could have them live with her parents in Jackson, Mississippi. But again, Richard, Alan, Ella were moved with Ella's sister Maggie and her husband Silas Hoskins in Elaine, Arkansas. The whites murdered Hoskins and the family ran to West Helena, Arkansas, and then to Jackson, Mississippi. Few months later they return to West Helena, where mother and aunt cook and clean for whites. Soon, Aunt Maggie goes north to Detroit with her new lover.

Richard Wright became the most famous African -American writer during the Harlem Renaissance. His technique in writing for the Harlem Renaissance was vastly different from Hurston's. He beautifully crafted several novels about the plight of the black race. Unlike Hurston, he fills his novels with racism fuelled plots; this is especially true in *Black Boy*. Wright was considered such a strong writer because he "broke with what he considered the more romantic novels of the Harlem Renaissance" (371). In other words, Wright is given credit for breaking the mould of writing for black advancement and pushing forward towards desegregation.

Wright entered school in the fall of 1918, but he was forced to leave after a few months because of his mother's poor health. It forced him to earn money to support his family. At the age of 13, Richard entered the fifth grade in Jackson and was soon placed in sixth grade. He delivered newspapers and worked briefly with traveling insurance salesman. Next year, he entered the seventh grade and his grandfather died. He managed to earn enough to buy textbooks, food and clothes by running errands for whites. Richard read pulp novels, magazines and anything he can get his hands on. During the winter, he wrote his first short story, *The Voodoo of Hell's Half- Acre*, which was published in



spring of 1924 in Jackson Southern Register. In May 1925, Wright graduated as a valedictorian of his ninth grade.

In 1927, Richard read H.L. Mencken, and from Mencken, Wright read about Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Frank Harris and others. He made friends with both black and white in post office, wrote regularly and attends meetings of black literary groups. Wright lost his postal job but began work in 1930, *Cesspool*, a novel that reflect his experience in post office. In 1931 Wright published a short story, *Superstition*, in Abbott's Monthly Magazine, a black journal that failed before Wright collects any money from them. He got an opportunity to write through the Federal Writers congress, where he speaks on *The Isolation of the Negro Writer*. He published a poem about lynching in Partisan Review and writes an article for New Masses entitled *Joe Louis Uncovers Dynamite*. He is hired by the Federal Writers project to research the history of Illinois and Negro in Chicago.

His short story *Big Boy Leaves Home* appeared in "The New Caravan anthology" where it attracted mainstream critical attention. A second novel manuscript, *Tarbaby's Dawn*, makes the rounds with publishers and received constant rejection; it was never published, but *Fire and Cloud* won first prize in a Story Magazine contest. Wright gained national attention for the collection of four short stories entitled *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938). He based some stories on lynching in the deep South. The publication and favourable reception of *Uncle Tom's Children* improved Wright's status with communist party and enabled him to establish a reasonable degree of financial stability. He was appointed to the editorial board of New Masses and Granville Hicks, prominent literary critic and communist sympathizer introduced him at leftist teas in Boston.

After being awarded a Guggenheim fellowship, Wright moved to Brooklyn where he was able to finish one of the most defining works of his career: *Native Son*. It was the selected book of the Month Club as it is the first book by an African American author. The lead character, Bigger Thomas represented the limitations that society placed on African- American as he could only gain his own agency and self- knowledge by committing heinous acts. Wright was criticized for his works concentration on violence. In the case of *Native Son*, people complained that he portrayed a black man in ways that seemed to confirm white's worst fears. The publication of *Native Son* was a busy time for Wright.

He joined the communist party in early 1930s soon after moving to Chicago. He drafted his autobiography; he had attained much popularity with an American readership. The Book of the Month Club – which had agreed to publish the book – it was divided into two part. Part one which detailed Wright's early life in Mississippi but excluded his life in Chicago and New York. As a result, he cut out the second part of the book and changed the title from *American Hunger* to *Black Boy*. It was written in the year 1943. It is a master piece written by Richard Wright. The full title of *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*. During this period the Black Americans were the victims of segregation and violent racism.

Wright's semi- autobiographical *Black Boy* (1945) describes his early life from Roxie through his move to Chicago, his clashes with his Seventh day Adventist family, his troubles with employers and social isolation. *American Hunger*, published posthumously in 1977, was originally intended second volume of *Black Boy*. It is a protest autobiography through which the writer endorsed the suffering soul of black



community as a whole. The autobiographical aspects of the text, bitter truth of it is that the south was poison for black people. The only remedy and the sensible course were to escape from the south. The Library of American edition restored it to that form.

This book detailed Wright's involvement with the John Reed Clubs and the communist party, which he left in 1942. Wright disapproved of the purges in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, he continued to believe in far-left democratic solutions to political problems. In *Black Boy*, Wright discussed a number of authors whose works influenced his own, including H.L. Mencken, Gertrude Stein, Dostoevsky, Sinclair Lewis, Marcel Proust and Edger Lee Masters. Wright received several literary awards during his lifetime including the Spingarn Medal in 1941, the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1939 and Story Magazine Award.

*Black Boy* became an instant best- seller upon its publication in 1945. While interest in *Black Boy* ebbed during the 1950's, one of his best novels, a resurgence of interest in critics, it remains a vital work of historical, sociological and literary significance whose seminal portrayal of one black man's search for self- actualization in a racist society made possible the works of such successive writers as James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. *Black Boy* is destined to become a definitive literary biography. It skilfully intercuts dramatic excerpts from Wright's own work with historical footage and the recollections of friends, associates and scholars such as Ralph Ellison, Margret Walker and Wright's daughter Julia.

Wright moved to Paris in 1946 and became a permanent American expatriate. His existentialist phase was depicted in his second novel, *The Outsider* (1953), which



described an African- American character's involvement with the Communist Party in New York. In 1954 he published a minor novel, *Savage Holiday*. After becoming a French citizen in 1947, Wright continued to travel through Europe, Asia and Africa. These experience were the basis of numerous non- fiction works. In 1949, Wright contributed to the Anti- communist anthology *The God that Failed*; his essay had been published in the *Atlantis Monthly* three years earlier and was derived from the unpublished portion of *Black Boy*.

Wright took a growing interest in anti- colonial movements and also travelled extensively. Wright himself played Bigger in a motion- picture version of *Native Son* made in Argentina in 1951. Later 1952, Wright begins working on a novel about a white psychopathic murderer. *The Outsider* (1953) was acclaimed as the first American existential novel. In October, Doubleday publishes a collection of Wright's lectures entitled *White Man Listen* (1957). In 1958 Wright finishes *The Long Dream*, his novel about Mississippi and begins to work on its sequel, *Island of Hallucinations*, which is set in France. Collection of short stories, *Eight Men* was published in 1961, shortly after his death. His works primarily deal with the poverty, anger and protest of northern and southern urban black Americans.

A number of Wright's works have been published posthumously. Wright's more works deal with race, sex and politics were cut or omitted before original publication. In 1991, unexpurgated version of *Native Son*, *Black Boy* and his other works were published. In the last years of his life, Wright became enamoured with the haiku and wrote over 4000 such poems. In 1998 a book was published *Haiku: This Other World* with 817 of his own favourite haikus. Many of these haikus still maintain an uplifting

quality even as they deal to terms with loneliness, death and the forces of nature. A collection of Wright's travel writings was published by Mississippi University Press in 2001. At his death, Wright left an unfinished book, *A Father's Law* dealing with a black policeman and the son he suspects of murder.

The importance of his works come not from his technique and style, but from the impact of his ideas and attitudes had on American life. This made to be different from other authors. Wright is seen as a seminal figure in the black revolution that followed his earlier novels.

Richard Wright started his novel *Black Boy* by narrating an episode which happened in his young life. He had burnt the curtains and was scared of the repercussions of his acts, he ran away to a hidden place. But he was found by his mother hours later and was severely beaten: "I was afraid to sleep. Time finally bore me away from the dangerous bags and I got well. But for a long time I was chastened whenever I remembered that my mother had come close to killing me." (5)

Richard has never paid much attention to his dad. He feels alienated from his family where he needed nurturing love. His mother beats him mercilessly and in same way his father too never showed any tenderness. Later his dad leaves him when he is young. He learns to fight, to curse and become an alcoholic before he's six. He grows up fast and he starts to take jobs when he is just eleven. When he starts working for white people, he figures out that something is wrong with his world – something called racism. He dreams about moving north, where rumour has it that racism doesn't exist. He has two dreams in his life: to become a writer and move up north.

Richard is almost assaulted just for wanting to learn, he decides to move to Chicago because south is so bad. He has to steal to get the money to go up there. The north is less racist than the south. They invite him to join a club that is art and changing the social order. He also becomes a communist. He decides that the communist party is going to be great savior of black race. In the end, Richard decides to use another tool to connect with other people. He doesn't need communism; he just needs a pen and some paper. So he decides to write.



## Chapter Two

### A Memoir

Richard Wright learned that the essential law of existence is struggle against forces deterministically operating to extinguish the weak. This view explains the prevalent naturalism of *Black Boy*. He observed the casual violence of nature, confronting street urchins, or battling wits with prejudiced white people. He was surrounded by hostility from all quarters, including the supposedly Christian adults who regularly beat and humiliated him. He rejects religion as fraudulent in its premises and hypocritical in its practices. He allowed himself to be baptized only because of the emotional blackmail of his mother and friends whose friendship he desperately sought. He craved an analytic vantage point that will illuminate the random pointlessness of experience.

*Black Boy* is a memoir of Richard Wright's childhood and young adulthood. The first fourteen chapters, about his Mississippi childhood were called "Part One: Southern Night", and the last six, about Chicago, were "Part Two: The Horror and the Glory". In January 1944, Harper and Brothers accepted all twenty chapters, and they were all in page proofs for a scheduled fall publication of the book. In June, the Book of the Month Club expressed an interest in only the Mississippi childhood section, the first fourteen chapters. In response, Wright agreed to eliminate the Chicago section, and in August he renamed the shortened book *Black Boy*.

The story begins with the four years old Richard Wright who remain quiet near his grandmother. He becomes bored and begins playing with fire near the curtains, it leads to an accident. The fire spreads all over the place in his house. In fear, Richard

hides under the burning house. His father, Nathan, retrieves him from his hiding place. Then his mother Ella beats him severely that he loses consciousness and falls ill.

As the novel *Black Boy* progresses, the reader follows Wright's development from a delinquent child into an intelligent, self – educated man that uses education to fight back against the oppression and he experienced in his youth. His development and success is often measured in his access to education. He was forced to educate himself and developed a unique worldview around him.

Richard's father is illiterate and an unskilled laborer; in search of work he moved his family to another state, which initiates his life of emotional and physical instability. These disruptions occurred in three cycles. From age four to age twelve, he moves frequently from Mississippi to Tennessee to Arkansas and back again. From age twelve to age seventeen, he remains in Jackson. From age seventeen to age nineteen, he escaped to Tennessee, and then to Illinois. Before age twelve, he suffered abandonment by his father, life in an orphanage, street life, heavy drinking, and the illness of his mother.

Richard's mother decides that the family should move to Elaine, to her sister Maggie's home at Arkansas. She takes Richard out of the orphanage so that he can go to Nathan and plead for money. But he claims that he has no money to give and he seems amused by the idea that his children are going hungry. So he offered Richard a nickel and though the boy wants to accept it, but it was refused by Richard.

My father ran his hand into his pocket and pulled out a nickel.

'Here, Richard,' he said.

'Don't take it,' my mother said.



'Don't teach him to be a fool,' my father said. 'Here, Richard, take it.' I looked at my mother, at the strange woman, at my father, then into the fire. I wanted to take the nickel, but I did not want to take it from my father. (32)

Arriving in Arkansas Richard discovers that Aunt Maggie and her husband, Hoskins always have enough food, as Hoskins earns good profit from his saloon. However, the whites jealousy on Hoskins business success reaches the peak and local white men kills Hoskins and threatens his family. 'Mr. Hoskins... he done been shot. Done been shot by a white man,' the boy gasped. 'Mrs. Hoskins, he dead.' (52) Richard's mother and Maggie flee with the two boys to west Helena, Arkansas. Later Maggie flees to Detroit with her lover, Professor Matthews. Richard's grandmother brings Alan, Richard and his mother to her home in Jackson, Mississippi. Again Richard started to face the familiar problem of hunger. He also face new problem his Granny's incredibly strict religious regimen. Granny forces him to attend the religious school where Aunt Addie teaches.

Richard grows up as an isolated figure because he does not fit the servile demeanor required of African Americans to live in the South. He rejects religion since he cannot understand how a white God allows his mother, family, and community to suffer. Ella is a young woman; she was arranged by Richard's grandmother to teach him. She is a colored schoolteacher and she always read a story book. Richard asked his teacher to tell the story of what she is reading. She whispered to him the story of "Bluebeard and His Seven Wives". (37) Through this reading grew into a passion. In turn, they assail his reading and writing of fiction, which his grandmother charges is "Devil's work".



'You stop that, you evil gal!' she shouted. 'I want none of that Devil stuff in my house!'

Her voice jarred me so that I gasped. For a moment I did not know what was happening.

'That's the Devil's work!' she shouted. (37)

The school principal even denounces him when he refuses to deliver the stock valedictory speech of humility at his graduation ceremony from ninth grade. In a valedictory function of Richards, his name was given for speech but he discovers that principal has prepared speech for him and he was told not to present his own speech at the ceremony because the whites will be present at the ceremony but he refuses and delivers his own speech. His action at function seems like moral victory for him. The whites attacked him for being a smart Negro when he undertook menial jobs in private homes or at businesses during his stay in the South.

In granny's house he notices from window a regiment of black soldier training for World War I and later he sees a black chain gang working by road side guarded by armed white men. As World War I ends, the racial disputes rises. In this regard Richard thinks that black soldiers were given training to guard the country. It seemed very friendly relation of blacks and whites, but on the other hand the chain gang was treated unfairly with harsh treatment from whites. Even blacks were risking their lives to defend the country through they are brutally treated.

After completing his studies he presents his dream of becoming writer to his white boss who reacted that a writer is predictably brutal, debased and disdain. Richard

already expected these types of criticism and he knew that the whites never supported blacks. Again Richard takes a job at cloth store and he finds that racism dominates at every place. He observes that his white boss was beating black women who were unable to pay the credit instalment on her clothing purchase. From a distance a white policeman watched everything but he did not even move from his place.

This also implies that the racism on blacks was highly rampant and the women were beaten so harshly and no one helped her but instead she was carted away. When he went to the store and saw the white boss he looked at him and told, "boy, that's what we do to niggers when they don't pay their bills," (182). When he went to deliver clothes in the white neighborhood, a policeman takes him to the side and searched him and told that he should tell his boss not to send him to deliver in the whites' neighbour after dark. Eventually, his boss fires him from the job. All incidences in cloth stores and the behavior of the policeman seemed like as if blacks were meant for oppression.

Through federal relief program he gets job at medical research institute. There he notices the segregation of labor. All health professionals are whites while all menial workers are blacks. He was curious to find out the reason for every fact he was interested in research but the whites rudely reject his questions. He joined his friends for political discussion and he attends the meeting. After many meetings with John Reed Club he trusts the white members who were with the communist club. He started to present biographies of black communist to other black people so that they could get inspiration from them.



When Richard joined a unit of communists he finds dispute among them. Later relief authorities grant him as the publicity agent for the Federal Negro Theatre to depict the experience of Black Americans and then he was transferred to federal writer's project. He himself faces conflicts with the domineering communist party like other problems in his life.

To earn for his family Richard works at many places but with no satisfaction and with some reason he left many jobs. Once he came to know that by selling newspaper one could make more money, Richard started selling newspaper. Meanwhile one black man asked him about the newspaper and told him that this paper deals with propaganda from Ku Klux Klan the vicious white supremacist group and he stopped selling it and again he goes with hunger. Then he takes a job writing for brother Mance, an illiterate insurance salesman who lived next door. It was a new experience for Richard to know about universal poverty and ignorance of south blacks. One day he learns that his grandfather falls ill and Aunt Addie meets and asks him "come and say good bye to your grandpa."(140)

Richard had discovered the explosive power of language and the raw emotional energy generated by melodramatic narrative. He had vowed to become a writer. As a young man, he becomes consumed with literature's promise to give him a voice in counterpoise to all those forces that have worked so systematically to silence him. This purpose saved him and directs his life after the nightmare of his southern childhood. Wright's naturalism, Marxism, and existentialism merge in *Black Boy*, particularly in his analysis of American racism.



'Crush that nigger's nuts, nigger!'

'Hit that nigger!'

'Aw, fight, you goddamn niggers!'

'Sock 'im in his f..k..g piece!'

'Make 'im bleed!' (245)

Richard's mother suffered and it grew into a symbol in his mind, gathering to itself all the poverty, the ignorance, the helplessness, the painful, baffling, hunger-ridden days and hours, the restless moving, the futile seeking, the uncertainty, the fear, the dread; the meaningless pain and the endless suffering. Her life set the emotional tone of his life, colored men and women he met in the future and conditioned his relation to events that had not yet happened.

Richard depicts the situation confronting the African American male in the first quarter of the twentieth century as literally life-threatening. By the age of fifteen, he had known an uncle hanged for being too successful and knew of a black youth murdered for forgetting the strict sexual taboos surrounding interchanges between black men and white women. He had been personally assaulted without provocation by white youths and participated in street battles between white and black adolescents. His insistent pursuit a way out of the South is a reaction to the physical terrorism exercised against the black community. It is also a rejection of the psychological condition that racism fosters in its victims.

Richard had already suffered for years from the debilitating anxiety caused by trying to predict the behaviour of white people. He has often felt the impact of their

displeasure, repeatedly losing jobs when they resent his manner or ambition. His exodus from the South is triggered as much by a spiritual hunger to define his own personhood, free of racist categorizations, as it is by a pursuit of greater material opportunity. He asserted that his personality bears permanent scars as a southern black man- scars that explain his emotional and philosophical alienation as well as his unresolved anger. Significantly, they also serve as the creative wellspring of his powerful artistry.

Wright leaves no doubt about his resentment of the white racist social order that defined his youth. What is more difficult to resolve is the ambivalence toward black people that permeates *Black Boy*. By the time he reaches adulthood, he finds himself estranged from the black community. He dismisses religion, resists strategies for manipulating white people behind the mask of stereotype, and has contempt for passive acquiescence in response to white terrorism. The estrangement becomes central to his depiction of black people and explains his vacillation between analytic detachment and deeply personal condemnation.

Richard resolves to leave for the North as soon as possible. He started to steal in order to raise the cash necessary for the trip. Richard moves to Memphis, where the atmosphere is safer and where he can make his final preparation to move to Chicago. Richard takes a job in an optical shop where Mr. Olin, he works with white co -worker in that shop. Falk is genuinely benevolent and let Richard to use his library card to check out books that otherwise would be unavailable to him. Richard begins reading obsessively and grows more determined to write. Richard and his aunt Maggie planned to go Chicago because they did not have enough money to take his paralyzed mother and his brother.

A disturbed childhood, scarred with bitter experience in his life, it left a permanent mark on young Richard Wright. Later he becomes an internationally recognized writer. His writings laid an enormous impact on the social and intellectual history of the United States of America in the second half of twentieth century. Sometimes he was regarded as a controversial writer, his writings were centered on racial themes and suffering of the African American people. The next chapter deals with the struggles of blacks.



## Chapter Three

### Racial Struggle

The problems discussed in Wright's novels are regarded as the main considered issues of modern era. Racism and oppression are one of the major issues in Black American literature. He concentrated on fragmentation and identity to explore that these issues accompany human being life. They accompanied human throughout his life. Wright's novels reflected African Americans suffering in America by the first half of twentieth century. Racism, violence, oppression, crime and racial division represented fragmentation and identity crisis that prevailed in the American society by white domination on blacks. Actually, these issues are still alive till the moment in this world. His novel gives a reflected picture about the origin and home of the blacks.

The blacks had an unlucky right from the beginning. Even the very contours and harbors of their native land conspired against their freedom. The coastline of Africa was long and flat and easy to invade. There were no mountains to serve as natural forts from behind which they could fight and stave off the slave traders. It was mainly the kings of vast rum distilleries who owned the ships that scoured the seven seas in search of these the black bodies.

Sometimes he was regarded as a controversial writer, his writings were centred on racial themes and suffering of the African American people. Racism was one of the most distressing issues in an American society. He inspired many people to raise their voices and lived with dignity. He wrote many short stories, essays and other non-fictional books and themes of all these works, were yet again racial discrimination and challenges faced

by the average African American. Richard equates racism with slavery and considers segregation one of its major practices:

While the system of slavery represents the most extreme division of American society into two basic subgroups, racism, its replacement, transforms the discriminatory practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into the cosmological order of segregation. (30)

In *Black Boy* Richard recalls the plight of the Africans who were sold for slavery between the early 1700s and 1860 through the convenience of their own fellow Africans. They were transplanted to America, Canada, the Caribbean Island and other part of the world. The Africans were taken into America and they were called as "Black Americans" and in the Caribbean Island are called as "Afro Caribbean" But they all have common roots and common problems, which is racial discrimination.

This novel *Black Boy* highlights the poverty and hunger of the black character that are economically disempowered by the deprivation resulting from racial discrimination. When Richard and his brother Alan were too young, his father left them alone and went with strange women. This led them into poverty and lack of food for a single time per day. Later they moved to his Aunt Maggie's house, Richard always got enough food but this happiness stayed with him for a short time. After the death of Hoskins, again he faced the same problem of hunger.

The blacks are deprived the right to equal job opportunity. They have no good jobs and so cannot afford good accommodation, food and other basic necessities of life. The impact of racism is revealed to Wright in the form of hunger. Initially as a child he



does not understand racism. But soon he sees reasons why he and his brother had to feed on the leftover of whites. "Why could I not eat when I was hungry? Why did I always have to wait until others were through? I could not understand why some people had enough food and others did not." (17-18)

Wright's novels were representative of a transitional period: Harlem Renaissance, Black starting from Renaissance till Black feminist movements appearing. The author emphasized in his novels that religious, especially Christianity, is a supportive element of the slaves. His novels are a witness of the blacks struggle through such stages: Negro, black, colored, Afro-American. Wright was always concerned with questions of identity, he gave a unique portrait of struggle specially man's struggle to overcome the race, suppression, degradation as problems of modernity. Aunt Addie is a teacher for Richard. One day in class she beat Richard for eating walnut, though it was ate by the student who sitting in front of Richard.

Wright endeavored to picturesque fragmentation and identity as a painful picture of modernism throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, his novel revealed fragmentation phenomena as a disease that breaks all the efforts of blacks to quest their identity throughout the twentieth century.

Richard portrayed the character such as Olin and Pease as an evil people. For him the real problem of racism is not simply that it exists, but that its roots in American culture are so deep. It is doubtful whether these roots can be destroyed without destroying the culture itself. Throughout his work *Black Boy*, Richard observed the effects of racism not only as it affects relation between whites and blacks but also relation among



themselves. The whites in memoir generally treat Richard poorly due to the colour of his skin.

*Black Boy* shows the relationship between personal desire and the social conventions exposed the racial identity as a main topic in his novels. They shed the light on racial identity, class identity, Gender identity and professional identity. His novel also highlights the personal identity. Moreover, Wright realized that hegemony of the male power prevailed in his novels and short stories.

Richard's works represented the black's rejection of the white's norms through their alienated from the established order. His literature is an Avant-garde literature and art as well as challenges norms of the society. His works brought out publicly, among black novels to change the American culture. This novel forced whites to recognize their selves as oppressors. Not only that, but also made blacks obliged to twig and take notice the cost of their acquiescence as well as to achieve a formidable task to liberate blacks. His works were also tried to liberate American society from such traditions that destroyed its culture. This novel professed that history can be a punishment.

Wright emphasized on blacks struggle and resistance in all life aspects: in prison, churches, schools and even in courtroom. His works shown the society aporias; they showed the irresolvable internal contradictions on the individual level or the logical disjunctions in the whole life. He used disjointed structure to reflect the dysfunction of Western society and addresses the inner thoughts of people and explored the inner mind of the man. This focusing on the state of mind explores his radical rejection of the traditions, cult the new, cult of fragmentation and the static values.

Moreover, *Black Boy* gave clear picture about split between high and low culture, exposing loss of faith in progress with giving an optimistic vision. His views about modernism, through the historical period of the first half of the twentieth century, associated with the capitalism, is regarded as a way of looking to the new world. The new world develops through technological advances, especially in building, architecture, and transportation.

Richard gave outlines of the African American literary through certain period according to the novels that deal with the same issues of the author and in the same period. His work included a historical and literary review about fragmentation, crime, race and identity. It reflected the dilemma of the blacks in the Promised Land. Moreover, it defined fragmentation and identity as a real dilemma of the black's life either in their homelands or in America as the dreams land.

*Black Boy* investigates the black's life and history as immigrants with highlighting such novels and novelists as contemporaries of Wright. 'The "white" man did not whip the "black" boy,' my mother told me. 'He beat the "black" boy.' (22) Furthermore, his works proved the conditions which the blacks underwent through. He makes deliberate attempt to transform African American dilemma and white's domination on Blacks into a special art form in his literary work.

*Black Boy* indicates the self-education, showing how he suffered from racism. It reflects the picture of his poor family in Natchez, Mississippi. It describes his miserable journey to escape from poor and to escape from white oppression. The novel traces his life as a migrant and explores the urban life's toughness. He shocked of alienation of



industrial development and in *Black Boy*. He describes the murderous poverty which dedicated by white as a strategy to dominate blacks. Many times, Richard and his family had nothing to eat because of great extent of poverty. Hunger made Richard and his mother to move to Auntie Maggie's house in Arkansas. His uncle Hoskins owned a saloon that catered for hundreds of Negroes who work in his environment. At meals time, there was much to eat that Richard himself found it hard to believe.

"Can I eat all I want?"

"Eat as much as you like" uncle Hoskins said.

I did not believe him then I ate until my stomach hurt, but even then, I did want to get up from the table (48).

*Black Boy* showed the fragmentation caused by racism either on the personal level or on a collective level as a reality in the South. It explains the pointless and paradoxical conditions of the life in the South. It exposes the inhumanity situations of blacks, reflecting the famine as a disease that prevailed in the society during the period of Great Depression.

*Black Boy* is an evident of blacks suffering in all aspects of their lives. Some of his novels concentrate on domination of the whites not only socially but also in economic sides as a vital tool to control black activities and marginalized them in everything. This novel taught blacks how to work collectively in order to achieve their freedom and identity. They visualized as an answer to those who fight freedom and existence of African American.



Wright explored that humanity is not a correlation with whites. He expresses, to what extent whites degrade blacks. In brief, for blacks, his literary works were a literary portrait that developed from a slave's consciousness to a free consciousness. He participated effectively to establish the underpinning of the first stage of the Black literature. His novels were a journey from anonymity to identity.

Wright and other black characters are treated by the whites as or even worse than animals. Wright recounts how he lost his job on the basis that he called a white man by name without adding Mr. to his name. The whites deny the blacks; they are treated as animals even right from the time of slavery. Richard's Granny was named by her slave master:

"What was Granny's name before she married Grandpa?"

'Bolden.'

'Who gave her that name?'

'The white man who owned her.' (46)

This conversation between Richard and his mother makes him know that he is actually a descendent of slaves. Another incident of this dehumanization is the one of Wright witnesses in his Granny's place. Black slaves are held together by iron chains. Wright saw them and mistakenly refers to them as elephants because of the way they were held and bundled together. "As the strange animals came abreast of me I saw that the legs of the black animals were held together by irons and that their arms were linked with heavy chains that clanked softly and musically as they moved." (55)

Wright vividly and powerfully delineated the state of the blacks in racist regimes. *Black Boy* mainly focuses on portraying the unlovable conditions of the blacks in the South and celebrating their determination to continue to live. He focused on the persistence and tenacity with which they learned to survive. This explores the phenomenon more theoretically and portrays the black revolutionary actions against the racist environment and system. The spirit of the characters would still continue until they achieve their liberation and create a new world.

*Black Boy* was regarded as a transplant survey of the sociological and psychological impact on the blacks as a result of the economic, political and social upheavals in the society and violence which occurs abundantly. Violence is a prominent theme in the novel *Black Boy*. The black community was very harshly treated during those times. The punishments were very brutal and included forceful arrest, severe beating and mob-lynching.

*Black Boy* mainly recollects the life of Wright and more importantly his interactions with the whites, his neighbors and his own family who were scared and very pious during Jim Crow Era. The life that Richard Wright faced in his childhood and early adulthood was very hurtful. It has a complete different setting where violence would again occur in the life of young Richard. He went on errands for his mother. It was a very ordinary scene. Richard recalled in the beginning of his book of an incident that occurred when he was six:

There he is! They came toward me and I broke into a wild run toward home. They overtook me and flung me to the pavement. I yelled, pleaded,



kicked, but they wrenched the money out of my hand. They yanked me to my feet, gave me a few slaps, and sent me home sobbing. My mother met me at the door. They b-beat m-me, I gasped. They t-t-took the m-money. I started up the steps, seeking the shelter of the house. (15)

In the above quote, Richard's mother asks him to go to the market and get a few things. His mother gave him money and told him not to pay any attention to the gang of older boys on the streets. He came back to his home to stay away from the street boys, but his strict mother refused to allow him inside unless he brought home the groceries. He pleaded with his mother with no success. This scene shows that Richard is armed with a stick and advice from his mother in order to teach him how to protect himself through his difficult times. His mother handed him some money again, but this time she also gave him a pole to be used in case he was mugged for second time. Richard was scared. He did not want to face those goons again. But his mother was adamant. Finally, he learned to stand up and succeed in it.

Wright entitles his work *Black Boy* primarily for the emphasis on the word black. This is a story of childhood, but at every moment the readers are acutely aware of the colour of Wright's skin. In America, he is not merely growing up; he is growing up black. Indeed, it is virtually impossible for him to be too grown up without the label of a black boy constantly being applied to him. Whites in the novel generally treat him poorly due to the colour of his skin. Even more important, racism is so insidious that it prevents him from interacting normally even with the whites who do treat him with disrespect or with fellow blacks. It is perhaps the most important factor in him, specifically the black upbringing.



It is a fact that he is a grown up among black people who are unable or unwilling to accept his individual personality and his gifts. His critique of racism in America includes a critique of the black community itself specifically the black folk community that is unable or unwilling to educate him properly. The fact that he had been kept apart from such education becomes clear to him when he recognizes his love for literature at a late age.

*Black Boy* exposes the inevitable resort for the blacks in order to react on the white practice that is violence in all its aspects. It proves an inevitable quandary of modern life and modernism that is in creating a masculine and fragmented society. At the same time, the novel emphasizes that he could sympathize with the modern man who is transferred into commodity.

This novel depicts the lowest level of black life by exposing and criticizing the reason for this atmosphere of oppression. This novel made him a spokesperson for oppressor either blacks or whites all over the world. The domination of the whites made him to give a full picture of the bad conditions by portraying the social, political and economic situations. Richard is beaten with a whisky bottle and fists by some white boys; the only reason was Richard forgot to address them as 'Sir'. This caved deep disgust against the white men.

Wright reveals in *Black Boy* that giving up the ghost in African American emboldens alienation, crime and violence. His novel not only blames but also accused the American society for rape and killing as a response towards the whites attitudes against

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blacks. This pinpoints that white domination of blacks prevailed all life aspects. Poverty, hunger and race were his nemesis of freedom and identity.

Finally, his novels are regarded as a survey of his experience in America. Briefly, this can be concluded with two options for man; as a Negro he is either to live and to accept his life conditions or to accept the responsibility for these conditions, trying to change the blacks' situation in American society. Therefore, his protagonists lived a fragmented life in a fragmented society while they were questing for freedom and identity in so many ways. Shortly, both the author and his characters suffered from the inner disharmony.

This assumption is not however fully depicted in a mortal way as racism was still prevailing in the society. As always, it was the abominable settings from the whites degrading the blacks. He especially feared that the white liquid would suffocate him and also helped on his way to establish himself as a dignified person. *Black Boy*, which narrated the life and the perils of Richard Wright begins with the time he was born, with the time he took his first breath, with the time he came into being. It reflects thus the racism and oppression of the black people at every place. Even women were not spared from this suffering. As a growing child Richard faced many problems of hunger, family and his identification and at last he recognized his potential and understands the knowledge which he was searching from childhood. He came across many difficulties and faced boldly instead of running from it. Being a black is like a punishment for the blacks.



*Black Boy* lays stress in the struggle of an individual to survive in the atmosphere of oppressors and cope up with the environment. Richard was able to break away the racial system of the society at that time of segregation of blacks. Through his life long struggle with racism and oppression in the society he discovers his potential, self-worth and as a writer. The issues of social security affect the life of Richard so much that he turns into drunkard at the tender age of six. The blacks are insecure in the white society as a result of violence, lynching and murders.

All the frightful descriptions we had heard about each other, all the violent expressions of hate and hostility that had seeped into us from our surroundings, came now to the surface to guide our actions. The round house was racial boundary of the neighbourhood, and it had been tacitly agreed between white boys and the black boys.(81)

As a child, he is taunted and oppressed by the white kids who bully him. This insecurity makes his mother encourage him to fight by equipping him with a big stick to retaliate. His uncle Hoskins also killed by the whites and envious his thriving business and so they come together to kill him. Bob is also killed because he flirts with a white prostitute. He is taken to the country road and shot dead.

All the black characters in *Black Boy* are constantly rejected by the society. Richard's grandfather wait many years for his pension allowance which he is rightfully entitled, but all the time he receives a rejection letters through which they deny him all his benefits.



And I would read him the letter –reading slowly and pronouncing each word with extreme care telling him that his claims for a pension had not been substantiated and that his application had been rejected. Grandpa would not blink an eye, then he would curse softly under his breath. (169)

Richard's mother is rejected in the hospital because the government makes no adequate health provisions for the colored people. The hospital provide good healthcare for only white people. The black who lived a poverty life they should take care of themselves. Wright is also rejected by his white employers most of the time. He moves on from one job to another as a result of racial discrimination.

'I had begun coping with the white world too late. I could not make subservience an automatic part of my behaviour. I had to feel and think out each tiny item of racial experience in the light of the whole race problem. (243)

The *Black Boy* was about the life, trials, problems, tribulations, oppressions suffered by the author when being brought up in Southern America and at the same time being black and poor. It also narrated the way in the author managed to educate himself enough to enable him to use different wordings to convey his messages. The next chapter deals with how Wright combats his loneliness.

## Chapter Four

### Transient Loneliness

Loneliness is a complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation or lack of companionship. It typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connectedness or communality with other beings, both in present and extending into the future. Loneliness can be felt even when surrounded by other people. The cause of loneliness is varied and included social, mental or emotional factors. Loneliness also plays an important role in the creative process. Loneliness is transient in nature caused by something in the environment and easily relieved. But chronic loneliness is permanent. It is caused by the person and it is not easily relieved. "I tried not to think of it. She had to come. The utter loneliness was now terrifying." (84) Loneliness is a fundamental part of human condition because of the paradox between the desires of man's consciousness to have meaning in life conflicting with the isolation and nothingness of the universe.

In *Black Boy* Richard Wright suffers from deep loneliness. His sufferings are deeply shown in the first ten chapters. He never knows his father, which obliges him to become the father in his family. This isolates him from people of his own age and makes him wary of his elders. He feels intellectually and spiritually alone in the south. His family and friends repeatedly try to convince him the needs of God. *Black Boy* begins when he was four years old and the ignorance started. At every situation he was told to keep silent or ask any question.

Granny intimated boldly, basing her logic on God's justice, that one sinful person in a household could bring down the wrath of God upon the entire



establishment, damning both the innocent and guilty and more than one occasion she interpreted my mother's long illness as the result of my faithlessness. I became skilled in ignoring these cosmic threats and developed callousness towards all metaphysical preachments. (101)

Richard's father ignored his family for another woman and lived with her. This created a vacuum in him. Here as son, Richard faced ignorance of his father this made to develop a negative association between him and his father 'Nathan'. After all this Richard and his family faced many problems even sometime they had shortage of food this made Richard's mother to join the children in the orphanage and they also lived with many relatives because his father Nathan refused to help them. At the orphanage Richard suffers loneliness. After sometime his mother retrieves the children from the orphanage and goes to Aunt Maggie in Arkansas.

From here begins the struggle of racism and segregation of Blacks. While travelling to oppress over the black that one could not avail the benefits of his own hard work because he is black. Richard separated himself from his neighbourhood. He cannot understand why blacks are content to remain uneducated and complaints with the way society is organized. At six, Richard makes fun of the drunks at a saloon when they spot him and decide to get him drunk for their amusement. He ends up as a very young alcoholic. His mother temporarily placed him and his younger brother Alan in an orphanage. Loneliness and hunger makes him drunkard.

To beg drinks in the saloon became an obsession. Many evenings my mother would find me wandering in a daze and take me home and beat



me; but the next morning, no sooner had she gone to her job than I would run to the saloon and wait for someone to take me in and buy me a drink. My mother protested tearfully to the proprietor of the saloon, who ordered me to keep out of his place. (19)

Richard Wright is very young child; he is continually questioning life and trying to learn new things. All throughout his life, he is violently forced away from the white world by fear of abuse. He learned to defend himself with violence. He fights with street boys, at school and fends off his relatives with knives and razors. At first he tried to talk to white people naturally, he soon realized the kindest of southern whites assumes that he is above Richard in some way. He is also ignored even at work. No one is interested in helping him, even to learn a new skill that would benefit the company. In general, his suggestions are met with scepticism or hostility. He longs to go North, where he thinks he can truly make something of himself.

Throughout Richard's childhood, his father is nothing to him but the threat of punishment. They have no kind of friendly relationship. He thinks of his father so he has to be quiet because his father sleeps during the day. Richards's family was left by his father when he was too young. His grandmother casually slaps him throughout the book. He is taught not to resist these slaps, but to rather welcome them as an indication that he has done something wrong.

Richard deliberately ignores or disregards important information or tact. He suffers from ignorance throughout the novel. As a child, he is ignored when he asks his

family profound questions. If he is simply curious about something he sees and asks about it, he will likely hear "Why do you want to know?" (27)

In school Richard is named valedictorian of his high class. The principal would not allow him to give his own speech during the ceremony because there will be white people there. The principal gave him a speech to read that he wrote. Here Richard did not allow delivering a speech of his own. But later he did not read the speech which was given by his principal. He delivered the speech of his own. After completing his studies he presents his dream of becoming a writer. On this his white boss reacted that writer is predictably brutal, debased and disdain. Richard already expected this type of criticism and he knows that whites never support blacks and they were always ignored by white people.

Richard is ignored by his whole family in his past. Everyone seemed either too afraid or too angry to explain the difference between whites and blacks in America. Richard observes, that forced ignorance is what keeps blacks from knowing and understanding each other. He own ignorance when he sells some newspaper without realizing it. He reels with shock and quickly stops selling them. He feels like a fool for not even looking at the paper which he sells.

When Richard was younger he did not see how cruel people were until his mother sent him to get the groceries and he got beat up. He did not know about the perverseness some people harboured until he looked through the window of his neighbour. He does not know how to handle whites. It often gets him into trouble because he does not know how



to pacify anger, ignorant suspicious white person. Bess and Mrs. Moss automatically accept Richard as a good boy.

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Never being fully able to be myself, I had slowly learned that the south could recognize but a part of a man, could accept but a fragment of his personality, and all the rest – the best and the deepest things of heart and mind – were tossed away in blind ignorance and hate. (261)

Richard seemed to be the epitome of bliss ignorance. When he argues with them saying that he could easily be a dangerous criminal, they confidently reject the idea, based on his politeness and pleasant demeanor. He is mystified when he was cheated by some bootleggers in Memphis. It shows Richard that he too can be a victim of blind ignorance. When he wants library books he was ignored by Whiteman. His co-worker allowed him to use his card in library.

Granny intimated boldly, basing her logic on God's justice, that one sinful person in a household could bring down the wrath of God upon the entire establishment, damning both the innocent and guilty and more than one occasion she interpreted my mother's long illness as the result of my faithlessness. I became skilled in ignoring these cosmic threats and developed callousness towards all metaphysical preachments. (101)

Richard feels the tension of trying to be different in the highly structured society. The communists call him an intellect person because he articulated and read a lot. It makes him furious and he tries to argue saying that he sweeps floors for a living but the superficial appearance is paramount. Education in general sense is a form of learning in



which the knowledge, skill and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next. He is introduced to education in an informal way as early as childhood.

Richard was ignored and feels lonely by his own family members and by this society. His mother suffered paralysis and was not able to do any work.

"My mother's suffering grew into a symbol of my mind, gathering to itself all the poverty, the ignorance, the helplessness; painful, baffling, hunger – ridden days and hours. There he feels lonely without his family. (98)

Richard can never relate with anyone who led very lonely and detached life. In his memoir, *Black Boy* he described those early years as dark and lonely as death causing him to reflect as follows about black life in America. Richard's idea from himself emerged from the caldron of segregation in the south. He wrote in black boy:

At the age of twelve, before I had had one full year of formal schooling, I had a conception of life that no experience would erase, a predilection for what was real that no argument could ever gain say, a sense of the world that was mine and mine alone, a conviction that came only when one was struggling to wring a meaning out of meaningless suffering. (99)

Richard often moves from one job to another. He was ignored by Whiteman because he is a black American. They named the black people as "niggers." He gets a job at a clothing store, a group of young white men hit Richard with whisky bottle because he did not call them "sir", no one help him or support him from white men. "After a moment

or two I heard shrill screams coming from the rear room, later the woman stumbled out, bleeding, crying, and holding her stomach, her clothing torn." (179)

When Richard went to the store and saw the white boss he looked at him and said "boy, that's what we do to niggers when they don't pay their bills (182). The white men beat the black women severely for not paying the bills. Then the white boss warned Richard what will happen if someone did not pay the bill they will be punished like this. His life begins to get older and taller where he starts to become a juvenile and starts associating himself with the neighboring boys in a fraternity. It is stated that in *Black Boy*.

"Money, God, race, sex, color, war, planes, machines, trains, swimming, boxing anything.... The culture of one black household and folk thus transmitted to another black household, and folk tradition was handed from group to group. (79)

Again at Crane's optical shop Richard's white co-worker refuses to teach him the work because he was black and the work is for whites. Richard works at many places and shifted from job to job so exhausted with ignorance because frequently he has experienced racism. Richard Wright has a passionate desire to observe and reflect upon the racist, ignorant and alienated world around him. Whites in the novel generally treat Richard poorly due to the color of his skin. He struggles against a dominant white culture both in the south and north and even against black culture. Richard said that, "I would know that the south too could overcome fear, hate, its cowardice, its heritage of guilt and blood, its burden of anxiety and compulsive cruelty." (262)

In his work he revealed his own sufferings which happened in his life and the sufferings of the black American and the suffering of all oppressed people everywhere. Loneliness is thus rampant in Richard's life. He represents the humanity that suffers oppression and economic depravity. Loneliness however becomes transient, when he fights the suppression and comes out as a writer.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

*Black Boy* is a memoir of Richard Wright's early life. It is evident of blacks suffering in all aspects of life. Some of his novels concentrate on domination of the whites not only socially but also in economic sides as a vital tool to control black activities and marginalized theme in everything. This novel taught blacks how to work collectively in order to achieve their freedom and identity. They visualized as an answer to those who fight freedom and existence of African American.

Harlem renaissance is a blossoming of African American culture, particularly, in the creative arts. It is the most influential movement in African American literary history. Embracing literary, musical, theatrical, and visual arts participants sought to reconceptualise the Negro apart from the white stereotypes that influenced black people relationship to their heritage and to each other. The Harlem Renaissance flourished during 1920s in New York City. It is generally believed to have begun in 1920s and ends in the late 1930s just before the Great Depression. During this renaissance black people began to express themselves as a distinct culture.

Renaissance is another word for the term rebirth. In relation to the titles context, rebirth stands for rekindling the flame of literature in Harlem. Years before Harlem Renaissance associated publications, the slave narratives as literary form paved the way for later writers and poets. The name "New Negro Movement" covers the second aspect more than the creative aspect. The New Negro as a racial movement is shown as an aspect worth less than the cultural aspect.

*Black Boy* is full of drama that will sometimes make the reader laugh and other times make the reader cry. It is most known for its appeals to emotions, which will keep the reader on the edge of his seat. In *Black Boy* Richard talks about his social acceptance and identity and how it affected him. He decided to compose an essay upon the topic because this book not showed only the issues we face in terms of racial division but also inspires young children to hunger for more.

Throughout this book *Black Boy* there are many things that Richard desires in the hope that he will gain both emotional satisfaction and intellectual understanding. From young age Richard hungers for love and acceptance, an understanding of the world and by all other knowledge. Wright portrayed his feelings about the situation best when he writes, "I was conscious that she had descended to my emotional level in order to rule me and my respect for her sank" (110).

Richard develops his own understanding of the racial stereotypes. He begins to believe that "there were good white people, people with money and sensitive feelings" (148). *Black Boy* makes it clear that Richard's hunger is the cause of his greatest weakness as well as his greatest strengths. He creates his biggest weakness in the forms of enemies and understandings. Richard Wright's *Black Boy* explores themes of alienation, hunger, education, racial identity and self – enlightenment in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The theme alienation continues both in relation to Richard's family, the black community as well as white community and his intense feeling of isolation is reflected in his rebellious action. It becomes evident by burning house and killing the kitten. The



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writer very effectively portrays violence as a way to oppress, a tool to control. It is recorded act of violence through the white people and black people.

As the strange animals came abreast of me I saw that the legs of the black animals were held together by irons and that their arms were linked with heavy chains that clanked softly and musically as they moved. She looked out of the door and shook her head. 'Those are not elephants,' she said. 'It's just what you see,' she said 'a gang of men chained together and made to work.' (56)

The miracle is that Wright survived his childhood and grew up to be able to tell his story. In that sense it is the story of hope for humanity. Using a library card to borrow books from library it helps him to enrich his knowledge from reading. Reading a books like novel, short stories it enhance his interest and started writing. As a boy Richard is routinely, relentlessly, habitually beaten by his mother, grandma, and later same kind of treatment is attempted by an uncle and an aunt.

Richard's mother and grandmother know the only way for a black man to survive by turning into a childish buffoon or a servile idiot. This role was expected by the white culture that surrounds them. They recognize the danger that a rebellious young man may find the only outlet for his aspirations that create crime like cheating, stealing.

Do you want this job? the woman asked.

Yes ma'am, I said, afraid to trust my own judgement.

Do you steal? She asked me seriously.

I burst into a laugh and then checked myself.



What's so damn funny about that? She asked.

Lady, if I was a thief, I'd never tell anybody. (145)

Wright explored that humanity is not a correlation with whites. His novels expressed to what extent whites degrade blacks. In brief, for blacks, his literary works were a literary portrait that developed from a slave's consciousness to a free consciousness. He participated effectively to establish the underpinning of the first stage of the Black literature. His novels were a journey from anonymity to identity. The blacks had an unlucky right from the beginning. Even the very contours and harbors of their native land conspired against their freedom.

*Black Boy* outlines several themes most of which are connected to Richard. Racism forms the main theme which he associates with discrimination and injustice. While he grown up, he witnesses that a black boy beaten by a white man. His uncle Hoskins is killed out of jealousy of the whites. Religion is presented in *Black Boy*. According to Richard the opinion of religion is oppressive and meaningless. He perceives religion as a way of silencing curiosity and questioning attitude to maintain the status quo of racism.

Isolation is presented in the book through the life of Richard most of which he spends alone. These times provide him with strength and happiness out of which his love for writing, reading and creativity is developed. *Black Boy* also presents the theme of rebellion based on the behavior and attitude of Richard. He rebels against religion from his granny; he attempts physical violence against his aunt Addie and uncle Tom.



Wright endeavored to picturesque fragmentation and identity as a painful picture of modernism throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, his novel revealed fragmentation phenomena as a disease that breaks all the efforts of blacks to quest their identity throughout the twentieth century. . The coastline of Africa was long and flat and easy to invade. There were no mountains to serve as natural forts from behind which they could fight and stave off the slave traders.

It is a grim record; the story is about one boy's life – the seeds of hate, distrust and race riots were planted. Wright was born to poverty and hardship in the deep South, his father deserted his mother and illness drove the little family from place to place. There was always a thread of fear, hate, suspicion and discrimination. Wright struggled against the tide, put by a tiny sum to move on, finally he go to Chicago.

*Black Boy* indicates the self-education, showing how he suffered from racism. It reflects the picture of his poor family in Natchez, Mississippi. It describes his miserable journey to escape from poor and to escape from white oppression. The novel traces his life as a migrant and explores the urban life's toughness. He shocked of alienation of industrial development and in *Black Boy*. He describes the murderous poverty which dedicated by white as a strategy to dominate blacks.

Wright employs the literary technique of naturalism to portray the racial and environmental factors that create a hostile world for Richard. The whites considered African American to be inferior because of their skin color. Richard also saw the violent act against African Americans in the form of murders, lynching and beating. He personally experienced verbal threat, physical assault and animal attacks. White pay



African American low wages to keep them economically weak and enslaved them. He suffered from hunger, poor housing, insufficient clothing and erratic schooling.

Many times, Richard and his family had nothing to eat because of great extent of poverty. Hunger made Richard and his mother to move to Aunty Maggie's house in Arkansas. His uncle Hoskins own a saloon that carter for hundreds of Negroes who work in his environment. At meals time, there is much to eat that Richard himself finds it hard to believe.

Wright's novels were representative of a transitional period: Harlem Renaissance, Black starting from Renaissance till Black feminist movements appearing. The author emphasized in his novels that religious, especially Christianity, is a supportive element of the slaves. His novels are a witness of the blacks struggle through such stages: Negro, black, colored, Afro-American. Wright was always concerned with questions of identity, he gave a unique portrait of struggle specially man's struggle to overcome the race, suppression, degradation as problems of modernity. Aunt Addie is a teacher for Richard. One day in class she beat Richard for eating walnut, though it was ate by the student who sitting in front of Richard.

The previous chapters showed the relationship between personal desire and the social conventions exposed the racial identity as a main topic in his novels. They shed the light on racial identity, class identity, Gender identity and professional identity. His novel also highlights the personal identity. Moreover, Wright realized that hegemony of the male power prevailed in his novels and short stories. His other works represented black's rejection of the white's norms through their alienated from the established order. His



literature is an Avant-garde literature and art as well as challenges norms of the society. His works brought out publicly, among black novels to change the American culture.

Moreover, his novel *Black Boy* gave clear picture about split between high and low culture, exposing loss of faith in progress with giving an optimistic vision. In each chapter Richard relates painful and confusing memories that lead to a better understanding of the man. He is a black Southern American writer who eventually emerges. Richard, as the narrator, he maintains an adult voice throughout the story.

Each chapter is told from the perspective and knowledge that a child might possess. It highlights the theme of Racism, violence, alienation, isolation, discrimination and injustice. He broke free of racism through his own self – interest and dedication to his development as a reader and a writer. Society pushed him away but books and the ideas of writing allowed him to dream once again. His experience as a child and a young man in South America molded him into a man and intellectual.

*Black Boy* is a memoir of Richard Wright's alienation. It is not only from white society but also by his people. It is more than a record of personal abuses. *Black Boy* has a unique place in American literature. It opposed to its content and structure. This novel is regarded by many critics as the finest autobiography written by a black American. *Black Boy* is a great book to read that provides a real life example of an effective memoir.

This book encourages everyone to read especially young African Americans. Reading allowed Richard to learn how to understand and critique his society and awakened the anger inside of him. He used words and knowledge as a tool of resistance and turned to books and writing as a way to make change effectively. The racism and

oppression ruined the life of black people at every place. Including women and children were not spared from this suffering. As a growing child Richard faced lot of problem like hunger, racism, loneliness.

Richard comes across lot of problems and he faced boldly instead of running from it. Being a black is a punishment for blacks. He worked at many place and experienced lot of things which gained him to acquire knowledge of solving the difficulties. This novel is about his own life which he experienced in his life. Richard was able to break away the racial system of the society at that time of segregation of blacks.

The hierarchy of religious submission kept in place by emotional blackmail, is mirrored in the god given segregation and exploitation of African Americans by white supremacists on all levels of interaction. Following Richard Wright's path to breaking free from the dilemma of being human and having to eat is a nice experience while reading. They use the fact that hunger or need can drive a person to do many things. The indignity of being hungry creates the power vacuum that plays into the hands of a privileged tribe.

The whole tragedy of a race seems dramatized in this record, it is virtually unrelieved by any evidence of human tenderness or humor there are no bright spots. Richard experienced another moment of isolation and later he leaves that party to maintain his values. This novel forced whites to recognize their selves as oppressors. He used disjointed structure to reflect the dysfunction of Western society and addresses the inner thoughts of people and explored the inner mind of the man. This focusing on the



state of mind explores his radical rejection of the traditions, cult of fragmentation and the static values.



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**Postcolonial Elements in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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**(REG. NO. 17APEN27)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Postcolonial Elements in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

A. Sonirenga.  
SONIRENGA A.

THOOTHUKUDI

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Postcolonial Elements in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*** is submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Sonirenga A. during the year 2018 – 2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Postcolonial Elements in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*** analyses the sufferings experienced by the characters of the novel in the postcolonial world.

The first chapter **Introduction** gives a short biography of Michael Ondaatje discussing the general characteristics of his works and the predominant place he held in Canadian literature.

The second chapter **Cultural Hybridity** portrays the characters' cultural identity as a fluctuating and fluid process. It shows the interconnectedness and mixedness of various cultural influences which constitute an unstable and continuously shifting state of cultural hybridity.

The third chapter **Impasse on Identity** highlights how the characters ambush in their past and cast its shadow on their present. It depicts their struggle to possess a hold over life and their quest to reconstruct their identities.

The fourth chapter **Resistance to Territories** focuses on how the socially constructed geographies influence the lives of the characters in the novel.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Canada is such a huge and sprawling country that only a tremendous effort of will has made and kept it a single environmental unit. It has a prodigious interior but almost no coast line, and hence has had nothing to correspond to the Atlantic seaboard culture of the United States. It possesses a literature of which it may be reasonably proud. It has grown with the growth of the country and reaches its highest point at the present time when the dominion also attains its greatest stature in external influence and internal unity.

Canada is a unique, diverse country and it has two home cultures – French and British. Like other colonial literatures, Canadian literature has encountered a number of obstacles in its growth. Canadian literature is concerned with place and displacement and with the development of an effective identifying relationship between self and environs.

A shared familiarity with popular culture, a localized adaptation to space and distance, a reliance on common civil rights and a recognition of local forms of speech and intonation underlie as the more immediately observable regional and linguistic disparities. Literature in Canada grows from these social attitudes held in common, as well as from historical antecedents and extranational models. But definition of a single Canadian identity is suspect. It is the cultural plurality inside the country that most fundamentally shapes the way Canadians define their political character, draw the dimensions of their literature, and voice their commitment to causes, institutions and individuality. Canadian literature has had to overcome the oppressive psyche of being dominated by the American and British literary traditions.

In the various settlements, people's desire for reform in the political structure was secondary to their need to deal with more basic questions. Fire, hunger, weather, the needs and niceties of neighbourhood got frequently ignored in the quest for grander explanations of political events. In large part of the history of imagination, incompetence, faction, affection, prejudice, faith, industry, child labour, sport, slavery, food, unions, childbirth and epidemic affected literary endeavour, which was itself a feature of settlement.

Canadian literature has a much longer history than is generally assumed. It includes a long phase of invisibility in stages. It was first recognized as an area to enquire into the value system of the land or to study the distinctive features of cultural nationalism. The spirit of cultural nationalism, assisted by federal support and aid, has greatly facilitated Canadian writing and its canonization.

The volume of new writing in all genres grew rapidly in the latter half of the twentieth century. Canadian novelists, in particular, began to achieve a high profile abroad. Among them Davies, Richler, Margaret Laurence, Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood and Norman Levine are momentous. The literary concerns of these authors and their peers are multiple and diverse. It may be noted that the traditional Canadian preoccupation with wilderness was beginning to evolve into a concern with environmental issues. Gender politics were becoming prominent and interest in the relationship with Britain had largely been superseded by anxieties about the power of the US over Canada's economy and culture.

The 1960s and 1970s were strongly marked by cultural nationalism and the ideals of Canada, first recurred in new forms. Literary critics produced survey studies of the



national literature and celebrated works which they thought displayed typically Canadian preoccupations. The government promoted Canadian culture by establishing prizes and fellowships for artists and writers, and also encouraged Canadian studies abroad.

Educators, critics and canon-makers increasingly recognized the significance of ethnic minority and native Canadian writers, although there was a danger that such writers would be exoticised. Migration, exile and diasporic experience are the subjects of a substantial proportion of the late twentieth and twenty-first century Canadian texts, especially in the important genre of life writing. Also notable is the mushrooming of the postmodern historical novel and in many such texts, a fascination with Canada's history coexists with a scepticism about the whole project of writing national histories. Many of the best-known contemporary novelists like, Anne Michaels, Robert Kroetsch and Dionne Brand, are also poets. Numerous experimental writers like, Daphne Marlatt, George Elliot Clarke and Michael Ondaatje, blur the boundaries between poetry and fiction or history or autobiography.

The production and reception of contemporary writing in Canada has been greatly influenced by three related phenomena, namely, the rise of literary celebrity, the proliferation of book prizes and the advent of mass reading events. Authors including Atwood, Ondaatje, Alice Munro and Yann Martel have become international stars. At present, they are at the centre of intense debates about literary value, popularity and the economics of culture. Such debates have been further stimulated by the enormous success of projects such as 'Canada Reads' and other mass reading events, which exploit the appeal of celebrity authors in order to stimulate book sales and encourage communal reading and discussion of Canadian books.

Robertson Davies' popular *Deptford trilogy* examines the growth of its protagonists into maturity within a Jungian paradigm. Exploration of Canadian identity and of the world of art form much of the interest of Davies' *Cornish trilogy* and *Murder & Walking Spirits* (1991). Alice Munro in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), set in southwestern Ontario, and Margaret Laurence in her Manawaka novels explored their heroines' rebellion against a constricting small-town heritage. Munro's short stories – in collections ranging from *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968) to *The View from Castle Rock* (2006) – depict the domestic lives and relationships of women in Toronto, small-town Ontario, and British Columbia in an increasingly enigmatic style.

With incisive irony, Margaret Atwood dissected contemporary urban life and sexual politics in *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Lady Oracle* (1976), and *The Robber Bride* (1993). *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and the speculative *Oryx and Crake* (2003) are cautionary tales of political violence and dystopia, while *Alias Grace* (1996), and *The Blind Assassin* (2000), winner of the Booker Prize, are situated in a meticulously researched historical Ontario and expose the secret worlds of women and the ambiguous nature of truth and justice.

Set in Montreal, London and Paris, Mordecai Richler's novels *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959), *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1971), *Joshua Then and Now* (1980), *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989), and *Barney's Version* (1997) ridicule the condition and hypocrisy of modern society through black humour. George Browning's *Burning Water* (1980), which focuses on the 18th-century explorer George Vancouver, and Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), the story of the jazz



musician Buddy Bolden, mingle history with autobiography in self-reflexive narratives that enact the process of writing.

Carol Shields's novels, stories and plays present the lives of ordinary women and men in a luminous and in a gently satiric style. *The Stone Diaries* (1993), which won the Pulitzer Prize, begins in early twentieth century Manitoba and follows the life of Daisy from birth to death in a variety of voices and textual strategies, while in *Unless* (2002), a middle-aged professional woman confronts the nature of goodness and the disintegration of a comfortable family life.

An award-winning novelist, poet and critic, Michael Ondaatje has secured himself as one of Canada's brightest literary talents. Born in Sri Lanka, Ondaatje spent part of his childhood in England. His childhood contained a mix of both prosperity and near-poverty as the fortunes of his family shifted. After his parents' divorce, his mother moved to England, and Ondaatje left Ceylon in 1954 at the age of 11 to join her and to attend Dulwich College. He received his university education at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, the University of Toronto, and Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and has taught at both the University of Western Ontario in London and York University in Toronto.

An officer of the Order of Canada and the Booker Prize winner for *The English Patient*, Ondaatje is one among the most celebrated living authors. His prose often feels cinematic in nature, exploring temporality and narrative expectations. His poetry collections are equally compelling, with a movement and whimsy that strikes beauty in the detritus, the celebrated and the ignored parts of our lives.



It was in 1962, the year of Ondaatje's arrival in Canada, which Canadian immigration policy began to take a significant turn away from accepting almost exclusively British, US and European immigrants. Immigration of Europeans other than British or Scandinavians began in earnest in the post-war years. Thus Canada began the practice of admitting refugees, nearly a quarter of a million between 1946 and 1962, largely European displaced persons and refugees resulting from the Second World War. Ondaatje, coming to Canada from Ceylon via England, can be seen as one of the first non-Europeans to immigrate into the modest beginning of a new cultural climate in Canada that has led to Canada's current multicultural identity.

He is the most mainstream of the writers, having received widespread public acceptance and high sales, both in Canada and internationally. He has also won several prestigious literary awards, including the Man Booker Prize for *The English Patient*, which was also the basis for the Academy Award-winning movie of the same name, the Governor-General's Literary Award for Fiction for *The English Patient*, *Anil's Ghost* and *Divisadero*, the Giller Prize for *Anil's Ghost* and the Prix Medicis for *Anil's Ghost*. He has also received the Governor-General's Literary Award for Poetry for *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do*.

There is a disputation, that there is a direct link between Ondaatje's immigrant background, the common themes and preoccupations of his body of prose work. Rather than choosing to write from a specifically ethnic minority point of view about his homeland, his past, his experience of otherness, conventional history, politics or economics, Ondaatje consistently and consciously writes from different points of view about statelessness, lack of allegiance to homeland or nationality, the permeability and

impermanence of human-imposed borders, and the isolation of human beings. Additionally, he provides alternative versions of history, telling different stories about the same subject or event, with a blurring of fact and fiction. Further, Ondaatje's immigrant experience has influenced his outlook on these themes, allowing him to take global and comprehensive, rather than individual or regional perspectives.

"Ondaatje's texts reveal an intensive preoccupation with the sound and texture of words, a preference for unexpected juxtapositions and conjunctions, and an often devious sense of humour" (New, *Encyclopedia* 846). The dialogue and intersections between self, persona, myth and a subterranean kind of history inform many of Ondaatje's works, and in interviews he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of discovery and process in the act of writing. This trust in process and experiment is balanced by complicated attention to tone and narrative architecture in the process of rewriting and editing. Moreover, Ondaatje has been fascinated, from the beginnings of his career as a poet, by the interplay between poetic image and narrative development. He has combined lyric and narrative elements in many different forms in his work. His first collection of poetry, *The Daily Monsters* (1967), opens with shorter lyrics that project defamiliarized human traits through the anthropomorphic 'social animals' evoked in the title, while the longer narrative poems in the second part employ personae from Greek myth, history, or of Ondaatje's own invention. Ondaatje has also shaped Canadian writing as a reader of manuscripts and as an editor of journals and anthologies. His editorial activities include his work for the Kingston literary journal *Quarry* in the 1960s.

The notion of many voices, sub-texts, degrees of truth beyond or under official recorded history, is common to Ondaatje's novels and one of the most momentous



elements of his point of view. Ondaatje consistently represents history as a form of sanctioned storytelling, a necessarily incomplete version of the past, no matter how thoroughly researched and documented. In his fictions, he both alters and supplements historical records to present other stories artistically, suitable to and representative of the voices of outsiders who do not figure in published history.

He travelled to Sri Lanka in 1978 and 1980, blending those experiences in his 1982 fictionalised memoir *Running in the Family*. Ondaatje currently resides in Toronto. In addition to the memoir, he is the author of a number of volumes of poetry and seven novels: *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), *Anil's Ghost* (2000), *Divisadero* (2007), *The Cat's Table* (2011) and *Warlight* (2018).

*The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Ondaatje's debut narrative work, explores the infamous outlaw's journey through verse. The poems interrupt the chronological order, and force the reader to explore – and even empathize – with the actions and interior thoughts of this legendary figure. With *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Ondaatje foregoes the clichés of this mythologized and often-parodied anti-hero of the American West, creating a complex, fully-dimensional exploration of Billy the Kid.

Ondaatje's transition from poet to prose writer is most apparent in this prose poem-like novel, *Coming Through Slaughter*, widely considered his debut work of fiction, of the first jazz musician Buddy Bolden. The mystery of the New Orleanian cornet player's legacy is rife throughout the book. Ondaatje uses flights of poetic reverie to describe Bolden's bursts of music and eruptions of drunken rage and the strange enchantment he casts upon his friends, foes, lovers, and fellow players.



In his memoir *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje infuses imagination with fact as he recounts his return to his native Sri Lanka in the late 1970s. As he explores his familial ties, Ondaatje attempts to better understand his own identity. The stories of friends and relatives offer context and perspective, but much remains elusive. This memoir draws on themes of loneliness, societal expectations and the complexity of memory. Ondaatje strings these ideas together through multiple perspectives and striking prose.

*Divisadero* is a compelling novel about family, distance and love in its many forms. The book surrounds one family as a unit before splintering into their separate lives. Anna and her sister Claire grow up together as twins, though they are not blood relatives. Claire is adopted as a baby and the two sisters are raised by their single father. An orphaned boy named Cooper is also brought into the family, but treated more as a farm hand. Cooper and Anna start a sexual relationship and its discovery results in a violence that dissolves the family. The prose is beautifully crafted and the non-linear narrative jumps take the reader on an unforgettable journey across countries and time.

*The Cat's Table* tells the story of an eleven-year-old boy's sea voyage to England in the early 1950s. As Michael travels aboard the ocean liner he encounters misfit characters and boyhood adventures. The reminiscences of this journey remain a strong part of his consciousness as he reimagines these events in adulthood. The lasting influence of childhood discoveries are brought to life in the pages of this novel, and will no doubt leave an impression long after you've finished reading.

Set in 1920s and 1930s Toronto, *In the Skin of a Lion* mixes history with imagination in an evocative and mysterious love story. The novel takes a fictionalized look at the lives of immigrants who helped build the city through their labor, but

remained on the fringes of society. Ondaatje mixes voices and perspectives through interweaving tales to tell the story of a time of growth and industrialization at the hands of the poor.

Hana and Caravaggio, two characters from *In the Skin of a Lion*, reappear in Ondaatje's next novel, *The English Patient*, which is a historiographic metafiction. The book won the 1992 Booker Prize, and the Governor General's Award. On 8 July 2018, the novel has been crowned the 2018 Golden Man Booker, the best winner of the Booker prize of the last 50 years. Set around and during the Second World War and ranging in locations from North Africa to Europe and from Canada to India, this work again unfolds past events as they are reconstructed in the interactions among several characters whose lives become part of a communal history, in a half-destroyed villa that becomes a setting for reading, hazardous deciphering, and imagination, the nurse. *The English Patient* tells the stories of four individuals whose lives come together at the end of World War II in an abandoned Italian villa. Hana, a 20-year-old nurse from Canada, seeks refuge from an explosion of wartime death. Kirpal Singh, a 25-year-old bomb dismantler, from India is a member of the British Army. David Caravaggio, a friend of Hana's father, worked as a spy during the war and severely disfigured while a captive of the Germans. Hana's patient is a severely burned man whose identity is the mystery at the heart of this novel. Each of these characters finds him or herself far away from home, displaced by the war, and each of them finds a quiet refuge in the abandoned Italian villa to reconstruct their lives. While Hana and Kip eventually develop a romantic relationship, Caravaggio becomes more and more obsessed with the patient's true identity. Caravaggio believes that the patient may not be English, as everyone assumed, but a Hungarian who worked as a spy for the

Germans. Scattered into the story of the lives of these characters together in Italy are each character's clear reminiscences of the past, including the patient's hallucinatory memories of a sultry love affair, of desert exploration, and of friendship and betrayal. The novel becomes a patchwork of memories that explores themes of war, nationality, identity, loss and love.



## Chapter Two

### Cultural Hybridity

Cultural hybridity can be construed as a mixture of different cultural fragments, including among others such features as nationality, race, and religion. It demonstrates how cultures come to be represented by processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are vicariously addressed to through an 'Other'. In cultural studies, hybridity denotes a wide register of multiple identity, cross-over, pick-'n'-mix, boundary-crossing experiences and styles, matching a world of growing migration and diaspora lives, intensive intercultural communication, everyday multiculturalism and erosion of boundaries. It constitutes the effort to maintain a sense of balance among practices, values, and customs of two or more different cultures. In cultural hybridization, one constructs a new identity that reflects a dual sense of being, which resides both within and beyond the margins of nationality, race, ethnicity, class, and linguistic diversity. Many immigrants face this process as they attempt to accommodate new environments and experiences, while holding on to their indigenous sociocultural principles or beliefs.

Homi K. Bhabha, in his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, shows the cultural influence of the colonizer on the colonized and the colonized on the colonizer which leads to the formation of a hybrid identity. He uses the term 'colonial hybrid' to explain the hybridization of cultures in colonized countries. In *The Location of Culture*, published in 1994, he gives many of the definitions of the concept of hybridity and accounts of the diverse aspects of this concept. According to Bhabha, "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production

of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority)" (159). According to Bhabha, the formation of colonial stereotypes proceeds through the projection onto the racial other one's own properties that pose a threat or are experienced as negative. From the point of view of colonial discourse, the colonial other is defined as a racial other that is effortlessly distinguished by virtue of being visibly different in appearance. To put it differently, the colonised culture has appropriated cultural traits from the colonialist authority in such a way that the authority cannot recognize the original traits of the colonised culture. Bhabha uses the term 'mimicry' in the colonial context to describe how the colonized adapt to and eventually adopt the colonizer's culture.

Stuart Hall refers culture as a "typical 'way of life' of a people, community, nation or social group". In a yet another definition, culture includes "the 'shared values' of a group or of society". However, Hall does not endorse the view of culture as a list of things but rather "as a process...concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings...between members of a society or group" (2). In short, Hall defines culture as a continuous process that gains its meanings from shared values of a group. According to Hall, one possess a myriad of different cultural identity positions resulting from the multiplicity of sources so that identity arises from nationality, ethnicity, race, social class, language, gender, and sexuality. Different identity positions, including national and cultural identities, have become splintered or dislocated.

Michael Ondaatje's works represent in many ways the best of contemporary Canadian literature in English not only in the context of Canada itself but also on the international scene. In this, it is not without significance that Ondaatje is an immigrant to



Canada and that much of his writing is about identity, history, and about people of 'in-between'. He is a man of multiple cultural realities. Identity, whether that of an individual or that of a people, history, and hybridity, are of great relevance in the age of globalization, disappearing borders, and the migration of people whether for economic, political, or other reasons.

From both within and without, former European colonies have been seen as translations of a distant and idealized original whose standards have been transplanted and reduced to imperfect copies, characterized by absence or imitation. In a search for origins, one could not find a source but absence, dispersal, and loss.

In Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, the main characters have multiple cultural identities, for example, vague national affiliations, and the novel challenges the notion of any original or pure cultural identity. The central character is referred to as 'the English patient', although in fact, he is a Hungarian expatriate, turned citizen of the world without one specific national identity and therefore he also represents cultural hybridity. All characters encounter their cultural identity as a fluctuating and fluid process. They vacillate between many associations and express the variousness of things with the interconnectedness and mixedness of various cultural influences which constitute an unstable and continuously shifting state of cultural hybridity.

*The English Patient* interrogates the notion of a pure cultural or national identity and conceives the postmodern identity as hybrid identity. Nationality and identity are amalgamated in the novel. They function together to generate a web of inescapable structures that link the characters to certain places and times despite their best efforts to



avoid such detention. The novel questions colonial and anti-colonial nationalism which carve the characters' identities and it often breaks down colonial hierarchies.

The characters in *The English Patient* are mental ruins. In the novel, cultural and national borders vanish with characters that have diverse cultural identities due to their past. The patient has multiple national and cultural connections spanning from Hungary to the Levant, France, England and Libyan desert. Hana and Caravaggio are Canadians with a mixed background of emigration including Italy for Caravaggio's family, while Hana is a French-Canadian of Finnish and Slovenian origin and Kip is a Sikh who emigrated from Punjab, India, to England to work in the British Royal Engineers. At present he is in Italy defusing German bombs and "fighting English wars" (129). Caravaggio opportunely sums it up by saying, "The trouble with all of us is we are where we shouldn't be" (129).

*The English Patient* is a story of a badly burned man with an enigmatic identity. The story is sensuous, mysterious, and philosophically inspirational with tones of loss and sadness. It is a story of allegiances in war, love and history and takes place in a ruined Italian villa north of Florence at the end of the Second World War. The main characters include a 20-year-old Canadian nurse Hana, who has volunteered to stay behind to care for the unidentified patient and has grown wary of the war and life. The villa is a base for a young Indian sapper Kirpal Singh. Hana's old family friend from Canada, David Caravaggio, also arrives at the villa inquest of Hana. He is a thief with the thumbs cut off, searching for his identity, having to find himself again. The four of them slowly form a brittle community amidst the war. The story of the presumably English patient, who will be revealed as Ladislaus de Almasy, a Hungarian Count, unknots

through narrated flashbacks of his desert explorations in the Libyan Desert in Northern Africa. The tragedy of his injury is connected to his love affair with Katharine Clifton, a young wife of one of his fellow explorers of the British Geographical Society.

If Herodotus and Florence together signify the best of the West, the great moments of Western self-invention and achievement, the rise of history and art, the triumph of beauty and reason, then the English patient is the ideal subject of enlightenment. He is also the exemplar of colonial knowledge and the epitome of colonial adventure. An expert on the desert, he knows the Bedouin as only colonial agents could.

I am a man who can recognize an unnamed town by its skeletal shape on a map. I have always had information like a sea in me...So I knew their place before I crashed among them, knew when Alexander had traversed it an earlier age for this cause or that greed. I knew the customs of nomads besotted by silk or wells...When I was lost among them, unsure of where I was, all I needed was the name of a small ridge, a local custom, a cell of this historical animal, and the map of the world would slide into place.

(19-20)

The English patient went to the desert, with his friends, because of his love of untamed spaces. But if knowledge was pure, if only in its originary enlightenment conceit, it was soon overtaken by war and the imperatives of nation-states. Madox, the patient's best friend through ten years of desert exploration, could not bear the onset of war, the way it divided him from his small circle of friends, the noise it brought to his quiet fantasy of the desert. Clifton, who had joined the desert party on a lark after Oxford and marriage, turned out to be an intelligence officer for the British, his accumulated



knowledge of the desert an added advantage once war was declared. And the English patient was not really English, after all. His story, first told in fragments that gave nothing away, was finally extracted during a long session of morphine, administered by Caravaggio the thief, who had used his skills for the counterintelligence efforts of the British and then followed his old family friend Hana to the villa. The English patient was in fact Hungarian, and had turned to help the Germans after the onset of war, guiding spies such as Rommel across the great North African desert. Caravaggio, deduced his identity from the stories he first heard, having followed Almasy's case when he was posted in Cairo. But he could not guess the contingency of Almasy's betrayal.

When Almasy finally tells his tale, he has moved beyond recognition and he has moved beyond desire for either morphine or memory. Strangely, without memory all he can do is to read the history of Herodotus. And he comes to his end for his death is just a matter of time, a romantic who could not accept the inevitable appropriation of his knowledge and life:

We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers we have hidden in as if caves. I wish for all this to be marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography – to be marked by nature, not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and women on buildings. We are communal histories, communal books. We are not owned or monogamous in our taste and experience. All I desired was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps. (277)



He was, in the end, misguided. In the final scene in the villa, the English patient has a gun directed at him by the Sikh sapper who had also taken refuge in the villa. He held his gun on the English patient after hearing about explosion of the atomic bomb, a bomb he could never defuse. Holding the charred throat in the rifle's sight, he says:

My brother told me. Never turn your back on Europe. The deal makers. The contract makers. The map drawers. Never trust Europeans, he said. Never shake hands with them. But we, oh, we were easily impressed – by speeches and medals and your ceremonies. What have I been doing these last few years? Cutting away, defusing, limbs of evil. For what? For *this* to happen. (302-303)

And when Caravaggio shouted out that the English patient was not English, it did not matter at all, though the sapper left him unharmed. He returned home instead, with his own troubling memories of Hana, his lover, to disturb the simple pleasures of his own national awakening.

In the end, the English patient, the man who used Herodotus as his guide through the deserts of life, laid waiting for death. He was a man who embodied the best of colonial knowledge and yet turned out to be not quite what he seemed. He belonged to all of Europe, erasing the distinctions between allies and axis by revealing the common heritage and fundamental flaws of both sides. The tragic elegy of his life provided the pretext for the ultimate intention of the novel, the devolution of cultural capital from Almasy and his Oxford education to the likes of Caravaggio and Hana. And perhaps even more significantly, the position of critique is appropriated in the end by the silent sapper, the Sikh from India who recognizes the ultimate deception, the terrible tyranny of the

West, the translation of European colonial power into American English. The ruin that haunts the final pages of the novel is that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, cities instantaneously converted to rubble by the unprecedented power of nuclear explosion. When the sapper returns home, he does so to join in the final struggle of the nationalist movement, to attempt to free himself, for good, of the ruination of the West.

The character of the English patient is surrounded by an air of mystery. His mysterious identity is revealed little by little as his narration confesses his past secrets and actions in desert exploration missions. Like Herodotus's *The Histories* interprets the past and thus constructs culture by narration, the patient also narrates his past, so that the act of narration composes his identity. However, Almásy's narrative is not trustworthy because despite his initial injuries, he also conceals his national identity because of his German affiliations. He claims that he cannot remember his name or nationality. He is adding layers to his story to mask his identity.

The character of Kip can be read as a figure of resistance with his final rejection of the West and support of the Indian independence. Kip or Kirpal Singh is a sapper employed in the British army. Kip has a complex identity which is the result of his exposure to Indian as well as the English culture. He is allured by the English culture that has made him ignore his older brother's anti-English remarks, siding with whoever was against the English. He is part of an elite bomb disposal squad which defuses bombs planted by the enemy. He is a colonized native who works for the colonizer, that is, the British army. His brother had refused to work anymore in the army because of his growing fury against the British colonial rule in India. This forces Kirpal Singh to occupy the position of his brother in the British army. Right from the beginning of the novel,



Kirpal Singh's status as a colonized native of India is established. He fights the colonial governments' wars in foreign soils as indicated by the narrator, "Kirpal Singh had been befriended, and he would never forget it... Singh had arrived in England knowing no one, distanced from his family in the Punjab. He was twenty one years old. He had met no one but soldiers" (199).

Kip's hybridisation process occurs when he approaches western culture through works of art that influence his perception of the west and its cultural images. He obtains a hybrid identity while developing a deep appreciation of western art in Naples. Kirpal Singh's name change from Kirpal Singh to Kip is a part of this hybridisation process. His maiden name Kirpal Singh, indicative of the community and caste of Singhs he belong to, is no longer mentioned in the novel after he is nicknamed as 'Kip' by the members of his bomb disposal unit. Kirpal Singh, the colonized native, latently accepts the new name given to him by the colonial authority. Though he accepts the name change, it is done by people he does not know. He admits "And he remained the foreigner, the Sikh" (105). This indicates that he still identifies himself as an Indian even though he possesses many attributes which are the products of English cultural influence.

It can be argued that Kip has assimilated his Indian identity with English culture through his experiences in the British army and his stay in England. His first encounter with the English culture is irksome as he remarks "The English! They expect you to fight for them but won't talk to you" (200). The main reason for Kip's fascination with England and English gentlemen is his relationship with Lord Suffolk and his team. Lord Suffolk was an eccentric person who educated sappers for the British Army, and he welcomed Kip as an equal: "He stepped into a family, after a year abroad, as if he were



the prodigal returned, offered a chair at the table, embraced with conversations" (201-202). Since Kip left his family in India against his family's wishes, he became an outcast siding with the colonial power. In England, he is welcomed into the home of Lord Suffolk as if he were a lost son who has finally come home again. Suffolk was full of anecdotes and information, and taught Kip about western life. He not only introduces him to the basics of defusing bombs but also to English culture. They would often travel to various villages where Lord Suffolk often halted to describe the specialities and exotic items offered by each village. At one such instance, Lord Suffolk introduces Kip to a place called Humber which was the apt place to buy blackthorn walking sticks. They also offer Kip to take him to an English play. In this way, he introduces Kip to all the specialties and niceties of his region which is a window to understanding English culture. The friendly approach of Miss Morden and Lord Suffolk surprises Kip as he suffers from cultural distance with the other Englishmen. Kip has not dropped his English identity since he seeks advice and wisdom from someone he believes to be superior to himself in terms of knowledge, namely the patient: "In recent days, Hana had watched him sitting beside the English patient, and it seemed to her a reversal of Kim. The young student was now Indian, the wise old teacher was English" (117).

Kip has a dual belonging to India as well as to Britain. But this hybridity is denied by him when Hiroshima and Nagasaki are bombed, which forces him to reject English culture altogether. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki exasperates him. This incident makes him relinquish the West. Kip also cautions to kill the English Patient, whom he regards as a symbol of the West because he believes he is English. Kip's anti-Western outburst and his readiness to abandon his Western friends are once again due to

his sense of cultural displacement as an effect of his disappointment with Western culture. He returns to India following this scene. Even though his friends call him Kip, he is no longer 'Kip', but Kirpal Singh or the sapper till the end of the novel. He has a hybrid identity till the time he returns from the villa due to his rejection of English culture. His rejection and disillusionment with the Western culture at large makes him renounce his hybrid identity.

The characters are doubly displaced in the way the Canadian Caravaggio disguises himself in fascist Italy by speaking fluent Italian, and Almasi hides his national identity and subsequent Nazi affiliation from the Allies by his perfect command of English language and culture. In addition, they are spies who skillfully build different identities and expose those of others. Almasi accompanied Germans in the desert and Caravaggio tracked spies and supplied false rumours to expose double spies in Cairo, while also the English were doubly false.

The context of the novel is the war situation which generates experiences of dislocation when armies encroach new territories and refugees are forced to leave their homes. So they become dislocated without a homeland. In addition to this material loss during the war, national identities are also lost in mental terms due to disillusionment. The novel proposes that Hana is shell shocked and she has lost her faith in the cause of the war, for example, she has ditched her uniform: "Coming out of what had happened to her during the war, she drew her own few rules to herself. She would not be ordered again or carry out duties for the greater good. She would care only for the burned patient – her only communication was with him" (15). The characters are culturally dislocated or become so in the novel. The four of them share the villa as their new homeland. They are



leaving old cultural identities behind as they are, according to the phrasing used in the novel, "shedding skins" (124), or ridding themselves of their old identities from their old lives before the war. They have grown wary of life and endure from disillusionment: "They could imitate nothing but what they were. There was no defence but to look for the truth in others" (124). The construction of cultural identity can be read in the novel, for example, when Caravaggio is shocked to see the change in Hana from the girl he knew in Canada and how her identity has developed during her war experiences: "What she was now was what she herself had decided to become" and he wonders "at her translation" (234).

There is a pattern in the novel concerning Hana's identity construction. Kip visualizes Hana's future years after the end of the war:

She will, he realizes now, always have a serious face. She has moved from being a young woman into having the angular look of a queen, someone who has made her face with her desire to be a certain kind of person. He still likes that about her. Her smartness, the fact that she did not inherit that look or that beauty, but that it was something searched for and that it will always reflect a present stage of her character. (319)

In the novel, the Florentine villa is depicted as a ruin. The magnificent mansion built by culture was hollowed out by the middle of the century, demolished from within by the upheaval of world war, deconstructed from without by the relentless historical logic of decolonization. The ruin was a sign of loss or absence. Ruins were once accessible, but they are at present shadows of their former selves. The ruin not only housed culture, it stood for it. Like culture itself, the ruin was at once material and



heavenly, simultaneously about history and memory, a sign of accomplishment and a signal of failure, an inspiration for life as well as a notification of death. While ruins would seem to be about history, more often they are about the need to annihilate history, as well as signs of the death of history.

Cross cultural encounters have become a remarkable theme within the field of postcolonial literature and theory. The work of the Canadian based novelist and poet Michael Ondaatje has been identified for the complex mapping of postcolonial cultural hybrid experience. Cultural hybridity, identity and otherness entangled together form a novel entity. The novel represents a complex thematic linking of these affairs. In fact, they can be seen as central captivation in his work. Ondaatje is bothered with the challenges of postcolonial struggles. He writes about an ideal world, without any geographical or cultural borders, where hybridity rules, and the theme of cultural hybridity is strongly portrayed in *The English Patient*. Cultural hybridity provides tools to dislodge forged cultural notions of otherness. By illustrating characters outside normative categories of cultural stereotypes, he rewrites cultural otherness and creates new space for cross cultural encounters.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Impasse on Identity**

Colonial and postcolonial literature relates to the world the struggle of those who have been colonized by others. It clearly articulates the struggle of postcolonial individuals to create a place in the world. To find a place for oneself in a society, where the past life before colonization is completely forgotten, is a difficult task indeed. Hence, the study of colonial and postcolonial literature inherently involves the study of identity. Identity becomes the fulcrum upon which the postcolonial character revolves. Each character that is created suffers from a certain lack of direction in their lives. Identity becomes an overwhelming emotional force in the character's lives that begins to drive every action that the characters take. This search for a true identity forces their decisions and guides their lives in directions that seem almost irrelevant. The struggle for an identity apart from the colonial power becomes paramount.

In a postcolonial world, there are alienated majority colonies, primarily in the Caribbean, in which the colonized people are in a majority, but they have been alienated from their land through forced displacement, and alienated from their ancestral traditions, languages, and so forth through forced dispersal and intermixing. In consequence, there are some significant differences between alienated majority literatures and the indigenous majority literatures of the paradigm post colonization countries. On the other hand, since writers in this region are largely of West African ancestry, they retain many African traditions, and they do so in a way that clearly involves the repeated transformation of these traditions in response to novel circumstances which is an important point for any study of exhaust identity.

Moreover, perhaps even more than African writers, black Caribbean writers – whose ancestors were almost all slaves – have been faced with the justificatory racism and ethnocentrism of Europe in a particularly stark form. Because of this, their treatment of identity is in some ways more paradigmatic of the colonial condition than is that of lighter-skinned south Asians or, even more obviously, the Irish. Indeed, the separate racial status of the Irish was slowly dissolved into a reconstituted white race – which includes Semitic and south Asian peoples – all opposed to blacks.

By its very nature, post colonization literature is, in a sense, two literatures: one arising from the dominant or colonizer society, the other from the dominated or colonized society. This is the most fundamental division, which one must draw in anatomizing post colonization literature – literature written by members of the oppressor group and literature written by members of the oppressed group. These literatures are united by a sort of dialectical tension necessarily produced by the history that defines post colonization literature. But they also maintain a striking degree of thematic or structural congruence, often centering on the issue of identity.

*"The English Patient* is a story about trapped people – people who are trapped in their past casting its shadow on their present, and struggling to somehow possess a hold over life" (Ray 70). Almasi is trapped in his past, reliving it constantly to escape the pain of the present. Hana too does not have the freedom of mind and is yet to overcome the loss of her lover, child and father in the war. She retreated from everybody around her except the patient with whom she shares everything in her mind. She wanted to go home, but unable to do so she opts for another possible action – stepping outside the war and staying with a patient. What Ondaatje has presented in the novel is a picture of life pitied



against death which is duplicated by the setting of the Tuscan villa. Mined and ruined, its surroundings are littered with death and devastation. In sharp contrast the villa itself is painted – each room with a different season, as if in celebration of life.

All the characters in the novel have taken a refuge from reality in a bombed Italian monastery that is in ruins. Although their stay in the Villa San Girolamo could appear as a flight from the outside world, the fact that each character attempts to remember the past in order to get a grip on his or her identity stresses the importance of the larger context. As a result, the novel consists of flashbacks, which are often vague and provide only a fragmentary account of both history and each character's story. In an attempt to redefine their identity, the characters turn to books, themselves partly destroyed by the war, that thematize the representation of the cultural 'Other': Herodotus's writings, Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Tacitus's *Annals*, passages from the Bible, Kipling's *Kim*, Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*, song lyrics, and accounts from the London Geographical Society. These fragmented accounts of the 'Other' become mirrors of the characters' mutilated identity, inscribed with history's debris and its ruins.

The first scenes of the novel present the mutilated body of the 'English' – as he is believed to be throughout most of the novel – patient. His mutilation is mirrored by the destruction around him, be it that of the Villa or of the partly destroyed books in which there are "gaps of plot" (7), including his own story. A plane crash has melted his body into a paralyzed lump of aubergine-coloured human flesh. He becomes the battle field for different historical meanings which his body establishes for those who attempt to understand its rules. Although the English patient speaks the language of the tribe which

rescues him, he can never locate it exactly. The nomads keep escaping the cartographer's eye. The closest the English patient comes to locating them is as "one of the northwest desert tribes" (9). As a consequence it remains the "--- tribe" (101) for the 'English' patient and his readers. This blank parallels that of the "-", the secret wind of the desert" (18), the wind that accompanies the unnamable tribe. In 1944, approximately two years after his crash, the tribe members bring their patient to the British base at Siwa. There he "was one more enigma, with no identification, unrecognizable" (101) because the tribesmen took away his identification plate. The removal of this sign opens up a blank in his identity, which could also have made him into the '---' patient. But by deciding to bring their patient to the British base, the --- tribe establishes his identity as British and so he becomes the 'English' patient. His physical signifiers do not refer to a stable signified. The nomadic quality and the mysterious identity of the --- tribe is reflected mirror-like upon the English patient. Language manifests itself as one of the markers of identity. Yet the English patient speaks various languages – English, German, and the tribe's dialect – rather than only one. He crosses linguistic as well as national boundaries and therefore remains an unidentified alien figure with his "black body" (3) and his "dark face" (4).

The mysteriousness that surrounds the title character raises the suspicion that he himself might have behaved in savage ways, inconsistent with justice or laws. Even though different characters attempt to fill the gaps in his story and darns the holes that history has torn in the tissue of the self, the English patient's identity remains fluid and therefore suspicious. He is the unsettling presence at the end of colonialism and the war because history writes the problems of a "period of adjustment" (57) upon his body. After the plane crash, the English patient is different from who he was before. He has been



propelled into the elusive space of the nomadic 'Other'. In this sense the past is different from the present and stands beside it, "The power of memory displaces the constructed gap between the activities of inquiry and the object that is being studied" (Totosy de Zepetnek 42). The present and the past are intimately connected. The return of what was forgotten and repressed creates an ambivalent space for knowledge, not only for the 'English' patient who tries to recall his past, but also for those who want to fill the gaps in his identity in order to make sense of their own lives.

The plane crash has made the 'English' patient forget his national origins. It appears that this amnesia has brought his earlier wish to "erase [his] name and the place [he] had come from" (148) to full realization. He has become a signifier without a signified. Yet, the novel teases the reader with the possibility of knowing who the English patient really is by mentioning the name "Almasy" (173). The name appears without any direct reference to its bearer. There is an establishment of link between Almasy and the English patient himself when he realizes that Almasy is the only name without a clear referent and therefore it must be designated the unnamed and unnamable character in the novel.

In the novel, the English patient establishes his slipperiness in identity when he mentions that, "after ten years in the desert, it was easy for [him] to slip across borders, not to belong to anyone, to any nation" (148). The idea of elusive identity in this postmodern text parallels the complexity in the identity formation of the Hungarian nation. By hinting at the fact that his title character is based on the Hungarian Almasy, Ondaatje teases his readers with the possibility of solving the mystery of identity. Yet, a closer look at the fictional construct of Almasy's identity reveals that Ondaatje tries to



propel into yet another realm of fragmentation, questioning, imagination, and ambivalence. The other characters in the novel, themselves hurt and their identity mutilated, gather around the English patient in their attempt to come to terms with history. He becomes their screen, as each character deflects his or her true desire through the image of another.

The English patient's cathartic quality in the framework of deferral becomes clear in his interactions with Caravaggio. Caravaggio wants to know what the English patient's political involvement was during the war. He attempts to prompt the return of what was forgotten and repressed. He urges the English patient to speak and hopes that the morphine which Hana regularly administers will help. Caravaggio's need to reassemble the English patient's splinters is fueled by a feeling that they are the clues to coming to terms with his own fragmented postwar identity.

Caravaggio, the former thief, has been robbed of the use of that body part which previously constituted the most essential part of his identity, his hand. During the war Nazi officers cut off his thumbs. He now is the "man with bandaged hands" (29). Caravaggio holds the English patient responsible for his loss of identity because he suspects him of having been a German spy. But his pain is tinted with the pleasure associated with the focus on fragments. At the same time that the bandages act as protective "gloves" (57), they also highlight Caravaggio's fetishized parts and thereby provide him with the narcissistic focus on the fact that he is not whole anymore.

Caravaggio's bandaged hands awaken Hana's desire to care for the man to whom they belong. She not only takes care of the English patient, but also of Caravaggio in an attempt to halt a process of self-destruction that had started during the war. Her maternal

quality as a nurse is deeply entwined with a deliberate act of self-mutilation, an act prompted by the presence of "destroyed bodies [which] were fed back to the field hospitals like mud passed back by tunnellers in the dark" (51). She cuts off her hair, "the irritation of its presence during the previous days still in her mind— when she had bent forward and her hair had touched blood in a wound" (52). She breaks with her past by acknowledging her miscarriage and the deaths of her lover and father. She feels drawn to the Villa San Girolamo which "had the look of a besieged fortress, the limbs of most of the statues blown off during the first days of the shelling" (45). Not only do these statues represent the physical destruction, but they also mirror the characters' continuing fear of destruction and cruelty. Hana, the only female in the group, is the pivotal point on which all of the action revolves. She becomes a conduit through which the men will ultimately see into themselves by recognizing what as individuals each has become as a result of his war experiences. Each man will first establish a relationship with Hana and through her a relationship with each other in coming to terms with his own reality. She is a physically present apparition triggering memories of love and past relationships each will use in comprehending just how his karma led him to this point. Kip comes to the realization: "His name is Kirpal Singh and he does not know what he is doing here" (305). At that moment he comes to terms with a reality that has taken him full circle, except now he understands what that means. Each man knows at the story's end what it is that gives meaning to his life as a man.

The danger of destruction hovers over everyone in the Villa San Girolamo, but especially over Kirpal Singh, the Indian sapper who defuses bombs for the British army. The danger, the sapper faces daily, is displaced unto his desire to "aim his rifle and fire



and hit some target precisely. Again and again he aims at a nose on a statue or one of the brown hawks veering across the sky of the valley" (78). By targeting the statue, he wants to mutilate that part of himself which – figuratively – enables him to detect bombs, his nose. He can literally "smell" the danger in the air when he comes near a hidden bomb. But this 'nose' is not mere intuition because he has been taught by the British army. Kip is one of the "authorized versions of otherness" (88), as the mutilation of his name indicates. His name is Kirpal Singh but the British gave him the nickname Kip when some officers interpreted the butter stain on one of his reports as kipper grease.

The persistently doubled nature of the patient's image is further accentuated by his suspension between life and death as he prepares to become one more memory among all the others that circulate throughout the novel. The question of who the patient is will not be resolved from his own lips. His identity will instead be reinvented by a communal act of storytelling. This sense of a life no longer lived on its own terms emerges as early as the second page of the novel with the intimation of the patient's imminent death: "He whispers again, dragging the listening heart of the young nurse beside him to wherever his mind is, into that well of memory he kept plunging into during those months before he died" (4). But even this early in the narrative, the patient's image has already been remade by the young nurse sitting beside him. Gazing down at his "black body" with its "destroyed feet" and the "hipbones of Christ", she transforms him into her own vision of a "despairing saint" (3). The extent of Hana's symbolic reworking of the patient's blackened form becomes clear during her first encounter with him in the hospital at Pisa. What she sees in the "ebony pool" (50) of the patient's charred face is not the profile of a despairing saint but the erasure of all visible signs of distinction. Tenderly scrutinising



the remains of "a man with no face", Hana reluctantly concedes that "there was nothing to recognize in him" (50). But emptied of individual significance, the black hole of the patient's face becomes a blank canvas upon which any new image may be projected. The instability of the patient's identity is partly an effect of this continual translation of a physical body into a textual space. The same process inflects his first account of his burning fall into the desert:

I fell burning into the desert. They found my body and made me a boat of sticks and dragged me across the desert. We were in the Sand Sea, now and then crossing dry riverbeds. Nomads, you see. Bedouin. I flew down and the sand itself caught fire. They saw me stand up naked out of it. The leather helmet on my head in flames. They strapped me onto a cradle, a carcass boat, and feet thudded along as they ran with me. I had broken the spareness of the desert ... Who are you? I don't know. You keep asking me. You said you were English. (4-5)

This passage of descriptive prose is crossed by two different impulses – the patient's desire to obfuscate his own origins and Hana's determination to confirm him as a particular type of subject. It is a mistake merely to perceive the patient as the passive victim of external projection. Anonymous, initially unreadable and consistently enigmatic, he is a constant hermeneutic lure and temptation. His presence demands to be translated into recognizable codes of cultural and political affiliation. Proclaimed simultaneously Hungarian and English, the patient is always also a problem of English – a metaphor for the types of libidinal investment at stake in the process of reading itself. Reading, as the patient's experience in the Villa San Girolamo demonstrates, can always

outrun its proper object in its attempt to invest a particular world with form and coherence. Or, as the patient puts the matter himself in an uncharacteristic burst of defiance: "You must talk to me, Caravaggio. Or am I just a book? Something to be read, some creature to be tempted out of a loch and shot full of morphine, full of corridors, lies, loose vegetation, pockets of stones" (269). The link the patient implies at this point between reading and the desire to interpret the world according to one's own interests and needs is a staple theme of his relationship with Hana.

Kip's "trick of survival" (214) manifests itself as a profound emotional identification with English culture and customs. The forge of this identification suggests that this trick should be read as an expression of the cultural ambivalence felt by the colonial subject whose home space has been overwritten by the presiding imperial presence. A familiar imaginative response to the disorientation of finding oneself torn between competing national interests and identifications is, to embrace aspects of imperial culture as one's own. Such is Kip's response when he enters the British Army at the outbreak of the war. He inhabits English culture as if it were simply a continuation of his previous life: he is "a man from Asia who has in these last years of war assumed English fathers, following their codes like a dutiful son" (229). During the fraught, but happy period, he spends serving in Lord Suffolk's bomb disposal squad. Kip feels as if he has "stepped into a family, after a year abroad, as if he were the prodigal returned" (201-202). Kip's identification with all things English is reinforced by his tutelary relationship with Lord Suffolk, who takes him on trips to the Devon countryside which he spends "introducing the customs of England to the young Sikh as if it was a recently discovered culture" (196). Captivated by his new surroundings and grateful for the kindness shown



to him by Lord Suffolk and his assistant Miss Morden, Kip realises that he is "beginning to love the English" (202). His assimilation into Lord Suffolk's surrogate family affords him a ready compensation for the loneliness he sometimes feels as "a result of being the anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world" (209). Gradually his quiet self-sufficiency earns him more widespread acceptance to the point where he is lampooned, renamed, turned into an English version of himself:

The sapper's nickname is Kip. 'Get Kip'. 'Here comes Kip'. The name had attached itself to him curiously. In his first bomb disposal report in England some butter had marked his paper, and the officer had exclaimed, 'What's this? Kipper grease?' and laughter surrounded him. He had no idea what a kipper was, but the young Sikh had been thereby translated into a salty English fish. Within a week his real name, Kirpal Singh, had been forgotten. (93-95)

The death of Lord Suffolk in an explosion in 1941 robs Kip of his English father and exposes him as an outsider in an alien culture. When the reality of his situation finally strikes him, he concludes his work in the bomb disposal unit and rejoins the British Army as it heads overseas towards the Italian theatre. Kip's calculated retreat into the "anonymous machine" (208) of the army ends the moment he enters the Villa San Girolamo in search of unexploded bombs. Not only does he take responsibility for the safety of the villa's inhabitants – at one point saving Caravaggio's life when the Canadian accidentally dislodges a fusebox from a shelf – his presence plays a pivotal role in reclaiming Hana from her emotional isolation and reconciling her to the sudden loss of her father. The evolving relationship between Kip and Hana is exquisitely rendered in the



scene in which Kip, defusing a bomb in the villa grounds, unexpectedly finds himself holding two live wires without the safety of a descant chord. Desperate for a "third hand" (107) to extricate him from his deadly predicament, his salvation only arrives when Hana rushes from the villa to pluck one of the wires from his grasp. If this gesture represents in one sense the culmination of the death drive that has gripped her ever since Patrick's death, it nevertheless propels her beyond self-absorption into a renewed engagement with the world: "I thought I was going to die. I wanted to die. And I thought if I was going to die I would die with you" (109).

Alarmed by the potentially murderous consequences of Kip's identification of the patient as English, Caravaggio insists once more upon the enigma of his origins: "You don't know who this man is ...He isn't an Englishman" (303-304). The implications of Caravaggio's intervention – that Almásy is, in fact, Hungarian, not English – is irrelevant to Kip, for whom ethnicity, rather than the internal geopolitical divisions of Europe, is now the heart of the matter. Kip's indifference to the subtleties of European national distinctions is clear from his angry rejoinder "American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman" (304), which explicitly figures Englishness as a mode of imperial domination rather than a particular cultural tradition. Caravaggio is, in any event, quick to concede the essential justice of Kip's position: "He knows the young soldier is right. They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation" (304). Consumed by images of nuclear annihilation and convinced of the moral bankruptcy of the Western powers, Kip angrily renounces his English name and the last vestiges of his Anglo-Indian identity: "In the tent, before the light evaporated, he had brought out the photograph of his family and gazed at it. His

name is Kirpal Singh and he does not know what he is doing here" (305). Withdrawing from all contact with Hana and Caravaggio, Kip silently departs the Villa San Girolamo, setting his course due south in a symbolic attempt to reverse the entire historical narrative of the Allied invasion of Italy.

The colonial context, ethnic insecurity and alienation are vividly present in Kip's portrayal. Nonetheless, along with other major characters of the novel, his personality can also be termed as polytropic. The English patient is an enigma, a mystery, the despairing Christ of Hana. He compares himself to Kip, calling him an "international bastard" (188). He does not want to belong to anyone, to any nation, and uses the multiplicity of his identities to transmit different versions about himself. Similarly, Hana moves around in an alien territory trying to look within her and find her true self. She also does not possess any fixed identity. She cannot relate herself to the ravages of war. Sick of Europe, she does not want to go to Canada either. War has changed this innocent youth into a disillusioned being. The patient identifies it. Hana goes into a withdrawn self-imposed exile in the villa, like a nomad keeps on searching for oases. She prefers to be "nomadic in the house...living like a vagrant" (14-15). Caravaggio too is a traveler with multiple and polytropic identities – the thief, the double agent, the drunk, the lover, and the uncle. He systematically reawakens the memories of a pleasant past in Hana – dance, music and the Marseilles.

The characters in *The English Patient* do not have a well defined identity. The characteristics are overlapping and mixed and a plural notion of identity that belongs to different cultural spaces has been presented. Juxtaposed against it is the awareness of race and ethnicity codified as an indicator of behavioural responses during the significant

moments of national loss and gain. The war makes the ethnic divisions more conspicuous. The characters' response to the atomic bomb illuminates the extent to which ethnic identity conditions and generates reactions.



## Chapter Four

### Resistance to Territories

The later twentieth century can be understood as a space from which emerged a self-conscious cartographic writing, a writing in which traditional borders have been blurred or even obliterated. The process of globalization associated with increased urbanism, the rise of multi-national corporations, and the development of information and communication technologies has fragmented the concept of the nation-state and effaced the familiar geographical landmarks of empire, opening up a new space that is at once global and local. From this process has emerged not only the phenomenon of geographically aware poststructuralist theories, but also that of a postmodernist world literature. This literature, with its ties to postmodernist fiction, is explicitly concerned with articulating the late twentieth century's renegotiation of global and local spaces and cultures.

Theoretical and fictional writing of the postmodern episteme is geographic and cartographic in the sense in which it self-reflexively writes the world, indeed creates realities. Furthermore, this cartographic writing is characterized by the pervasive figure of the map, which self-reflexively deconstructs traditional theories of epistemology and representation. Although the map metaphor has been employed for centuries by authors, philosophers, and academics to highlight issues of textual representation, the map metaphor itself has undergone a transformation in the postmodern era. The metamorphosis undergone by the figure of the map has far-reaching implications, that, it is not simply reflective of epistemological shift of postmodernity, but is rather performative of that shift.

A map is viewed as a purely scientific document, having as its condition an empirically knowable territory that can be represented objectively and realistically. This territory is the real with which the conventional or modern map assumes a direct and unproblematic link. In this way, the traditional map, by claiming it is a mirror of nature, belies the fact it is always-already a graphical re-presentation of a geographical territory, that is, a distortion.

The postcolonial marginalized agonizes over spaces of belonging. The aboriginal mourn not just the loss of physical territory but their cultural space. The loss is of tradition, ways of living and cultural memory because, for the aboriginal, these are all rooted in a sense of place. In other words, the loss of the land is also the loss of tribal memory, history, cultural practices and way of life. Such narratives document the yearning for home-spaces, of the exclusion and expulsion of people from the land. Cartography, political mapping and social structures constitute modes of legitimizing belonging or non-belonging.

To be lost, or to be unable to find oneself on the map, is to become caught in a problematic fantasy of identification with that which has been pushed off the map. Michael Ondaatje, in *The English Patient*, describes a moment of being lost in the United Kingdom. A group of geographers who just returned from Africa are looking for the Royal Geographical Society. He sentimentalizes the state of being lost signals, a desire to evade the effects of over-civilization and so jump off the official map and into the margins or blank spaces.

In *The English Patient*, confusion between the enemy and the self is a common theme, as Caravaggio, Clifton, Almasi, and Kip all struggle with their national loyalties



or conceal their true identities. Kip, an Indian working for a British bomb disposal unit, struggles between his loyalties to England and India. Clifton plays the role of an explorer and aerial photographer, but he is also an intelligence officer who secretly works for the British in the Libyan Desert. Caravaggio, who says he is a thief, also works as a spy for the Allies, though purely for mercenary reasons. He explains his usefulness: "We could read through the camouflage of deceit more naturally than official intelligence. We created double bluffs" (269). Almasy, when the Bedouin tribe first discovers him, muses: "During this time with these people, he could not remember where he was from. He could have been, for all he knew, the enemy he had been fighting from the air" (6). Counterpoised with this loss of identity is the perpetual gaze of war, which leaves no detail unnoticed.

By invoking desert as place, Ondaatje allows for a contrast between nation as easily mappable and with boundaries, and the desert as that which stands outside nation, where "it is easy to lose a sense of demarcation" (20). The desert becomes for Almasy a place of renewal and regeneration, away from the constructs and ideologies of nation. Ondaatje represents the desert as a space of escape, a kind of utopia that is empty of time and space, becoming for Almasy a substitute for religion. One of Almasy's flashbacks:

May God make safety your companion, Madox had said. Good-bye. A wave. There is God only in the desert, he wanted to acknowledge that now. Outside of this there was just trade and power, money and war. Financial and military despots shaped the world. (265)

Almasy believes in the desert as a place where he has the freedom to contemplate nation and religion. He gains insight and knowledge only after the struggles and challenges of



his life in the war – with its trade, power, money – and his life in the desert, which gives him some sense of belief away from his earlier skepticism.

In the context of an older Almasy's soliloquies to a younger Hana, he attains a guru-like status as he reminisces about his time in the desert. Almasy reads to Hana a passage from desert explorer Hassanein Bey's 1924 article "Through Kufra to Darfur". Bey lavishly describes a sandstorm in the desert, as though it were "*underlaid with steam-pipes... [A]s though the whole surface of the desert were rising in obedience to some upthrusting force beneath*" (146). The dynamic tropes, reinforced by Ondaatje's italicization of the entire passage, make this an unsurprising choice. In the next passage, he admires the desert as resisting any fixed human naming:

The desert could not be claimed or owned – it was a piece of cloth carried by winds, never held down by stones, and given a hundred shifting names long before Canterbury existed, long before battles and treaties quilted Europe and the East. (147-148)

Almasy is so resistant to nation because he has seen its violent effect on his friend Madox, who commits suicide after hearing a pro-war sermon: "Yes, Madox was a man who died because of nations" (257). In fact, Madox commits suicide after his return to England during the congregation when the priest gives a sermon in honour of war. Being a member of the Geographic Society, Madox obviously believes in Western nationalism with its jingoistic rhetoric of saving the world for civilization and human progress. However, like Almasy, his national identity has been erased during the desert explorations and he kills himself because he feels betrayed by Western nationalism and national identity which honour war instead of civilization. Like Madox, Almasy also

hates his own social identity on which Western nationalism is founded. He is already made up of diverse cultural influences which resist any final definition as he says: "Kip and I are both international bastards-born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere" (188). Almasi observes the artificialness and violence of mapping and geography, as practices of the nation:

On one side servants and slaves and tides of power and correspondence with the Geographical Society. On the other the first step by a white man across a great river, the first sight (by a white eye) of a mountain that has been there forever. (150-151)

Ondaatje is careful to demonstrate that the absence of nationality does not mean lack, as in the following line: "A man in a desert can hold absence in his cupped hands knowing it is something that feeds him more than water" (165). Moreover, absence can be the site for the emergence of something new and creative, a possible sensibility and affect outside nation. The following is a passage illustrating the creativity of absence:

It was as if he [Almasi] had walked under the millimeter of haze just above the inked fibres of a map, that pure zone between land and chart between distances and legend between nature and storyteller...The place they had chosen to come to, to be their best selves, to be unconscious of ancestry. Here...he was alone, his own invention. He knew during these times how the mirage worked, the fata morgana, for he was within it. (261-262)

When Almasi states that the desert is "a place of faith" (148), it can be examined how such an affirmation is made possible within the space of interstice and absence by



considering the views of negative, or apophatic, theology. The desert represents a substantiation of the gap between vehicle and tenor, between signifier and signified, a no man's land which precedes and stands outside signification and territories.

Desert becomes imperative space for the English patient, a sort of shelter as he says, "I learned everything I knew there. Everything that ever happened to me that was important happened in the desert" (189). By living in a desert, the English patient got rid of the political bond with a geographical territory and tried to redefine his commitment with the world. For the English patient, the world should be such a place where co-existence of different people, religions, cultures and languages would be made possible. His disgust with the notion of nation comes to the fore when he says: "All I desired was to work upon such an earth that had no maps" (277).

Maps serve a purpose of delimiting various geographical territories. A way of controlling a particular area is to name the land. The English patient's rejection to live without maps is his denial of the concept of borders. The English patient lost interest in his own identity as well as a nation. He wanted to cast off his identity completely. It could be gradually discovered that Almasy's erased identity after he is burned serves as a fitting emblem for his identity even before the crash when he was obsessed with the purifying space of the desert and the power it had to erase national boundaries and identities:

It was a place of faith. We disappeared into landscape. Fire and sand...Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert...I wanted to erase my name and the place I had come from. By



the time war arrived, after ten years in the desert, it was easy for me to slip across borders, not to belong to anyone, to any nation. (148)

It is a place where he and his comrades had come "to be their best selves, to be unconscious of ancestry" (262). For this post-nationalist figure, the desert comes to replace the ancestral homeland as the centering space: "Show me a desert, as you would show another man a river or another man the metropolis of his childhood" (255). The desert is the space without boundaries, nations, or cities. It is a space that resists being divided up artificially and resists being tied down by the points on a map. This is the only space in which Almasy feels comfortable, truly himself, truly at home, and so he comes to embody the striving for a new model of identity.

Almasy has a desire to return to a pure state like that of the desert in which his self is not marked by nationality, race, and other social frames which limit, label and frame him. Almásy's love for the desert reveals his wish to live in similar conditions. He states that:

We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers of wisdom, characters we have climbed into as if trees, fears we have hidden in as if caves. I wish for all this to be marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography—to be marked by nature, not just to label ourselves on a map... We are communal histories, communal books... All I desired was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps. (277)

It is a strange desire for a mapmaker to live on "an earth that had no maps" (277). The desert reduces people to their common humanity. Its cartography is the true form of labelling to Almasy, who is against the racist labelling of others.

A map is a form of order, control, and deconstruction. Almasy sees everything in the shape of maps. This could be related to his profession as a mapmaker, but it is also related to the importance of maps. He "rides the boat of morphine. It races in him, imploding time and geography the way maps compress the world onto a two-dimensional sheet of paper" (171). Even works of art do not escape being mapped. For instance, the map which shows the path Kim and the lama take in Kipling's *Kim*. This map helps Almasy control his understanding of *Kim*. Missing something of the plot does not obstruct or limit his understanding because he is "familiar with the map of the story" (100).

Maps play an important role in Kip's life. To him, they mean the difference between life and death. He makes use of them in deconstructing bombs and mines which he reduces to their skeletal shape. They represent an order without which anarchy and deluge would follow. After the death of Lord Suffolk, "[Kip] had suddenly a map of responsibility". Maps give those who have them power. Hence, Kip feels uncomfortable with his newly acquired power as he was "never interested in the choreography of power" (208). He is accustomed to being invisible and having such power means becoming visible.

The desert is used as a metaphor that represents transience. It cannot be claimed, owned or defined. Therefore, mapping it, which means ownership and possession as colonial notions, is meaningless. The desert refuses anything artificial such as borders or



names as a landscape which is changed continuously by sand storms. Hence, it is a place of freedom where national identities disappear. What Almasi criticizes is Western nationalism or rather colonial nationalism which imposes artificial borders through mapping and wars simply for money and political power. Therefore, he wants to erase all national identities, constructed by Western nationalism as stable and fixed collective identities, limited to a single, domineering nationality that is responsible for creating artificial borders that divide people.

The Italian Villa is the meeting place of the four individuals of different nationalities, where they share their past. It becomes a metaphor for a space which exists outside geographical and temporal restrictions. It is a third space protected temporarily from the war and the structures of power. This space or world shelters all the characters gathered there, who were victims of authority or the lines drawn on maps.

It is as if throughout *The English Patient*, Ondaatje has been stressing the importance of history and of place, but the importance even more of being critical of the ideologies of history and place, of learning to affirm one's personally negotiated place among such worldly circumstances. Almasi arrives at such a position after he has witnessed Katherine's death in the Cave of Swimmers. He marks her dead body using pigments from the cave's paintings, affirming the richness of life, and concludes,

I believe in such cartography – to be marked by nature, not just to label ourselves on a map like the name of rich men and women on buildings...All I desired was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps.  
(277)



Almasy affirms a cartography which is his, not one which he has uncritically adopted through the orthodoxies of nationalism and religion, but one which he has personally negotiated and come to believe in from the world, being literally marked by that world.

Ondaatje has connected the gap between signifier (map, chart, legend) and signified (land, distances, nature) with agency. Pure creativity can be born in this mirage, the ability to invent oneself as one wish, free from the control of ancestry and history. By placing such a self-affirming recollection toward the end of the novel, Ondaatje heightens its affirmative quality. Ondaatje's Almasy is a subject affirmed and empowered by knowledge of this space between signifier and signified, a subject of his own invention who can refuse and paradoxically escape from the terms represented to him (signifier/signified) by imagining himself to be within the space between those terms. Such invention becomes especially significant in contrast with the English patient whose history is unknown and unmastered. The label 'English', designating a nationality to the anonymous man, could represent a failure of invention – even colonial invention – in that it misses the mark of who Almasy knows himself to be.

The novel questions artificially erected national boundaries and associated national affiliations. The image of the desert is suggestive of displaced and eroded national identities. The desert refuses to be mapped. It denies the validity of single pattern of understanding imposed by those who create maps of the desert. The activity of creating desert maps imposes artificial boundaries and fabricated identities. The desert becomes an uncharted territory where an individual can live freely devoid of any ideology of nation, race and gender. An individual can embrace a diversity of views.

The negotiation between geography, textuality and the postcolonial rests on the novel. Geographical tools are useful in so far as they are relational and appropriated, not as simple metaphors, but rather as circulatory sites for a reading between space and representation. Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is a compelling fiction, making use of a critical selection of traces of a militant imperial geography that may nevertheless be easily effaced behind the contentious romanticizing of the imperial persona. Yet, avoiding this danger, the novel's postcolonial task comes to the fore precisely in the metaphorical appropriation of the tools of empire. Ondaatje discloses geography as an antagonistic surface defaced and refaced under a resistant, though in this novel strongly utopian, reading. Finally, the novel proposes a literary geomodernity as a concept, bringing together the multiple modernities – hegemonic and emerging, Western and non-Western, colonial and postcolonial – meeting in the postcolonial text. These multiple geographies are socially constructed and they intersect and are intersected by diverse places and temporalities that meet across the surface of the literary text.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Though colonial experience – social, cultural, economic and geographical – has been shared by colonized and colonizer, its articulation has been dominated by the latter. Post-colonial discourse has paid attention to the presentation of colonial experiences in art, literature, and historiography, because within these representations of reality colonialism found its expression as well as its justification. Post-colonialism discourse reveals that the concept of a seemingly unified reality is a European construct with a particular perspective and specific norms, thereby subverting and destroying the European claim of authority.

Some of Ondaatje's most astonishing literary effects derive from his ability to extend perception beyond its human location, although this liberation of point-of-view is not necessarily in the service of a utopian politics. Indeed, both *Billy the Kid* and *Coming Through Slaughter* have a tragic dimension: Billy lives his life on the edge of madness and Bolden dies in a lunatic asylum. The problem with the unconditional surrender to life their singular vision demands is that it dislocates them from history and leaves them no position from which to contest the field of social and political forces that speak for their experience. In the second half of Ondaatje's literary career to date – the phase that encompasses major novels such as *In the Skin of a Lion*, *The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost* – he responds to this dilemma by creating panoramic historical fictions that explore the historical determination of our experience while insisting that what the readers understand as 'history' is always also the effect of a particular perspective or ground. History, for Ondaatje, is a ground but not the limit of being. His work challenges



simultaneously to think ourselves in and out of history and, by so doing, to expand the sense of what an historical 'event' might be.

Nothing in Ondaatje's literary career to date, though, could have prepared him for the international chorus of praise that greeted the appearance of *The English Patient*, his third novel, in 1992. With this book he made the transition from a national to a world writer. Ondaatje's new celebrity status was confirmed in October of that year when *The English Patient* shared the prestigious Booker Prize with the British writer Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger*. The novel's international success was subsequently confirmed when it later received the Governor General's and the Trillium Award for fiction. Such has been the success of *The English Patient* that it at present defines Ondaatje's literary image in the eyes of the reading public. This image was consolidated four years later by the extraordinary reception given to Anthony Minghella's film adaptation of the novel, which went on to win nine Oscars at the 1997 Academy Awards.

"What is remarkable about Ondaatje's novel in artistic terms is its subtle integration of several of his most persistent themes" (Spinks 13). In the interlinked stories of four embattled survivors brought together at the Villa San Girolamo in Rome, Ondaatje presents an unforgettable image of cultural deracination and dispossession. At the same time his postmodern – or at least flagrantly intertextual – narrative style suggestively probes the nature of subjectivity, the relationship between history and memory, the effects of imperial intervention upon colonial history and the establishment and erasure of national boundaries and traditions. The last words uttered by Hana, one of *The English Patient*'s central characters, concern the desire for homecoming. She writes to her stepmother:

I am sick of Europe, Clara. I want to come home. To your small cabin and pink rock in Georgian Bay. I will take a bus up to Parry Sound. And from the mainland send a message over the shortwave radio out towards the Pancakes. And wait for you, wait to see the silhouette of you in a canoe coming to rescue me from this place we all entered, betraying you. (314)

Since the early 1990s Ondaatje's thoughts have been much preoccupied with thoughts of home and the rediscovery of his native Sri Lanka.

Throughout his career Ondaatje has steadfastly refused to envisage experience in merely ideological and political terms. His work is distinguished instead by a continuing tension between the singularity of perception and those larger narratives of modernity, decolonisation and postmodernity that shape so much of contemporary history. Much of the best of Ondaatje's writing is driven by his desire to step back from our everyday or represented world and to think the differences from which it is composed. At the same time, his commitment to provide a voice for those individuals and groups, marginalised and displaced by cultural modernity demands substantial engagement with some of the defining events of the present era.

The word 'patient' in the title, *The English Patient* suggests, right from the very beginning, the image of the suffering, sick body of the main character; the patient is a burned pilot. Because of the injuries to his body, he cannot be identified and, therefore, he is taken to be an 'English patient'. This mistaken national identification is connected to the impossibility of identifying his body. His burned body is a physical presence similar to a corpse, because it lacks almost all the vital corporeal functions. He and his



body seem to 'exist' only thanks to his memories, which are transcribed in the novel and, thus, elusively voiced.

The characteristic features of Ondaatje's narrative are slippages, ruptures, discontinuities, retelling, and retracing as the writer composes in a postmodern style and pays close attention to language and narrative structure. *The English Patient* is a postcolonial novel written by Ondaatje in a postmodernist style. The central themes are supported by a number of intertextual references and allusions. The themes such as religion, relationship, identity and history were interpreted based on the intertextual references. The character constructions within the narrative are influenced by these allusions and provide the background and clarity to each character. The various print, visual and audio texts alluded to in *The English Patient* shape its reading and support its narrative structure, core ideas, themes and issues. The novel is full of technical details drawn from non literary texts projecting a war time atmosphere. The author draws from the remnants of the past, like the ruins and paintings over books and reinscribes them with personal memories within various contexts. In its refusal to offer a coherent, unified picture of the past, the novel silently remembers the past's various possible versions by inscribing them structurally into its intricate narrative fabric. Precisely the undecidability of meaning the novel thus yields guarantees the remembrance of the past in all its unique, often contradictory facets and complexity. An undecidability of this kind in fact distinguishes the text's oral qualities from the fragmentation and indeterminacy largely characterizing so-called post modern writing; far from calling meaning as such into question, it invites a creative, at times sensual engagement with past events and



circumstances. The minor characters and sub-plots are also well-developed and integrated into main storylines.

With the advent of post-colonial discourse, hybridity becomes a pivotal concern. A cluster of postcolonial theorists, like Homi Bhabha, downplay oppositionality and call for an increasing intercultural dialogue and mutuality. They stress the interdependence of the colonizer and the colonized, preferring hybridity to a monolithic, exclusive culture. Indeed, the binary opposition Self/Other seems to collapse in the post-colonial context with the existence of a hybrid culture or a liminal space, which is likely to reduce cultural and racial sensitivity. Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient* raises fundamental issues of wars, nations and boundaries. It envisages a world, in which different cultures become intermingled, interdependent and hybrid. The novel suggests the possibility of a liminal world, which crosses borders, a Third space that might fuse people of different races and nationalities, a world in which people forget their narcissistic origin. Resisting the Eurocentric vision of the world, the novel attempts to transcend and tergiversate the traditional manichean thinking, which often leads to wars, oppression and cultural conflicts. It calls for a reassessment of the traditional relationship between the Self and the Other.

Blurring of boundaries, in the novel, is crystal clear from the characters' relationship with each other. They are all victims of a ravaging war pursued for nationalistic ends, a war which had a great influence on their psychological make-up. This is the reason why these characters attempt to forget/flee from their original identities and start to reconstruct their new ones. Because their suffering tangled with problems of nations, characters wanted to escape from the seamy side of existence, which is defined

and marked by maps and borders. Thus, to step beyond the existing borders of nations becomes a pressing quest for all the characters. The major characters, the English patient, Hana, Caravaggio and Kip are representative of a liminal space or a hybrid space, which aspires to remove or destroy the traditional Manichean myth. Hybridity is used in post-colonial theory to refer to intercultural space, space of in-betweenness.

It implies a direct contact between Self and Other or their fusion in a single, mixed and impure culture. Hence, hybridity is likely to reduce the sharp dualistic or Manichean thinking and break the rigidly established barriers between the colonizer and the colonized. It is a daring attempt to find a common space where cultures meet.

The identity of the English patient is a glaring example of hybridity in the novel. After a plane crash, the English patient's skin, which evinces his race and clarifies his identity, is burnt. In addition to his skin, which is burnt, the English patient loses or pretends to lose his memory. His burnt skin symbolizes the effacement of his identity because the colour of his complexion is likely to evince his race. The English patient's and Katherine's torrid love affair, which is intermingled with the events of the story, is the best metaphor for international relations and alliances. Katherine is British, whereas the English patient, who is thought to be the German spy Almasy by Caravaggio, is Hungarian. This love story, which doomed to end tragically due to the impeding national barriers, makes Almasy a staunch opponent of borders and boundaries.

Very much like the English patient, nations become a nightmare from which Kip is trying to awaken. Kip's dream and aspiration is to be totally submerged in the English culture. He goes to Europe and joins the English army. He tries to belong and to adopt. His attempt, to integrate into the British culture, is evinced in his attempt to follow the



Western traditions slavishly. Kip's crossing of borders is also highlighted by his relationship with the English patient and a Canadian nurse called Hana. Before joining the characters in an Italian villa, Kip was buffeted by the extreme pangs of loneliness and solitude. This solitariness, loss and separation, which dominated his life, are on account of his race, which is deemed inferior and marginal. Hana, Kip and the English patient develop a relationship where the gulf of nations vanishes. Similar to the English patient and Kip, Hana's ordeal seems to stem from the problem of national borders. As a nurse, she is a selfless and passionate woman, who wants to save the severely injured English patient. Hana's love for Kip betrays the distance between Self and Other, because Kip is an Indian non-white man, while Hana is a white Canadian woman. Because national borders are responsible for her deplorable state, Hana ignores the constrictions of nationhood and race, and she developed an intimate relationship with him. She even adores and admires the brownness of his skin and his dark hair, which she views as colours in the spectrum of the complete human race. Their romantic relationship is symbolic of cross-cultural contact and interaction. It vindicates the possibility of a Third Space despite cultural differences and divergences. It shows the fusion and diffusion of Self and Other.

Like the other characters, Caravaggio's heart is so burdened with the preoccupations of national boundaries. The latter lead to his physical maiming and left him psychologically tortured. Caravaggio is a Canadian, who was a thief, and later, he turned to be a spy in the war. But what he steals is not properties but rather identities. He was very skilful in creating and constructing identities. Like Hana, Caravaggio's interpretation of the English patient's identity is personal and self-reflective. His version



of the English patient's identity befits one of his spy dramas. Giving him the identity of Almsay enables him to release his pent up emotions and to heal his psychic wounds. His crossing of boundaries is further highlighted by his fatherly relationship with Hana whose father dies in the war.

The quest of all the major characters, who belong to different national identities, is to reconstruct their identities. In pursuit of this aim, they rely on and interact with each other. This implies that the Self is defined and constructed in relation to an Other. Borders are fluid and cultures are dependent and not self-sufficient. The theme of crossing borders is also conveyed through images and symbols. The desert and the villa, San Girolamo, are richly symbolic and metaphorical. The desert, which is the most predominating image, represents a liminal space for the English patient, who dreams of no limitations and no national constraints. This is a direct call for a collective identity, which is not tied to a single family name or to any culture. This fervid desire for hybridity is fulfilled in the desert. The desert prompts Almsay to imagine a world without divisions and alignments. It is a borderless place where people of different racial, ethnic and national origins meet, unite and befriend each other.

Similar to the desert, the Italian villa San Girolamo is imbued with symbolic meanings. Characters come to the villa to seek out a familiar bond that is severed by national borders. In this shared place, they form a community, which was not mapped by national and racial boundaries. Though characters in the novel have deconstructed the binary opposition Self/Other, the explosion of the two atomic bombs reestablishes this boundary, which seems to be invincible. The community, which is formed and celebrated in the villa, is sadly shattered by the explosion of the two bombs. This event shakes the

relationship of the characters, who are bound together by love and boundary-lessness. However, this act of blatant racism does not deny the possibility of a hybrid or liminal space. It rather awakens the characters to the fact that national and racial boundaries cannot be totally blurred or transgressed, because Western aggression is an ever-present reality.

Despite the departure of the inhabitants of the hybrid world, the novel ends with connection rather than with rupture. The ending of the novel is hopeful. It shows the possibility of transcending physical, political and geographical boundaries. It suggests a liminal/Third space, which is not physical but rather intellectual and psychological. The novel reveals the possibility of a liminal space where substantial and fruitful intercultural and international relationships can be forged in a world which is characterized by difference and Otherness. Hence, the myth of a pure race or culture should be deconstructed. *The English patient* suggests the possibility of the mixedness, interaction or interconnectedness of cultures, the possibility of a Third space, which is likely to reduce or to prevent the detrimental effects of borders. The four characters are metonymies of peaceful coexistence of divergent cultures.

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**Psychic Struggle: A Feminist Study of Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Psychic Struggle: A Feminist Study of Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

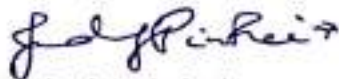
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STELLA L.

OCTOBER 2018

## CERTIFICATE

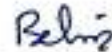
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Dr. A. Judy Pinheiro

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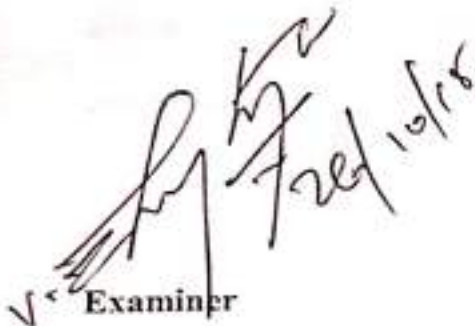
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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Psychic Struggle: A Feminist Study of Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*** gives a detailed analysis about the patriarchal problems faced by the protagonist Grace Marks and her mentality in overcoming her alter ego. It also gives some hidden truth regarding a historic incident and focuses on her break through from the snares embedded by the society.

The first chapter gives a short biography of Margaret Atwood discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant position in Canadian Literature.

The second chapter reveals how patriarchy oppresses Grace and how she struggles within various concepts of society. Atwood finds this patriarchal ideology in both family and society and shows the unequal power division between men and women.

The third chapter highlights the class, gender and sex and it explores how the construction of masculinity and femininity is deeply intertwined with differences in power between working class, middle and upper class people.

The fourth chapter explores the rhetorical strategies related to the protagonist's fictive autobiography. Atwood redefines the narrator's seminal acts and her storytelling ability by using patchwork.

The fifth chapter sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind (Atwood18). Canadian literature is relatively new. The word, Canada is derived from two Spanish words 'aca' and 'nada', which means 'nothing here'. The idea of nothingness is reflected in the name of the country itself. Despite such an absence, Canada has a bewildering variety of literatures.

Although Canadian writing began as an imitative colonial literature, it has steadily developed its own national characteristics. History reveals that Canada had absorbed a large number of immigrants. It has had to overcome the oppressive psyche of being dominated by the American and British literary tradition. Canadian writing is stimulated by a renaissance of interest in literature and culture. Canadian literature enjoys an international presence today, as a whole it developed slowly. It began in 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Canada is one nation and one state though it has two 'home cultures'; French and British. Canadian literature is divided into two main parts. It is like a tree with two great roots. One is deeply rooted in the culture of France. The other is rooted in the tradition of England. However, collectively this literature has become distinctly Canadian.

Canada's literature, whether written in English or French often reflects the Canadian perspective on nature, frontier's life and Canada's position in the world, which tie into the garrison mentality. Canada's ethnic and cultural diversity are reflected, with many of its most prominent writers. The two early important men novelists of Canada are Morley Callaghan in English and Gabrielle Roy in French. Failure is one of the themes in Canadian literature. Callaghan's significant novels are *Strange Fugitive* (1928), *A*

*Passion in Rome* (1961), and *The Enchanted Pimp* (1978). He gives expression to urban problems. Hugh MacLennan is another novelist who is aware of the real problems facing Canadians. He urges the people to face the problem of a divided culture realistically. His great novels are *Two Solitudes* (1945), *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959), and *Voices in Time* (1983). MacLennan and Callaghan are considered as the founding fathers of Canadian fiction.

Canada has gained a great significance in literary field among the common wealth countries. Michael Ondaatje is the first Canadian who won the Booker Prize for his literary work, *The English Patient* in 1992. Carol shield's *The Stone Diaries* has won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1995. Margaret Atwood has been awarded the Booker Prize for her creative novel, *The Blind Assassin* in 2000.

Some Canadian novels revolve around the theme of the search for self identity and need to justify one's existence. The most common hero of Canadian Literature is an ordinary person who must overcome challenges from a large corporation, a bank, a rich tycoon, a government, a natural disaster and so on. Another variant theme involves a conflict between urban and rural culture, usually portraying the rural character as morally superior. Canadian Literature has focused on nationalistic and regional themes. Canadian Literature is sociologically oriented. Canadian Literature is the literature of every nation, is influenced by its socio-political context. Canadian writers produced all variety of genres. Influence on Canadian writers is broad, both geographically and historically.

Though the Canadian novel began to take off during 1950s with Mavis Gallant, Robertson Davis, Mordecai Richler, Watson, it took an altogether new turn in the 1960's with the appearance of women novelists who tend to write more as women than as



patriots. A close study of their novels reveals their focus is so much on, the inner world of feelings and sensibility. Their works were mostly based on the sufferings and experience of women in Canada. Some of the great women writers were Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Gibson, Susan Musgrave, Marian Engel, Mavis Gallant and Boverley Simons are some of the outstanding ones. While Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood represent the new voices.

Alice Munro is a short-story writer. Her stories create interesting situations and then deliver surprises and make artistic leaps that feel exactly right. Main themes used in her works are woman's search for self-understanding and personal fulfillment. Her first collection of stories, *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1960) won Governor General's Award. In her writings Munro is concerned with human experiences and the record of cultural dimensions of female sexuality.

Margaret Laurence immortalized the Manawaka world in her fiction. She made extensive travel to Africa and her experience from the fabric of her fiction. She is best known for her novels, *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (1966), and *The Diviners* (1970). The Canadian writers move steadily towards the landscape. They also portray the journeys, which take place in the geophysical or cultural context. After the Second World War, the Canadian women writers begin to assert the authenticity of the feminine sensibility. They also evolve a feminine discourse that is opposed to patriarchal discourse.

Margaret Atwood is the first major novelist of Canada who attempts to focus on new woman and self-aware, independent, seeking to evolve an identity of her own. Margaret Atwood in her writing systematically thematizes the personal quest for

fulfillment as inextricably involved in a communal quest for cultural identity. As Atwood says, "Woman cannot be ignored in Canadian literature. You can't ignore them" (Salat 62).

Margaret Eleanor Peggy Atwood was born on November 18, 1939, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. She is a prolific, controversial and innovative writer. Atwood has emerged as one of the most eminent contemporary figures in Canadian Literature. She is a Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, inventor and environmental activist, a prominent figure in national and international cultural politics. She is the first major novelist of Canada who attempts to focus in her writing who systematically schematizes the personal quest for identity, fulfillment and freedom. Atwood's major literary output has come out in the 1970's. The London Review of Books has acclaimed her as "the most distinguished novelist... currently writing in English" (20).

Margaret Atwood was born as the second of three children. Her father Carl Edmund Atwood was a forest etymologist and Margaret Dorothy a former dietitian from Woodville, Nova Scotia. Atwood spent her early years in the backwoods of northern Quebec, where her father undertook research. She did not attend school full-time until she was eight years old. She had a great interest in reading. The childhood experience with her father in the forest laid the foundation for her career. Atwood began writing plays and poems at the age of six. She started writing poems. Morality plays, comic books and an unfinished novel about an Ant. She wrote a metaphorical use of the wilderness and its animals as in *Wilderness Tips* (1991).

Margaret Atwood graduated from Leaside High School in 1959 and studied at the University of Toronto. She won a Woodrow Wilson fellowship, and became a graduate

student at Radcliffe College, Cambridge Massachusetts, receiving her M.A in 1962. She has held a variety of academic posts and has been writer-in-residence of numerous Canadian and American Universities. She has published seventeen books of poetry, sixteen novels, ten books of non-fiction, eight collections of short fiction, eight children's book and one graphic novel, as well as a number of small press editions in poetry and fiction.

As a young girl, Atwood was subjected to one important lesson of the time that the society expected women to opt between career and family. Atwood ignored it and refused to play the role of stereotype housewife. She was inspired by her mother who also rejected such traditional roles assigned to a woman. Atwood shows her disregard for gender roles. Her mother taught a very important lesson to Margaret that to survive a woman must have a tough neck. Atwood took this lesson to heart throughout her life. She acknowledges the encouragement she got from her mother.

Atwood also read Sartre, Beckett and British literature with Shakespeare, Eliot, Austen, Thomas Hardy, Keats, Wordsworth, Shelly and Byron. It was at Harvard that Atwood first began to think about Canada. She was not only influenced by Northrop Frye and Jay Macpherson but also by her predecessors like A.J.M. Smith, Dorothy Livesay.

In 1968, Atwood married Jim Polk; they were divorced in 1973. She formed a relationship with fellow novelist Graeme Gibson soon after and moved to a farm near Alliston, Ontario, north of Toronto, where their daughter Eleanor Jess Atwood was born in 1976. The family returned to Toronto in 1980. Atwood is a noted humanist, and in 1987, she was named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association.



She taught at the University of British Columbia in 1965, Sir George Williams University in Montreal from 1967 to 1968, the University of Alberta from 1969 to 1970, York University in Toronto from 1971 to 1972, the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa in 1985, where she was visiting M.F.A. Chair and New York University where she was Berg Professor of English.

Atwood, who was surrounded by the intellectual dialogue of the female faculty members at Victoria College, often portrays female characters dominated by patriarchy in her novels. She also sheds light on women's social oppression as a result from patriarchal ideology. Atwood believes that the feminist label can only be applied to writers who consciously work within the framework of the feminist movement.

In March 2008, Atwood accepted her first chamber opera commission *Pauline*, a chamber opera in two acts composed by Tobin Stokes to a libretto by Atwood premiered on May 23, 2014 at Vancouver's York Theatre. Commissioned by City Opera of Vancouver, the opera is set in Vancouver in March 1913 during the final days of the life of Canadian writer and performer Pauline Johnson.

Margaret Atwood is one of the most prominent figures on the present day Canadian literary scene. She is a writer with diverse interests and attracts more attention as a gifted poet. She is both a satirist and a prophet. She is the first notable women novelist of Canada.

Atwood's close attention with people and relationships in a particular, historical and social location gives her novels the image of traditional realistic fiction. She presents a futuristic vision. Atwood challenges the conventions of realism, while working within

them, for she never pretends that words and stories offer an unproblematic access into the real world.

Atwood has proved herself as a feminist writer, for her incisive commentaries on sex roles, a religious writer, for her visions of spiritual ecstasy a gothic writer, for her images of grotesque misfits and surreal disorientation of the psyche, a writer of Canadian Wilderness; a nationalist writer and a religionist. She mostly writes about women from the female perspective. She often focuses on Canadian identity and the relationship between Canada and America.

Atwood's work encompasses a variety of themes including the power of language, gender and identity, religion and myth, climate change, and power politics. Many of her poems are inspired by myths and fairy tales which interested her from a very early age. Atwood's novels are characterized by their refusal to invoke any final authority as their open-ending resist conclusiveness, offering instead hesitation, absence or silence while hovering on the verge of new possibilities.

The two major elements of Atwood's works are Canadian's and her feminism. A Canadian by birth and upbringing, Atwood has done much through her writing, to make Canadian culture visible outside her country. Though several of her novels are set in the United States, the Caribbean, and in Europe, yet, her fiction is based on a strong sense of local identity.

As a writer Atwood made her debut with *Double Persephone* (1961), a collection of poem, at the age of nineteen. It was published as a pamphlet by Haws head Press. *The Circle Game* (1966) was published and won the Governor General's Award for poetry. In this poetry collection, she examined the ways by which people 'invent convenient

versions' of them, using stereotypes and conventions of the language and "belief" to exclude from their considerations whatever is uncertain, unknown or threatening.

In *Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970) she evokes Canadian history. In *Power Politics* (1973) and *You Are Happy* (1974) she considers women's lives as submissive territories colonized by men. *Two Headed Poems* (1978) explores the duplicity of language. In *True Stories* (1981) she portrays women as victims. She has also written many children's books. Atwood's contributions to the Canadian identity have gathered attention both in Canada and around the world.

Atwood's works reflect a profound respect for the nature around. Atwood's love of nature and its wilderness is quite obviously rooted in her childhood. Atwood also worked each summer as a camp counselor during her early university years and that experience linked her respect for the natural world with a growing social conscience. As a child she travelled in bush. As an adult she continued to take part in treks which inspired and made her as a bold woman.

Atwood's contributions to the theorizing of Canadian identity had attention both in Canada and internationally. Her principal work of literary criticism, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, is considered outdated in Canada but remains the standard introduction to Canadian literature in Canadian studies programs internationally. Atwood's contribution to the theorizing of Canada is not limited to her non-fiction works. Several of her works, including *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, *Alias Grace*, *The Blind Assassin* and *Surfacing*, are examples of what postmodern literary theorist Linda Hutcheon calls it as "Historiographic metafiction" (138).



The writer took her career as a novelist with her first novel *The Edible Woman* (1969) which is also known as the maiden novel. It is the story about a woman who starts to slip out of the world. Marian is the protagonist of the novel who gets engaged after her engagement she feels her body and herself are becoming separated. In a foreword written in 1979 for the Virgo edition of the novel, Atwood described it as a proto feminist rather than a feminist work. This novel's publication made a rise in the women's movement in America.

Atwood's later novel *Surfacing* (1972) is a slighter work, multilayered and self-deluded young woman narrator. In which the technology nature conflict is cast in political terms. It shows the face of Atwood's strong nationalist and feminist ideologies. In her other novels the protagonist goes away from their native in search of but in *Surfacing* the protagonist undergoes transformation through contact with native and Quebec cultures before reintegrating into society. *Surfacing* ends with a deep involvement of its heroine in environment and showing up her feminist and daughterly identity. According to Rigney, "The protagonist sees the heron as a symbol of her own psychological death" (100). In the beginning of the novel Anna, the protagonist seems to be very powerful. She is no more the same person at the end. She realizes the pain and truth of her life that she can no more be a victim.

The third novel *Lady Oracle* (1976) parodies Gothic romances and fairy tales. Atwood as a feminist uses parody to deconstruct male discursive form of writing. It won the 1977 City of Toronto Book Award and a Canadian Booksellers Award. The protagonist, Joan Foster, is a romance novelist who has spent her life running away from

difficult situations. With the help of past and present she fakes her own death and then flees to Italy.

*Life Before Man* (1979) is her most domestic novel with its triangular plot. This novel has brought international recognition for Atwood. *Bodily Harm* (1981) focuses on the contrast between affluent thinking and the brutal reality of power and sexual politics.

*Bodily Harm* (1981) focuses on the contrast between affluent thinking and the brutal reality of power and sexual politics.

*The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) received the Governor General's Award, the Los Angeles Times Prize, and short-listed for the Booker Prize. It is a dystopian novel, a tale of bleak future portraying a time where women are prized only for their reproductive gift. Although the novel is shocking, there are moments of lyrical comfort and wit.

*Cat's Eye* (1988) focuses on the issue of women through art, for the first time in history. It exposes male prejudices against women's creativity and talent and shows how art can be used as a weapon against tyranny in all its manifestations. It is a haunting book of Atwood. It has huge demands on one's empathy, compassion and patience for the main character. It is about a painter, who explores her childhood memories. In *Cat's Eye* and in her other works she forgoes specific political or moral ideologies, concentrating instead of the emotional and psychological complexities that confront individuals in conflict with society.

*The Robber Bride* (1993) is a feminist thought provoking novel. It examined Toronto lifestyle and woman's friendships. *Alias Grace* (1996) used a genuine 19<sup>th</sup> century criminal case. It is also Atwood's most sophisticated articulation of her longstanding philosophical and political concerns with power, culture and identity. The

book was nominated for the Booker Prize and short-listed for the Governor General Award.

*The Blind Assassin* (2000) is a meta-fictional fairy tale. The novel earned Atwood the Booker Prize. The novel *Oryx and Crake* published in 2003 is a vision of mankind's uncompromisingly bleak future.

With her novel *Scribbler Moon* (2015), Atwood is the first contributor to the Future Library project. The book will be held by the project until its eventual publishing in 2014. She thinks that readers will probably need a paleo-anthropologist to translate some parts of her story.

In her novels, Atwood has chosen to examine gender-based violence, which explores women's painful realities, their sufferings and endurance of life's perversities. She questions and challenges the concept of gender because women's status in patriarchal society is ingrained as victims. She wants to protect the basic human rights of women through her fiction. In her fiction she explores various forms of gender victimization of women in the name of tradition, modernity, technology, and marriage. Her protagonists learn lessons from their lives and take truer control of their images of self and their future directions. They come to realize that women themselves have got to have faith in their own powers.

*Alias Grace*, Atwood's ninth novel, published in 1996 is a historical fiction. First published in McClelland & Steward, it won the Canadian Giller Prize and was shortlisted for Booker Prize. *Alias Grace* represents Atwood's fascination with the tale after reading the author Susanna Moodie's account of murder in the 1853 book, *Life in the clearings Versus the Bush*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century account of pioneer life, an English emigrant to Canada. A



chapter of the book is devoted to the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto. Atwood has been intrigued by the story ever since. In 1970, she published *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, a cycle of poems informed by the published works of Moodie. It became a classic Canadian literature, as it lyrically evokes the experience of life in the wilderness, immigrant life, and colonial times. Subsequently, she penned a play called *The Servant Girl* and based on Susanna Moodie's version of the Grace Marks first. However, in *Alias Grace*, Atwood says that she has changed her opinion of Marks, having read more widely and discovered that Moodie has fabricated parts of her third-hand account of the famous murders. The play was filmed for CBC-TV and released in 1974, 22 years before *Alias Grace* was published. Atwood spoke to CBC twice about the novel in 1996 on the TV program *Midday* and the CBC Radio program *Morningside*. In 2012, Sarah Polley announced that she would be adapting *Alias Grace* into a feature film. This has since evolved into a television miniseries which aired on CBC Television in Canada in October and November 2017, and stream globally on Netflix. In 2016, Ball State University premiered a stage version written by Jennifer Blackmer. The same adaptation was then produced by Rivendell Theater Ensemble in Chicago, IL, directed by Karen Kessler.

*Alias Grace* is based on the real-life double murder. Grace Marks was a Canadian maid who, in 1843, when only 16, was convicted with fellow servant James McDermott of murdering their master, Thomas Kinnear, and his housekeeper-lover Nancy Montgomery. Kinnear had been shot in the left side of his chest. Nancy Montgomery was struck in the head with an axe and then strangled. A post mortem revealed that she had been pregnant. McDermott was hanged, and Grace Marks had her sentence commuted and ended upon the Kingston penitentiary. No one knows for sure whether or

to what degree Grace Marks was involved in the murders, *Alias Grace* gives a chance to decide whether the "celebrated murderess" was guilty or not.

In *Alias Grace* Atwood re-creates the historical character Grace Marks. Dr. Simon Jordan an American doctor interested in the mind and desirous of opening his own lunatic asylum, he is fascinated with Grace's case and moves to Kingston to study her. Atwood uses Grace's fictional relationship with Dr. Jordan as a vehicle for retelling the story. Scenes from Grace's life during her time in prison, particularly her meeting with Dr. Jordan, frame the story of her previous life. The story has two narrators: Grace, who tells her own story to Dr. Jordan, and the third-person narrator who gives the reader the account of Simon Jordan's life in Kingston.

Grace's past unravels slowly throughout the novel. One of the nine children, Grace was born in Ireland and travelled with her family to Canada in the hope of a future for her ne'er-do-well father. Her mother died during the journey. Grace was the eldest of the six children to go to Canada, and her father expected her to find work to help support the family. She did find work as a domestic, but she never returned home. As she moved around to improve her employment, she met Nancy Montgomery and ended up in Richmond Hill, the estate of Thomas Kinnear; however, she worked for Kinnear for little more than a fortnight. In this place she was convicted, along with McDermott. This murder was proven to be done by a man, but before he was hung, he told the public that he actually did the murder because the girl had offered to give him sexual pleasure in return. Although the girl had not proven guilty but all the attendances simply condemned her as real murderess and this assumption appeared because the society believed that



naturally woman was the source of evil. Such gender inequality became the issue of the feminist movement at that time.

Feminist analysis starts from the point women's oppression evolves from patriarchy. Atwood has not overestimating the problems of women but holds a mirror to actual social status of women in patriarchal society through her female characters who are true to life. She has described the portraits of realistic protagonists. As a writer of realistic fiction, Atwood cannot claim for her character's greater autonomy than actual woman can reasonably claim.

Margaret Atwood's novel is often organized thematically around images of both cultural and individual issues of survival, as she has sought to portray the entrapment of women in patriarchy, and of men and women in suffocating social cultural imprisonment.

She demands demolition of gender system and hopes for a new world in which men and women are equal at every level of existence.

What exactly patriarchy means is difficult to define. Patriarchy can be defined as a society's system that places male's values and ideas to dominate women. Women have to suffer gender stereotype and unequal treatment as labor and wife. Grace has to experience these things and she cannot do anything to overcome them. In Grace's case the oppression is obviously seen when she is life-sentenced without being tried to defend herself. She has lost her youth and become the victim of patriarchy. Therefore, in this modern era this patriarchal ideology still governs in most of social life although women now more or less get the same privilege as man. In some ways, it shows the position of women as subordinates to man. Judging from these kinds of situation it begins to feel curious in discussing patriarchal ideology and its impact towards women in general.



## Chapter Two

### Patriarchal Oppression

Patriarchy is a prime obstacle to women's advancement and development. Patriarchal society gives absolute priority to men and to some extent limits women's human rights also. Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres. In this way feminist use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the power relationship between men and women. The word patriarchy which is frequently used by feminists and writers literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch' in a family where the eldest male is the head of the family and controls his wife, children, other members of the family and slaves. It is a system of social structure and practices in which men selfishly dominate and exploit women to their own satisfaction.

Patriarchy is a form of community in which the father or men holds the supreme authority over women in all cultural domains such as religious, familial, political, economic, and social. Like every other concepts, society recognises patriarchy as it is exercised in all institutions of life. In the novel *Alias Grace* Atwood traces the patriarchal domination through Grace's family life where her father holds the authority of the family and later in her work place and also in the prison. Atwood shows how Grace struggles under the subjugation of male oppression.

The first oppression that Grace perceives is the cruelty that her mother experienced from her father. In her childhood she is indirectly affected by her father. She observes how her mother is after beaten abusively by her father. "when my Aunt Pauline came to visit, my mother would whisper to her, and show the bruises on her arms, and cry and say He was not always this way" (125). The way her mother talks to her aunt

somehow represents the condition of women at that time. She cannot fight back her husband's violence.

Grace also hears her father always blaming her mother for having too many children.

Our father by this time was fed up with it. He would say, What are you bringing another brat into this world for, haven't you had enough to that by now, but no you can't stop, another mouth to feed, as if he himself had nothing to do with it at all. When I was quite young, six or seven, I put my hand on my mother's belly, which was all round and tight, and I said What is in there, another mouth to feed, and my mother smiles sadly and said Yes I fear so, and I has picture of an enormous mouth, . . . eating away at my mother from the inside and I began to cry because I thought it would kill her. (123)

Grace expresses her genuine feeling that all her brothers and sisters are rejected by her father. So she thinks that by killing some of them she can reduce her father's burden. She knows that she must not have such kind of thoughts. Even though, she pleases her father to show her affection as she says:

I will confess to having a wicked thought, when I had all young ones all lined up on the dock, . . . I thought, I might just push one or two of them over, and then there would not be so many to feed, nor so many cloths to wash. But it was only a thought, put into my head by the Devil, no doubt. Or more likely by my father, for at that age I was still trying to please him. (124)

After her mother's cruel death Grace is thrown to please her father by working outside home to support her family needs. She earns money for the family and she also does the house hold job for the sake of her sisters, brothers and her father as well. When her father asks her to work she was only twelve years old.

My father had the idea that I would go back and forth between the two houses, and sleep at home, which was what he called our two rickety rooms, and continue to get up first thing every morning and light the brute of a stove, and boil the kettle, and tidy up at the end of the day and wash the laundry into the bargain. (148-49)

Here she does household works in her home and also works as a servant in Mrs. Alderman Parkinson's house. His father does not care about her pain. Moreover when Grace receives her first salary, her father demands her to give all her wages. He thinks that he has the right to do anything.

The older I became, the less I was able to please him, and I myself had lost all of a child's natural faith in a parent, as he was drinking up the bread out of his own children's mouths, and soon he would force us to begging or thieving, or worse. Also his rages had returned, stronger than before my mother died. Already my arms were black and blue, and then one night he threw me against the wall, as he'd sometimes done with my mother, shouting that I was slut and whore, and I fainted; and after that I feared that he might someday break my spine, and make a cripple out of me. (149)



Grace's father exactly practices the patriarchal ideology. In other words, Grace is her father's property so he can force her to beg or steal something, which according to her father is not wrong. Besides, now she is physically and mentally abused by her father. As a little girl, she faces the intimidation of her father, calling her as a slut and a whore; she is thrown against the wall until she faints. This incident traumatizes her that, "she is tired at the end of each day; she would die awake at night brooding over it" (149).

Her father's reaction indicates his domination and he extends his authority over his children. As a result, Grace is so afraid of her father that she cannot stop thinking about it even at midnight. It is as if she is haunted by her father's image, she starts to hate her father. This hatred later triggers Grace to achieve her freedom from her father's oppression.

Being oppressed by her father, Grace feels very happy to go out from home to work in some other place as she says,

So as I made ready to go to Mrs. Alderman Parkinson's, I thanked God for taking me out of the path of temptation, and prayed that he would keep me out of it in the times ahead. Mrs. Burt kissed me goodbye, and wished me well, because in this world you have to take your bits and ends of kindness. (150)

She is even happy to work as a servant in Mr. Haraghy's house, But as a servant Grace is put into many difficulties, which mainly comes from her master.

That went on well enough for a time, but I began to be uneasy, as Mr. Haraghy attempted liberties in the back passage while I was carrying out the dishes from the dining room; and although I remember Mary's advise

about kicking between the legs, I thought it would not be right to kick my employer, and also might lead to dismissal without a reference. But then one night I heard him outside the door of my attic chamber; I recognized his wheezy cough. He was fumbling with the latch of the door. I always locked myself in at night, but I knew that lock or no lock, sooner or later he would find a way of getting in, with a ladder if nothing else, and I couldn't sleep easy for thinking of it; and I needed my sleep, as I was very tired from the day's work. (231)

Women are more harassed by men who have greater power. Here as the master of the house Mr. Haraghy harasses Grace because, "he was one of the masters who think you owe them service twenty- four hours a day, and should do the main work flat on your back" (231). Mr. Haraghy assumes Grace as his property, for the fact that he gives her salary he thinks that Grace would be submissive to him as a reward for her salary.

This threatening condition in her work place causes her to suffer from insomnia, as seen from the way she could not sleep easy due to thinking of Mr. Haraghy's behavior. Grace also faces the dilemma of being condemned by the society if they found out Mr. Haraghy in her bed chamber. "And once you are found with a man in your room you are the guilty one, no matter how they get in" (231). Then she will lose her job and worse still, she will not find a job in another house since she has no good reputation. So Grace immediately decides to shift to Mr. Thomas Kinnear's house. Here Grace finds herself being oppressed by her senior co-worker James McDermott. Ever since Grace Step into Mr. Kinnear's house, McDermott tries to find a way to approach her, yet Grace ignores him because he is not a type of man that Grace wants. On the other hand, McDermott



does not give up to Grace's rejection. He shows his dominance in order to oppress Grace sexually. "But McDermott had turned this around to mean what I never intended, and now he wished to hold me to bargain. . . . I burst into tears, and I said, No" (384-385).

Similar to Mr. Haraghy, McDermott sexually assaults Grace because of her status as being single and beautiful. And also as a man he thinks he has power over Grace. Meanwhile, Grace has no power at that time as a servant.

As time goes, McDermott and Grace murders Mr. Kinnear and Nancy. After she is sentenced as guilty, she is sent to prison. The prison also happens to be a place where men can show their dominance over woman. Grace's attending doctor during her stay at the Toronto asylum. Dr. Bannerling sexually abuses Grace; she calls him as a "devious dissembler".

Nobody comes. I'm being left to reflect on my sins and misdemeanors, and one does that best in solitude, I've been shut up alone before. Incorrigible, said Dr. Bannerling, a devious dissembler. Remain quiet, I am here to examine your cerebral configuration, and first I shall measure your heartbeat and respiration, but I knew what he was up to. Take your hand off my tit, you filthy bastard, Mary Whitney would have said, but all I could say was oh no, oh no, and no way to twist and turn, not how they'd fixed me, trussed up to the chair with the sleeves crossed over in front and tied behind; so nothing to do but sink my teeth into his fingers. (37-38)

Dr. Bannerling exploits his authority to assault Grace sexually. He hides behind the mask of a professional doctor to take advantage in dealing with Grace's examination. The quotation explicitly shows an attempt of sexual harassment toward Grace by the



doctor after checking her cerebral configuration; he starts to lay a hand on Grace. Dr. Bennerling sees Grace as a powerless woman and it is a chance for him to exploit her sexually because she has no one to save her by the time.

Moreover, Grace also experiences sexual harassment from her prison guards. In prison Grace is oppressed, sexually harassed and deprived from any woman's right. These prison guards abuse their power by annoying and undervaluing her more or less as a 'female demon'.

You're no friends of mine, I say, with your filthy talk, you were born in the gutter and you'll die in it too. Oh ho, says the one, that's what I like, a little high spirits in a woman, . . . you know why God made women with skirts, it's so they can be pulled up over their heads and tied at the top, that way you don't get so much noise out of them, I hate a screeching slut, women should be born without mouths on them, the only thing of use in them is below the waist. Shame on you, says I, . . . your own mother was a women at least I suppose she was. (278-279)

The patriarchal oppression on women is clearly seen here, when women are considered as men's sexual object and worse still, as only reproductive machines. Grace undergoes patriarchal oppression at home, work place and prison, which indicates that men abuse their power and underestimate women so much. Grace is seen simply as men's property or a sexual object in the society. She is seen deprived from all her rights, treated badly, and abused sexually both at home and in society.

### Chapter Three

#### Parameters of Judgement

The novel *Alias Grace* is based on the real story of a woman named Grace Marks who was convicted of murder of her employer Thomas Kinnear and his house keeper Nancy Montgomery. She, along with servant James McDermott, was found guilty of the murder. When the crime was trailed in court, McDermott was hanged to death while Grace's punishment was mitigated to life imprisonment because of, "the weakness of her sex and her supposed witlessness" (538). After completing almost thirty years of imprisonment in Provincial Penitentiary in Kingston, she is finally granted pardon in 1872. After that she goes to New York State and is never heard of again. The truth of her involvement in the murder never gets revealed and it always remained a mystery whether Grace a female fiend and temptress. It is also not clarified whether she is genuinely 'insane' or feigned madness for her liberation from prison, hence, "the true character of the historical Grace Marks remains an enigma" (539).

Atwood presents the construction of masculine and feminine deeply intertwined with differences in power between working class, middle, and upper class people. She shows how identities are constructed in language and discourse which itself is dominated by those who occupy the position of power. She proves further that gender is not only a social and cultural product but also varies according to other differentiating features such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, and other facets of identity.

Grace is continuously influenced by the people around her that mould her into the stereotype of femininity. Not only her employers but also the co-workers acquaint her



with the conventional idea of femininity. Her friend and companion Mary Whitney makes her aware about the aim of women's life:

It was a custom for young girls in this country to hire themselves out, in order to earn money for their dowries; and then they would marry, and if their husbands proposed they would soon be hiring their own servants in their turn, at very least a maid-of-all-work; and that one day I would be the mistress of a tidy farmhouse, and independent. (182)

In the novel more than human beings, characters, "always marry money" (65). It is efficiently explained through the example of Dr. Jordon's mother who expects her son to get married. She suggests, "Of course he could always marry money, as she herself did. She traded her family name and connections for a heap of coin fresh from the mint, and she is more than willing to arrange something of the sort for him" (65).

This is also explicated through Governor's daughter Lydia, who though in love with Dr. Jordon, ultimately marries Reverend Verringer because of his economically sound status over looking his older age. Lydia's marriage, is a surprise, as she always used to make fun of him behind his back, and says "he looked like a frog" (493). Beauvoir explains that "Woman tend to look for a husband who is above her in status or who she hopes will make a quicker or greater success than she could" (Beauvoir 450). Unmarried women are looked down by society, they are criticized, mocked, pitied and treated as incomplete and not fulfilling their feminine destiny.

Grace, like other women characters, too thinks of getting married and is shown to be depressed when she is not able to marry because of the murder charges and life imprisonment. She thinks, "I would never be married now, or have any babies of my own



... and I would not like to have nine or ten and then die of it, as happens to many. But still it is a regret" (78). On the other hand for men the aim of life is to achieve "economic success".

Dr. Jordon ignores continuous proposals of marriage from his mother's side in order to establish himself well professionally. Though, he does not refrain from flirting with Lydia and establishing physical relation with his landlady Mrs. Humphrey. The man "undoubtedly dreams of woman, he longs for her; but she will never be more than an element in his life; she does not sum up his destiny" (Beauvoir 352). Despite being financially unstable he dreams of Grace as a perfect wife for him,

She has beauty without frivolity, domesticity without dullness, and simplicity of manner, and prudence, and circumspection. She is also an excellent needlewoman . . . His mother would have no complains on that score (452).

Grace's employer Thomas Kinnear, a wealthy Tory gentleman, too remains a bachelor because,

Some gentlemen do not have an inclination for the married state, she said. They were very pleased with themselves the way they are, and think they can get along well enough without it . . . If they want a thing, all they have to do is pay for it. It's all one to them. (257)

De Beauvoir, emphasizing on stereotypical construction of men and women argues that men are not pleased with woman who openly exhibit their desire for men and marriage, and who are easily seduced "young men mistrust women 'who want to get married' . . . Nothing is more disagreeable to a man than to feel himself pursued, to

realize that a woman is trying to hook him" (452). This aversion is quite apparent in Dr. Simon who is pursued by Lydia. When he perceives the intention of Governor's wife and his mothers "Simon is alerted: he is familiar with such ruses, he knows the cabals of mothers" (224).

Women in *Alias Grace* are projected as consumable entities existing for the sexual use and consumption of men. Grace witnesses the sexual abuse of women not only in her mother's life but also in her friends Mary Whitney's and housekeeper Nancy Montgomery's life. Grace encounters sexually demanding and exploiting men on each step of her life: as maidservant she faces amorous and sexual advances of her employers, as a prisoner she is sexually attacked by guards and as a patient of hysteria she is sexually molested by doctors. She is warned of men's nature by her relatives, women employers and co-workers. Mrs. Honey instructs her, "Behave modestly, and go and come back straight away, and not speak to any strangers, especially men" (175). Mary too acquaints her with the ways of men, and their perception of women as sexual commodities.

Despite being wary of men's 'nature' and ways, Mary dies due to abortion. She falls in the alluring trap of her employer Mrs. Parkinson's son, sexually exploited and deserted when pregnant, "the man had promised to marry her and had given her a ring, and for once in a way she'd believed him, as she'd thought he was not like other men; but he'd gone back in his promise" (200). She is aware of her fate as, "now no decent man would marry her, and she would have to go on the streets, and become a sailors' drab" (201). Nancy too faces similar circumstances at the hands of men. Before working for Kinnear she is involved in a sexual relation with a young man who ran off and left her when she had a baby. After the death of her baby only Mr. Kinnear hired her as a servant,



but Mr. Kinnear hired her and took her in anyway, which no respectable man would have done; and it was clear from the first what he'd had in mind, because once the horse was out of the stable it was no good shutting the barn door, and a woman once on her back was like a turtle in the same plight, she could scarcely turn herself right side up again, and was fare game for all. (296)

As a housekeeper Nancy is sexually used by her employer Thomas Kinnear and later on starts living as his mistress. But once Nancy gets pregnant, he starts taking interest in Grace. Grace perceives the declining interest of Kinnear in Nancy because of her pregnancy,

she was in family way, and it often happens like that with a man; they'll change from woman in that condition to one who is not, and it's the same with cows and horses; and if that happened she'd be out on the road, her and her bastard. (359)

This results in women's identity as 'other'. As complemented by Grace's words, "Why should the one be rewarded and the other punished, for the same sin?" (321)

Grace too suffers from sexual harassment not only from her employers but also by other servants, guards of the Kingston penitentiary and doctors of lunatic asylum. They all try to sexually harass and molest her. All these sexual assaults are passively endured by Grace except for few muffled groans of protest. Being accused of murder and having reported by newspapers as the paramour of co-servant McDermott she becomes the target of sexual abuse and "fare game for all" (296). The constructed gendered identity reduces



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Grace to the status of passive, inferior, fragile and weaker sex and permits her no voice of protest.

Atwood reflects that not only gender but sex of an individual too is constructed according to the social and cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity. Dr. Simon challenges and argues against the perception of women's biological nature and body by citing his own experience of dissecting a cadaver of woman from the labour class, "their spines and musculatures were on the average no feeblar than those of men, although many suffered from rickets" (83). Dr. Simon contemplates,

At least he isn't a woman, and thus not obliged to wear corsets, and to deform himself with tight lacing. For the widely held view that women are weak-spined and jelly-like by nature, and would slump to the floor like melted cheese if not roped in. (83)

Thus both gender and sex (body) are susceptible to the external influences and practices. Judith Butler argues that, "In some societies females' lower status has meant that they have been fed less and so, the lack of nutrition has had the effect of making them smaller in size" (37).

Nancy Montgomery too is projected as trying to shape her body into expected contours of feminine gender. As described by Grace, "Young ladies nowadays were starving themselves because of the fashion, which to be pale and sickly and they laced their stays so tight, they fainted as soon as looked at" (315-16).

Men and Women are stereotyped on the grounds of emotions and practicality too. While boys are brought up with instructions that "A man doesn't cry", girls' "tears . . . are viewed indulgently" (Beauvoir 298). In *Alias Grace* bursting into tears and weeping

are seen as womanly traits whereas men are shown to be strong and fully in control of them. "She'd been angry with him, but couldn't express her anger . . . and burst into tears. (218). Age is another important factor owing to which men and women have different parameters of judgment. This concern about age is reflected in Grace's thought in relation to Jamie Walsh, who proposes her on her sixteenth birthday, and she claims that he is still a boy. Grace broods, "why it is, a girl of fifteen or sixteen is accounted a woman, but a boy of fifteen or sixteen is still a boy" (304). Later again Grace repeats her thoughts about Dr. Simon too, "He's a young man, my own age or a little older, which is young for a man, although not for a woman, as at my age a woman is an old maid but a man is not an old bachelor until he is fifty" (41).

Women are seen as sexually cold and submissive in comparison to men in society. They are constructed to repress any sign of evident sexuality as only men are believed to be sexually active and overt. Essential feminine nature of women sexuality is challenged by Atwood through Mrs. Humphrey who, after being deserted by her uncaring husband, initiates sexual relation with her tenant Dr. Simon, refuting the commonly held perception of women's subdued and passive sexuality. As expressed in Dr. Simon, "she's a respectable woman . . . Respectable women are sexually cold" (424). Mrs. Humphrey at various instances in novel tries to actively seduce Dr. Simon into sexual relation. Dr. Simon voices the different norms of social concerns for "respectable women" As expressed in Dr. Simon's words Mrs. Humphrey's "pretence is a pretence of aversion" as "for a refined woman of her class. . . it's a way of saving face" (423), therefore, "it's her part to display resistance, his to overcome it. She wishes to be seduced, overwhelmed, and taken against her will".



She attempts to "disguise" her pleasure as "pain" (425). Dr. Simon is able to recognize Mrs. Humphrey pretext because of being well aware about the inner chastity of women as an illusionary and an unrealistic ideal to achieve, "he is under no illusion as to the innate refinement of women" and offers a suggestion, "hypocrisy is surely justified; one must present what ought to be true as if it really is" (100). It can be explained by Judith Butler's arguments that both sex and gender are products of discourse constructed by reiterative performances in culture and society. Thus the novel shows the existence of essential or natural feminine and masculine traits.

Grace Marks outwits men with her both gender and class performance and undermines all their efforts of knowing the truth of her identity and sickness. Dr. Simon, who visits her each day for her psychological treatment of amnesia, is forced to say:

She has manifested a composure that a duchess might envy. I have never known any woman to be so thoroughly self-contained. . . . Her voice is low and melodious, and more cultivated than is usual in a servant- a trick she has learned no doubt through her long service in the house of her social superiors; and she retains barely a trace of Northern Irish accent with which she must have arrived. (153)

Similar perception is framed by Thomas Kinnear too about Grace. He is amazed to see, "a naturally refined air" and "pure Grecian profile" in a servant and claims that if clad in, "right clothes with her head high . . . mouth shut" she could pass as "a lady any day" (324). In words of Mary, "being a servant was like anything else, there was a knack



to it which many have learnt and being a servant was not a thing we were born to . . . one day I would be the mistress of a tidy farm house, and independent" (183).

"Mary's philosophy of rising by "hard work" is aligned more generally in the novel with performative and fabricated conceptions of identity" (Beauvoir 296). Thus it can be seen here that the manners and attitude of upper class society are learned and acquired along with gender identity. Grace proves that servants and lower class people do not inherit their passivity and docile attitude in blood instead these are the matter of socio-cultural exposure and influences.

Grace moulds herself and performs her identity as constructed by people's expectations around her. After being convicted of murder, her lawyer "constructs her as a poor motherless child, uneducated, and illiterate, and little better than a half wit" (419). She repetitively performs this constructed identity in lunatic asylum and in prison. In Kingston penitentiary, criminals are expected to repent for their crimes, "whether you have done anything or not" (29).

Grace learns, "how to keep her face still making her eyes wide and flat and is believed by others to, have repented in bitter tears" (29). Media and newspapers, as opposed to lawyer's version, construct her as monster claiming that, "if they want a monster so badly they ought to be provided with one" (36). At the end, when she is granted pardon after twenty eight years of life imprisonment she is reconstructed by others as, "a baby snatched out of river . . . the one lost lamb that had been rescued" (513). Again and again she keeps on performing the identities imparted to her by others. She immediately appropriates the discursively ordained identity by Warden's family, "now I must act like someone who has been rescued" (513).

The novel presents Thomas McDermott also performing both gender and class. "He, despite being a man is dominated by Nancy, no better in position, than himself, because of the superior and privileged position of housekeeper she enjoys on account of being Kinnear's mistress and paramour". As a result "she adopts dominating and subordinating attitude towards both Grace and McDermott and they are expected to take orders from her" (295). McDermott and Grace don't like being ordered by woman but were forced to perform his orders because of their low position.

The novel explores the criticism of the upper class society. Grace satirically comments on the life, power and position of upper class people, including her employers, doctors and lawyers. They are described as,

feeble and ignorant creatures, although rich, and most of them couldn't light a fire if their toes were freezing off, because they didn't know how . . . and if they were to lose all their money tomorrow and be thrown out on streets, they would not even be able to make a living by honest whoring because, the thing these people hated the most was to be reminded that they too had bodies and their shit stank as much as anyone's, if not worse. (182-83)

In Mary's words, "People dressed in certain kind of clothing are never wrong. Also they never fart . . . if there is a farting in a room where they are, you may be sure you done it yourself . . . and a boot in the backside and out on the street with you" (36). Grace justifies their faults as, "it is only how they are brought up" (249). Thus it is family, peer, social circle and cultural norms which construct the identity and gendered spaces for men and women both.



The stereotypical image of masculine and feminine gender is to a great extent promoted and enhanced by media, the literature, newspapers and magazine. "The combination of sex, violence, and the deplorable insubordination of the lower classes was most attractive to the journalist of the day" (537). It can be seen in Susanna Moodie's "colourful description of Grace's confession in Penitentiary" (90). She is criticized of, "putting some fine speeches into the mouth of her subjects, which is highly unlikely they ever made" (437). Another example is of magazines read by Kinnear that consist of articles on "how a lady should behave" (370).

Grace tries to resist and protest the sexist oppression of men and her discursively constructed gender identity and space by feigning amnesia, and madness. Like Grace, the other characters in the novel have "multiple or at least dual selves, but while those on the lower rung of the social ladder get branded as liars and anti-social elements, others on the higher rungs escape censure altogether" (Vevaina 93). Dr. Jordon is shown to suffer nervous breakdown since he is:

horrified by the darkness unleashed from his personal Pandora's Box. The power politics within society however, will not permit respectable people like him to be regarded as abnormal and institutionalized for their mental condition. Instead as a member of the medical profession, it is he who has the power to institutionalize others. (Vevaina 93)

Grace says, "One does not find the same afflictions among the well-to-do as among the poor" (491). Dr. Simon's treatment process involves the "retelling of Grace's past life events, which would help him unravel the hidden knot of truth or fabrica



tion to re establish the chain of thought . . . which was broken perhaps by the shock of the violent events in which she was involved" ( 97).

Thus by constructing and narrating her story in her own words, Grace learns how to perform the Male Narrative Paradigm bringing a peak of desire for the revelation scene. By becoming assertive speaker she deconstructs and destabilizes the notion of identity as fixed, coherent and stable ones.

At last when Dr. Jordon's efforts fail in knowing the truth of her madness, her case is handed over to Jeremiah, the peddler, performing as Dr. DuPont, who owing to his excellent performance passes off easily as a specialist in neuro-hypnosis. It is through DuPont's hypnotism that Grace exploits her condition in trance, gives voice to her long oppressed, muffled and suppressed voice openly. She seemingly pretends to be suffering from double consciousness or de-doublement and appropriates her voice giving the impression of being uttered from the mouth of Mary Whitney.

Speaking in Mary's voice she verbally attacks all those men who treat her and other women no better than sexual objects. She attacks Dr. Jordon publically and avenges his perception of her as sexual commodity.

I know when what you are thinking when you sit in that stuffy little sewing room with me. She speaks of her awareness of his intentions, that like other men, he too wanted to kiss her and touch her. She tells them, I had him (McDermott) on a string and Mr. Kinnear as well. I had the two of them dancing to my tune! (465)

She not only exposes Dr. Simon's lust for her body but also his sexual intentions for Lydia. Thus using the disguise of Mary's voice she constructs an identity and space

for herself where she is purged of all accusations of being a murderess, which otherwise was not possible.

Thus gender, sex and class are all the outcome of socio-cultural constructions that are handed to us through discourse. Grace Marks is able to fight against patriarchal ideologies by appropriating her own voice and narrating her story.

## Chapter Four

### The Rhetoric of the Patchwork

In literature, writing style is the manner of expressing thought in language characteristic of an individual, period, school or nation. Beyond the essential elements of spelling, grammar and punctuation, writing style is the choice of word, sentence structure and paragraph structure, used to convey meaning effectively. It is the technique that an author uses in the writing. It varies from author to author, and depends upon one's syntax, word choices and tone. The rules are about what a writer does; style is about how it does. While following the rules drawn from established English usage, a writer has great flexibility in how to express a concept. The point of good writing style is to express the message to the reader clearly and convincingly. The aim of the writer is to keep the reader attentive, engaged and interested. It also displays the writer's personality, skills, knowledge or abilities.

Atwood's works gives close attention to people and relationship in particular; historical and social location gives her novel the image of traditional realistic fiction. Atwood's language is rich in vocabulary and synonyms. Atwood uses slipperiness of words and language as symbolic representation. Atwood's narrative method induces double vision in her readers, which borders blur between fiction and real life. Her female protagonists are forced to confront the gap between traditional narratives of female helplessness and a complex reality, which forces women to revise their life stories. It is the female narrator's process of growth into awareness, personal and moral responsibility, which is figured in Atwood's novels.



The two major elements of Atwood's works are Canadianness and her feminism. Her novels can be characterized as 'experiments', always testing the limits of theory and exceeding ideological definitions. As a true novelist, she is interested in the dynamic power of language and story.

Atwood uses devices like irony, symbolism, gender, politics, and explore the dark side of human behavior and relationship between humanity and nature. In her novels she portrays the unexpected, unsettling aspects of the human personality and behaviour normally hidden by social conversations. Her narrative voice has been described as unemotional. Her characters are two dimensional. Her stories revolve around a single symbolic object. Each novel has a first person narrator, tightly enclosed within a limited perspective. Atwood's novel is not intended to simply reflect the objective world. It is like a mirror, in which we can detect the shapes and pattern of experience. Atwood's novel is written in a mixed style well suited for the exploration of the nature of language and the duplicity of human perception.

Margaret Atwood's writing has shown an ever-increasing engagement with the problematic of history and its representation in many of her works. In *Alias Grace* the questioning of history has been considered from various directions. Through her work sewing, knitting, and other forms of handcrafting activities comes to be associated with the representation of history, both as a concept and as a narrative account of past. In *Alias Grace* metaphor emerges as a privileged motif in Atwood's construction of history: that of a patchwork quilt.

Quilting, quilt-in-process, quilt-as-pattern-to-be-interpreted, women and their relationships to the quilt-as-object, the metaphor is extensive and is crafted into Atwood's version of the story of Grace Marks to a multitude of meaning producing effects. Grace Marks is a moment condemned for murder in nineteenth-century Ontario. In this novel quilt acts as a center of discussion, participates in the postmodern structures involved in representing a version of the past.

In *Alias Grace* the image of the patchwork quilt marks the beginning of each chapter and runs through the text as a leitmotif. The patchwork offers an insight into the narrative strategies and structuring devices employed throughout *Alias Grace*. The novel, like the patchwork quilt, privileges heterogeneity over resolution. Each of the novel's fifteen chapters begins with an illustration of a quilt pattern that corresponds thematically with the contents of the chapter. For example, the pattern called 'Pandora's Box' foreshadows the unveiling of Grace's alternate identity. The chapters of the novel also take their title from the name of these quilt patterns.

The quilt becomes an emblem of Atwood's challenge to the homogenous model of selfhood that expresses the limits of the traditional autobiographical narrative. It is also directly a way of addressing the problem of historical truth, as the patchwork represents a specialized model for historical reconstruction and an alternative to the linear chronology of history. This chapter examines quilt as a pivotal signifier of narrative representation. As it suggests an image through which the protagonist's identity is refracted into a kaleidoscope of fragmentary forms. This must be pieced together into a textualised pattern. So that other characters can reassemble the protagonist's identity for themselves.



The traditionally feminine activity of quilting, and its associated forms of textile work, sewing, and embroidery, frames many of Grace's daily duties both in the prison, and in the Governor's house. A large part of her narrative is taken up with the description of domestic scenes involving women's textile work. Grace admires the quilts at Alderman Parkinson's residence: "Mrs. Alderman Parkinson had more pieced quilts than I'd ever seen before in my life" (184-85). She tells Simon that she preferred her employer's Tree of Paradise quilt above all she remarks that, "it was a lovely thing, made of all triangles, dark for the leaves and light for the apples, the work very fine, the stitches almost as small as I can do myself" (112). She also describes the Memorial and Attic Windows quilts, attaching a personal significance to their design. Her preoccupation with these domestic works of art link to a realist detail that she employs in describing domestic tasks to her interlocutor. Indeed the domestic sphere is an essential part of Grace's narrative and her sense of self is clearly tethered to this realm.

Grace's association with her work as a quilter and with the domestic sphere in general, undermines the traditional conventions of self-representation. Grace's life follows a pattern of development that is contrary to the teleological Building of the traditional subject of autobiography as there is no expectation of a determined path for her as a murderess. Instead, Grace's development follows an itinerary that sees her move between the prescribed roles of "celebrated murderess," and "model prisoner," to that of "innocent woman" upon her release from the Penitentiary. Towards the end of the novel, Grace moves to New York and marries the former stable hand, Jamie Walsh, now a farmer and landowner near Ithaca. As she takes up the role of good wife, devoted to her



home and her husband, and potentially even that of mother, the final domestic activity she describes is the making of a traditional marriage quilt, the Tree of Paradise.

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By focusing Grace's narrative on domestic arts such as quilting, Atwood redefines women's devalued textile practices, transforming the domestic sphere into an active site for women's artistic creativity. Atwood follows late-twentieth-century trends in feminist criticism which see women's textile practices as a valuable tool for self-expression. In "The Needle or the Pen: The Literary Rediscovery of Women's Textile Work," Elaine Hedges illustrates the way that the feminine practice of textile handicrafts has been redefined, particularly in terms of the originality of their designs:

The rediscovery and celebration of women's traditional textile — the domestic arts of spinning and weaving, sewing and quilting — constitutes by now a widespread and peculiarly interesting development in contemporary feminist thinking. In the past two decades, visual artists and art historians, social historians, folklorists, poets and novelists, and most recently literary critics and theorists have discovered in the process and products of the spindle, shuttle, and the needle a major source for understanding women of the past, and, as well, a source of subject matter and of images and metaphors for new creative work. (338)

Atwood's *Alias Grace* is traditionally associated with women, by imaging the patchwork as a central trope for women's artistic creativity. Women's textile practices may also be considered in a rather less positive light: as a symbolic marker of women's circumscribed roles within the private sphere. In the nineteenth century, quilting was

reinforced as a quintessentially feminine practice through prescriptive advice manuals in which sewing was discussed alongside advice on women's moral and religious duties, fashion, etiquette, and education. The advice offered in a selection of manuals announces the idealisation of needlework as a respectable recreation for women of all ages during the nineteenth-century. The gendered significance attached to women's textile practices in general, and quilting in particular, is voiced by Mary Whitney in the novel, who remarks that quilts were an important part of a woman's trousseau: "a girl did not consider herself ready for marriage here until she had three quilts, made by her own hands" (185).

Textile work, however, is also a means of liberating women from restrictive cultural conditions, offering a socially acceptable personal and creative mode of expression. In this novel *Alias Grace*, quilt is described as symbolic cultural object and a form of female discourse through which women could express repressive aspects of nineteenth century.

The relationship between textile work and literary creativity is announced by the metaphors the novel employs from the catalog of women's textile work. Many of these metaphors signal cunning or deceitful narrative strategies: for example, Grace's lawyer uses the metaphor of the text as quilting to assert his view that her testimony is suspect by remarking that "she spun out a yarn for me to as great a length as it would go" (439). Amid the suspicion raised by Grace's narrative, Simon mobilises this metaphor to refer to the "spinning of her story" (451), and associates her sewing with deceit: "she knows she's concealing something from him. As she stitches away at her sewing, outwardly calm as a marble Madonna, she is all the while exerting her passive stubborn strength



against him" (421). Grace is not the only character in the novel whose creativity in terms of the truth is imaged through the metaphor of women's quilting work. Simon and Verringer discuss the veracity of Susanna Moodie's account of Grace and conclude that: "Mrs. Moodie is a literary lady, and like all such, and indeed like the sex in general, she is inclined to Embroider, says Simon" (223).

The novel also draws an equivalence between the activities of textile production, and literary creativity that is expressed in the way Grace's stories are told in the sewing room of the Governor's house, so that while Grace recounts her personal history, "she is also stitching away at a quilt block for the Governor's wife and her daughters or a dress that needs mending" (280). She is put to work of sewing quilts for one daughter's trousseau, including such patterns as the Pandora's Box, and the Log Cabin. Grace's sewing, and the talking cure, progress simultaneously, suggesting a parallel between these two activities that allow her to stitch the events and experiences of her life into a textualised pattern. Her incessant sewing, as well as the talking cure, help Grace to avoid the chaos of a life without meaning. The novel, however, suggests another, more ambiguous, function regarding the activity of quilting, as one that facilitates her psychological withdrawal from the events that she is narrating. At moments in her narrative, Grace circumvents certain questions Simon asks by concentrating on her needlework: "keeping silent, and continuing to sew" (187), so that a gulf emerges in her narrative between events and their representation, growing wider as Grace contemplates her sewing while narrating stories which perhaps prove too painful for her to tell. Unsatisfied with many of her answers, Simon is left to wonder "what has Grace really been thinking about him, as she sewed and recounted?" (439).



The image of the patchwork emphasises the distinctive sense of creative improvisation that goes into the process of quilting, including its block-by-block construction, and the recycled materials from which the fabrics of the quilt blocks are traditionally derived. Furthermore, these recycled materials traditionally carry a history for the quilter as they are derived from their family and community.

The Tree of Paradise quilt is the final quilt that Grace describes in the novel and the first that she has made for herself. The pieces of fabric she uses for the pattern have their own history, and together form a record of their donors:

One will be white, from the petticoat I still have that was Mary Whitney's; one will be faded yellowish, from the prison nightdress I begged as a keepsake when I left there. And the third will be a pale cotton, a pink and white floral, cut from the dress of Nancy's that she had on the first day I was at Mr. Kinnear's, and that I wore on the ferry to Lewiston, when I was running away. (534)

Grace embroiders around the edges of these pieces "to blend them in as a part of the pattern," so that "we will all be together" (534). She stitches together pieces of each of the women in order to create a memorial to her dead friends Mary and Nancy that helps her to mourn the loss of her female community and enables her to recall their lives.

Quilting in this instance, is not only a metaphor for the narrative processes of self representation: it is also directly a form of narrative itself. The quilt may be seen as an alternative medium of autobiography that privileges a specialized model over that of the linear and technologically oriented structure offered by verbal narrative. The quilt acts as

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a kind of canvas for Grace by enabling her self-representation through a medium which was considered to be a culturally acceptable recreation for women during the nineteenth century.

Grace exploits the design possibilities for her autobiographical quilt, the Tree of Paradise, by departing from the conventional pattern. Grace places just one tree in the centre of her quilt, rather than the usual "four or more in a square or circle" (534). The colours Grace chooses to illustrate the Tree is red and purple. However, she intends to interrupt this colour scheme by placing triangles of material from the clothing of Mary, Nancy and Grace herself, so that the colours "white," "faded yellowish," "pink and white" are introduced to the pattern (534). The border of her quilt will be comprised of snakes that "will look like vines or just a cable pattern to others" (534), finely sewn so that others will not be able to recognise them. Much like Grace's deceptive narrative strategies which are hidden in her text, the snakes remain hidden from the viewer in the fabric of her textile. The self that Grace projects in her autobiographical narrative is potentially deceptive, as it illustrates an authorial performance in which she projects a self that outwardly appears to be unshaken by the trauma of her involvement in the murders. Her propensity to tell stories with many potential concealments and omissions echoes the symbolism of the quilt as an object that covers and conceals.

Improvisation, the ability to construct a project with indefinite materials, is a distinctive feature of the patchwork design of quilts. In the random and creative manner of their construction, there is an equivalence that can be observed between the patchwork quilt and the activity of bricolage defined by Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1966). He coined this term in the context of mythical thought; however, this concept can



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be extended to the patchwork design of the quilt in which materials are recycled and reintegrated creatively, to form an integrative whole. With the materials gathered, the bricoleur self-reflexively considers how to assemble the pieces, "to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer" (Levi-Strauss 19). The patchwork, as with the bricolage, is an innovative design process that Grace employs in the construction of the quilt she makes for herself by creatively improvising from available materials and assembling them in a carefully considered and constructed manner.

This design strategy is also extended from the patchwork to other aspects of the novel. Grace's narrative is also set against this approach as quilting in general, and the Tree of Paradise in particular, come to represent the self-reflexive narrative strategies that she employs in the construction of her autobiography. Grace contemplates what turn her story will take, and explores the possible juxtaposition of materials, and how their assembly will form a whole, when she says:

What should I tell Simon. . . . I could pick out this or that for him, some bits of whole cloth you might say, as when you go through the rag bag looking for something that will do, to supply a touch of colour. (410)

The "rag bag" of materials at her disposal contains past experiences, limited resources that are enlarged by her abilities as a narrator, while her search for a "touch of colour" that will adorn her narrative and make it more interesting for her interlocutor, suggest her creative and potentially deceptive, narrative strategy. Puzzled by her narrative, Simon remains unable to fit the pieces together to form a pattern, and aware of



the possibility that Grace is adapting her story to his expectations because, after all, "he wants her to be vindicated" (374).

The patchwork quilt, with its juxtaposition of different pieces, is a cultural object whose interpretation does not resolve itself in any single definition, a view that Grace articulates when she contemplates the meaning of the Attic Windows quilt:

it had a great many pieces, and if you looked at it one way it was closed boxes, and when you looked at it another way the boxes were open, the same with all quilts, you can see them two different ways, by looking at the dark pieces or else the light (187).

Her own particular perspective on life emerges from her interpretation of this quilt. As a woman who have been inscribed by various and contradictory discourses, Grace is in a privileged position to recognize the ambiguity that characterizes such cultural objects. Grace is not exempt from the type of interpretation in which two difficult conclusion may be derived "by looking at the dark pieces, or else the light," either the negative or the positive aspects of character and circumstance. Like Grace, the quilt patterns resist any single meaning in the novel. Rather they insist on multiplicity by consisting of both the light and dark elements which are filtered through one's perspective. Atwood's images of patchwork blocks, thus illustrate the narrative representation of the novel.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Margaret Atwood is one of the world's leading novelists, who have written poetry, novels, criticism and short stories. She campaigns for human rights and for the environment. However, across the years, certain themes, concerns and ways of her writing recur. Amongst other things, Atwood writes about art and its creation, the dangers of ideology and sexual politics. She deconstructs myths, fairytales and the classics for a new audience. Her work is often gothic, which is one reason for its wide popularity.

Atwood has become increasingly interested in fiction, in writing within popular narrative forms, while questioning what they convey. Atwood's first historical novel imagines the story behind the nineteenth century figure Grace Marks, who was imprisoned for murder, and at one point placed in an asylum. Combined with the familiar territory of imprisonment and subjugation, and the mysterious feminine, though, it is a crime novel. Atwood refuses to provide an answer. The novel is similarly postmodern in its depiction of the silent, lost voices of the past. The generic mixing becomes even stronger in the Booker Prize-winning *The Blind Assassin* (2000), which has the intensity of a gothic horror story.

One of the main themes of the postmodern movement includes the idea that history is only what one makes of it. In other words, to the postmodern philosophy, history is only a story humans frame and create about their past. Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* is an excellent exploration of this postmodern idea. Through use of postmodern writing styles and techniques, Atwood explores how the framing of a story influences its meaning. By mixing different writing mediums such as prose, poetry, period style letters, and historical



documents such as newspaper articles, Atwood achieves a complex novel that explores a moment of history in a unique way.

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The novel shows Grace as an unreliable narrator which is an element of the writing uncharacteristic of Atwood's style in Gothic literature, but it is a technique common to postmodern literature. It is evident in the first two pages of the novel that Grace is an unreliable narrator. In the opening chapter, Grace recounts a version of the murder in a stream of consciousness technique. Grace talks about seeing Nancy covered in blood before her "scatters into a patches of color, a drift of red cloth petals across the stone," but Grace ends her story by saying, "This is what I told Dr. Jordan, when we came to that part of the story" (7). This last sentence reminds the dubious nature of Grace's narration. Atwood also subtly discredits Grace through inconsistencies in her narration, such as Grace's switching back and forth between calling McDermott in formal Mr. McDermott or in very personal James.

The novel *Alias Grace* alternates between first and third person accounts, and reflects Atwood's preoccupation with narrative techniques. The novel *Alias Grace* can be seen in various points of view. These points of view alternate, for example, a more personal testimony as related by Grace Marks throughout the novel and then switching to a more distant observation offered by the third-person account of Dr. Simon Jordan's circumstances. It should be pointed out that Grace's first-person point of view is often unreliable. Although Grace sometimes admits that she is not being fully honest with Dr. Jordan, there are other times when it is not clear if she is even being honest with herself. Other points of view include replications of newspaper accounts of the murders of Thomas Kinnear and Nancy Montgomery and the subsequent trials of Grace and



McDermott. There are also lyrics of popular ballads concerning the murders, accounts quoted from Susanna Moodie's journals and letters from Mrs. William P. Jordan, Simon Jordan and many others.

Atwood chose cultural approach utilizing feminist concepts with the concepts of patriarchal ideology in family and society. In *Alias Grace* Atwood shows the oppression Grace undergoes throughout her life and how this patriarchal ideology is exercised at home, work and prison to oppress her. It is represented by the abusive father in the family which makes Grace suffer in her early childhood and confine her freedom as a woman. She is the bread winner of the family and undergoes physical abuses from her father. The way her father rules over the house as a patriarch affects the whole family and particularly Grace's life as the daughter of the family. She also undergoes sexual harassments from her masters, her co-worker, and even the doctor.

Grace knows exactly where she stands as a female criminal; this oppression comes from the patriarchal system that still differentiates women's role from men's. The way patriarchy gives absolute power over woman has created the new strategy for man to oppress woman even more it is called 'tactic' and this tactic is mostly used to show his power which usually results in violence over women.

In the novel a number of references are concerned with the preservation of a woman's purity. A warning against men is given by Mary Whitney to Grace Marks. She advises her to lock the door always and use the chamber pot at night and distrust men, "because men were liars by nature, and would say anything to get what they wanted of you, and then they would think better of it and be off on the next boat" (191). Further, Grace Marks talks of the bed as a place where "many dangerous things" take place, and

list among others the sexual act, which, in her own words, some call "love, others despair, or else merely an indignity which they must suffer through" (186).

Later on in the novel, Mary Whitney experiences herself the fate of women. She sexually engages with a man before marriage and is left alone in the state of pregnancy. Not only would she lose her engagement at Mrs. Alderman Parkinson, further "no decent man would marry her, and she would have to go on the streets, and become a sailor's drab, as she would have no other way of feeding herself and the baby" (201). The two options open to Mary Whitney in the novel to prevent herself from the loss of her reputation are suicide or a secret abortion, with the latter leading to death in her case as well.

The blatant discrepancy between the ideal of the sexually cold woman and the reality of female lust is most strongly exemplified by Margaret Atwood with Dr. Jordan's landlady Mrs. Humphrey. In the course of the novel, Mrs. Humphrey in many instances assertively tries to entangle Dr. Jordan into a sexual affair with her. However, being denied an active sexual desire, she hides her pursuit under a number of psychosomatic symptoms and explains her entering of Dr. Jordan's bedroom with suffering from sleepwalking.

In the gender-based society of the Victorian period, women were forced into a passive role, bereft of political power in society, and idealized as pure and morally superior beings, devout of any criminal traits. Therefore, a woman transgressing from her "womanly nature" by committing a serious crime at the same time meant an attack on the preconceived gender roles of the Victorian society woman of her class he supposes it's a way of saving face." (437)



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A similar process is assumed for the psychological state of Grace Marks. Her amnesia concerning the events around the murders, after the spiritualist session is classified with the symptom of double consciousness and the doublement. Grace's passionate character traits into the preconceived female stereotypes of her time, projects the evil side into a secondary split personality. In a society, not able to realize women as they are, Grace hides her criminal involvement under the mask of the morally superior, but socially inferior woman.

At the very beginning of *Alias Grace*, there is a quilt. Quilts are a running theme in *Alias Grace*. Each section is named after a quilt pattern and includes a corresponding illustration. The first few pages are also a patchwork of their own with assortment of quotes, poems, and historical documents that set the stage for what Grace will later reveal. This pattern is repeated throughout the book with each new section.

Grace sews quilt blocks throughout her sessions with Simon, and she constantly refers to textile and quilt patterns within her narration. Further, each section of the novel begins with a quilt pattern name. Symbolically, the structure of the novel mirrors a quilt. This patchwork method of constructing a narrative, a novel, or the "truth" becomes the central unifying motif in the novel. Additionally, Atwood has chosen symbolic quilt pattern names for each section of the novel, and indeed many of them mirror the violence or difficult experiences contained in each section as jagged edge, rocky road, and broken dishes.

At the end of the novel, Grace is making a Tree of Paradise quilt using fabric symbolizing the most significant events in her life as a scrap from Nancy's dress, Mary's petticoat, and her own old prison nightgown. They are all together again. Grace has made

peace and weaves these women into the patchwork quilt of her life as part of the whole. In this manner, a quilt is a metaphor for life; each experience becomes a piece of cloth sewn into the pattern.

Grace Marks' story takes place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which Margaret Atwood successfully and accurately portrays how women were treated in the 1800's. As one gets deeper in understanding Grace Marks' story it is evident that Margaret Atwood has turned Grace into a very complex character who can possibly weave stories. It also reveals her psyche concerning all women's role in the society. The quilt also represents her oppression and it acts as a memorial for her subjugation.

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**Conflict between Ethics and Aesthetics: A Study of Oscar Wilde's  
*The Picture of Dorian Gray***

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Conflict between Ethics and Aesthetics : A Study of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

*Suganya S.*  
**SUGANYA S.**

## CERTIFICATE

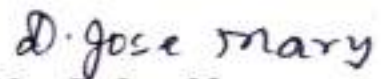
This is to certify that the project entitled **Conflict between Ethics and Aesthetics: A Study of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Suganya S. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project analyses Hedonism, morality and beauty in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The first chapter deals with the historical context of the novel, its background, time and place. The key issues and values of that time such as ambivalent morality, the image of beauty, aesthetic tendencies in the tradition of hedonism are presented.

The second chapter Morality, Beauty and Hedonism throws light on the topics of aesthetic idea and ambiguous morality, cult of youth and beauty, new hedonism as an antipode of moral obligation and ambiguous attitudes to life of the main heroes in the novel.

The third chapter deals with the battle between good and evil which is a common theme in literature, as well as a battle that still exists in the world today.

The fourth chapter depicts the supremacy of youth and beauty.

The fifth chapter sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters and instills a moral consciousness in the hearts of the people in order to create a harmonious world.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Irish Literature comprises writings in Latin and English. The earliest recorded Irish writings date from the seventeenth century and produced by monks writing in both Latin and early Irish. The English language was introduced to Ireland in the thirteenth century, following the Norman Conquest of Ireland. The Irish language remained the dominant language of Irish literature down to the nineteenth century, despite a slow decline which began in the seventeenth century with the expansion of English power. The later part of the nineteenth century saw a rapid replacement of Irish by English. This shift can be seen in the changing use of the term Anglo-Irish literature, which at one time referred to the whole body of Irish writing in English but is now used to describe literature produced by, and usually about, members of the Anglo-Irish protestant ascendancy of the eighteenth century. Irish writers from Edmund Burke and Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith, Maria Edgeworth and George Barnard Shaw were traditionally considered English authors.

Jonathan Swift was an eighteenth century writer, he is Anglo-Irish satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, poet and cleric who became Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Like O'Brien, Swift too wrote in a very particular satirist manner; every word Swift picked was chosen to express the opinionated sarcasm in his major works *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tale of a Tub*, and *A Modest Proposal*.

Anne Enright was Pulitzer Prize winner. She is famous for her novels, short stories, and essay collections about familiar relationships, love, sex and Ireland's culture and the obstacles the country has overcome. Anne Enright's major works are *The Portable Virgin*, *The Wig My Father Wore* and *What Are You Like?* *The*



*Gathering*, perhaps her most famous novel, is about a woman named Veronica, who upon her alcoholic brother Liam's suicide, attempts to look through her family's troubled history in order to make sense of his death.

As Irish literature moved into the twentieth century there was an upsurge in interest in Celtic myth and legend. Often called the Celtic Twilight, this is more of a renaissance than a decline, but it tended to be looked on rather in the same way as the sentimental Scottish Kailyard School at around the same time. It is true that it shares some of the Kailyard's homely sentimentalism, but as inspiration is more concerned with national identity and cultural individuality some of the Irish writers such as Jonathan Swift, Anne Enright, and W.B. Yeats began to find a confidence in their own ground, place, and speech, expressing themselves in English and Irish.

Like Thomas Hardy, W.B. Yeats is a poet whose poetry stretches across the whole period of the late Victorian and early modern ages. However, Yeats' poetry undergoes more marked changes during these years than that of Hardy. Yeats' first poetry was published in 1885 and he continued writing until his death in 1919. There are three main stages to Yeats' development as a poet. The first phase, when he was associated both with the Aesthetic movement of the 1890s and the Celtic Twilight, is characterized by a self-conscious Romanticism. The poetry is sometimes based on Irish myth and folklore and has a mystical, dream-like quality to it. Yeats was also regularly in the habit of revising his poems. He sharpened the language in an attempt to clarify the imagery.

The second main phase of Yeats' poetic career was dominated by his commitment to Irish nationalism, and it was Irish nationalism which first sent Yeats in search of consistently simple, popular and more accessible style. As Yeats became



more and more involved in public nationalist issues, so his poetry became public and concerned with politics of the modern Irish state.

In the final phase of his career, Yeats reconciles elements from both his earlier periods, fusing them into a mature lyricism. The poetry is less public and more personal. He develops his theories of contraries and of the progression which can result from reconciling them, but he also writes about the eternity of art, producing in the process many memorable poems which have come to be seen as having enduring value. The later poems explore contrasts between physical and spiritual dimensions to life, between sensuality and rationality, between turbulence and calm.

At a time when all citizens of British were finally able to embrace literature, the wealthy and educated could only once afford, Oscar Wilde wrote many short stories, plays and poems that continue to inspire millions around the world. Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie was born on October 16, 1854 in Dublin, to William Wilde, a doctor and Jane Francesca Elgee, a writer with a pseudonym Speranza. Oscar was profoundly affected by the death of his sister, who died within ten years after birth, and for his life time he carried a lock of her hair sealed in a decorated envelope. Oscar attended the Portor Royal School at Enniskillen. In 1871, he was awarded the Royal School Scholarship to attend Trinity College in Dublin. He won the College's Berkeley Gold Medal for Greek and was awarded a Demyship Scholarship to Magdalen College in Oxford.

Oscar was a bright and bookish child. He fell in love with Greek and Roman studies. At Oxford, Oscar continued to excel academically first in both classics and classical moderations. He also made his first attempts at creative writing. Oscar was awarded the new Digate Prize for his poem "Ravanna" and a first class in both Mods

and Greats by his examiners. In 1881, he published his first collection of poetry. It received mixed reviews by critics, but helped to move Oscar's writing career along.

In December 1881, Oscar sailed for New York to travel across the United States and deliver a series of lectures on aesthetics. The 50-lecture tour was originally scheduled to last four months, but stretched to nearly a year, with over 140 lectures given in 260 days. In between lectures he made time to meet Henry Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Walt Whitman. He also arranged for his play, *Vera*, to be staged in New York the following year. When he returned from America, Oscar spent three months in Paris writing a blank-verse tragedy that had been commissioned by the actress Mary Anderson. When he sent it to her, however, she turned it down. He then set off on a lecture tour of Britain and Ireland.

Oscar worked in *Women's World Magazine* during 1887-1889. The next six years is the most creative period of his life. He published two collections of children's stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) includes the collection of short stories such as; "The Happy Prince", "The Nightingale and the Rose", "The Selfish Giant", "The Devoted Friend", "The Remarkable Rockers".

*The House of Pomegranates* (1892) includes the collection of short stories such as: "The Young King", "The Birthday of the Infanta", "The Fisherman and His Soul", "The Star-Child". Oscar Wilde's first play *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), is a four-act comedy. The story concerns Lady Windermere, who suspects that her husband is having an affair with another woman. She confronts him with it but although he denies it, he invites the other woman, Mrs. Erlynne, to his wife's birthday ball. Angered by her husband's supposed unfaithfulness, Lady Windermere decides to leave her husband for another lover. After discovering what has transpired, Mrs. Erlynne follows Lady Windermere and attempts to persuade her to return to her



husband and in the course of this, Mrs. Erlynne is discovered in a compromising position. It is then revealed that Mrs. Erlynne is Lady Windermere's mother, who abandoned her family twenty years before the time the play is set. Mrs. Erlynne sacrifices herself and her reputation to save her daughter's marriage. *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), is a society play. *An Ideal Husband* (1895), is a comedy stage play by Oscar Wilde which revolves around blackmail and political corruption, and touches on the themes of public and private honor.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is often considered Oscar Wilde's dramatic masterpiece. It is a farcical comedy in which the protagonist maintains fictitious person to escape burdensome social obligations. Working within the social conventions of late Victorian London, the play's major themes are the triviality with which it treats institutions as serious as marriage, and the resulting satire of Victorian ways. Its high farce and witty dialogue have helped make *The Importance of Being Earnest* Wilde's most enduringly popular play.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* are archetypically 'English' plays, but there is a profound Irishness underlying much of what Oscar wrote and thought, especially in his correspondence. He may have remarked that the first thing he forgot at Oxford was his Irish accent, but when his play *Salomé* was banned he openly accused the English of being narrow-minded saying, "I am not English; I'm Irish which is quite another thing." (Wilde 4)

Oscar Wilde's *Poem in Prose* (1894) includes; "The Artist", "The Doer of Good", "The Disciple", "The Master", "The House of Judgment", "The Teacher of Wisdom". Oscar Wilde's conversion to homosexuality probably came about in 1886 with a young man who was to remain a lifelong friend, Robert Ross. In 1891 he met Lord Alfred Bosie Douglas, the third son of the Marquis of Queensberry in April



1895. Oscar sued Bosie's father for libel as the Marquis has accused him of homosexuality. Oscar withdrew his case but was himself arrested and convicted of gross indecency and sentenced to two years hard labor.

Upon his release, he wrote "The Ballad of Reading Goal", a response to the agony he experienced. It was published shortly before Constance's death in 1898. He spent his last three years wandering Europe, staying with friends and living in cheap hotels. When a recurrent ear infection became serious several years later, meningitis set in and he died on November 30, 1900.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the first and only novel written by Oscar Wilde. It is a philosophical novel. First publication consists of only thirteen chapters, published in July 1890 issue of Lippincott's Monthly Magazine. On August 30, 1889, Philadelphia publisher Joseph M. Stoddart, managing editor of Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, invited a few guests to dinner at the Langham Hotel in London. Among them were two promising young writers: Arthur Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde. Doyle recounts the events of what he calls a golden evening in his autobiographical *Memories and Adventures* (1924). Stoddart was considering an English publication of Lippincott's with a British editor and British contributors. As a result of that evening, Doyle contributed to Lippincott's his second Sherlock Holmes story, *The Sign of Four*. Oscar Wilde published his first version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the magazine's July 1890 issue.

The magazine's editor J.M. Stoddart, feared that the story was indecent and without Oscar Wilde's knowledge, deleted roughly five hundred words before publication. Despite the censorship, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* offered the moral sensibilities of British book reviewers, some of whom said that Oscar Wilde merited

prosecution for violating the laws guarding the public morality. In response, Oscar aggressively defended his novel and art in correspondence with the British press, although he personally made excisions of some of the most controversial material when revising and lengthening the story for book publication the following year.

Wilde responded to the criticism of his work with numerous letters to editors and added a preface to the book version that came out in the spring of 1891. He also extensively revised Lippincott's version, adding six new chapters (3, 5, 15, 16, 17, and 18), softening the homoerotic references, and dividing Chapter 13 of the original text into Chapters 19 and 20 of the book. Contrary to the reviews' charge that the novel was immoral, Wilde was concerned that the novel was too moral, that it was didactic in its portrayal of the wages of sin.

The longer and revised version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published in book form in 1891. Its implied homoerotic theme was considered very immoral by the Victorians and played a considerable part in his later legal trials. The content, style and presentation of the preface made it famous in its own right, as a literary and artistic manifesto. In April 1891, the publishing firm of Ward, Lock and Company, who had distributed the shorter, more inflammatory, magazine version in England the previous year, published the revised version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. As literature of the nineteenth century, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an example of Gothic fiction with strong themes interpreted from the legendary *Faust*.

The novel is the cautionary tale about a beautiful young man, Dorian Gray, who wishes and receives his wish that his portrait ages while he remains youthful and lives a life of sin and pleasure. Dorian Gray, the title character of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is a decadent dandy of the Victorian era. Concerned with little but



appearances, he lives a reckless, nonproductive existence. A crucial event in his life comes when Dorian meets Lord Henry Wotton in the studio of Basil Hallward, an artist, who has painted a portrait of the breathtakingly beautiful Dorian, now in his early twenties. Lord Wotton intrigues Dorian with his talk of the New Hedonism, which is reflected in the novel by Lord Henry's giving Dorian a copy of Joris-Karl Huysmans's *A Rebours* a novel that articulates this philosophy, the basis of which is the achievement of a complete realization of one's nature.

Dorian now utters a Faust-like proposition. He expresses a willingness to surrender his soul if he can maintain his youth and physical beauty and have his portrait age in his place. Dorian hardly expects to have his wish granted and thinks little more of it. He is busy courting Sybil Vane, a talented young actress, who falls in love with him.

Ironically, Sybil's being in love with Dorian robs her of her ability to act. In time, the very ability that first drew Dorian to Sybil has disappeared, and he rejects her unfeelingly. Having lost Dorian and her acting ability simultaneously, Sybil kills herself. Lord Henry, Dorian's Mephistopheles, convinces Dorian that, in line with the New Hedonism, Sybil's suicide is an experience that will help him to feel life more intensely and that it can be viewed as nothing but a source of personal growth.

When all of this happens, Dorian notices subtle changes in the portrait, which is still on display in his residence. A hint of cruelty, a line near the mouth, forms, but Dorian thinks little of it. Meanwhile, Lord Henry leads Dorian into all kinds of arcane activities that, in the tradition of the Gothic novel, are suggested but never revealed explicitly, making them seem, perhaps, more horrible than they actually are.



By the time Dorian is thirty-eight years old still looking twenty the portrait has changed so drastically that it must be hidden under lock and key. Basil, the artist, alarmed at Dorian's dissolute ways, urges him to change, to reform. Dorian shows Basil the portrait, now hideous, reflecting all the corruption of Dorian's past years. Then he turns on Basil and stabs him. To conceal the crime, Dorian forces a chemist whom he has ruined to use his knowledge of chemistry to destroy the body. Finally, weeks later, shaken by what he has become, Dorian tells Lord Henry that he is going to reform. On returning home, he looks at the portrait and, seeing further deterioration in the visage before him, grabs the knife that he has plunged into Basil and sinks it into the grotesque portrait. A cry and a crash are heard. Servants rush to the locked room, forcing open the door. Inside, they find a portrait of an exquisite youth, and on the floor beside it, the body of a hideous, loathsome old man in evening dress, a knife through his heart.

Wilde's novel provoked considerable outrage when it was published. The tenets of the New Hedonism expressed in the book flew in the face of conventional morality to the point that readers were profoundly shocked. Despite these objections, the novel succeeded artistically and attracted many readers. The book presents Lord Henry's credo within its first few pages, and the rest of the narrative is devoted to Dorian's acting out of that credo. In a sense, Dorian Gray was born with the creation of Basil Hall Ward's portrait. Readers are not introduced to Dorian Gray, the child. The Dorian that Wilde springs on his readers does not exist until the portrait exists.

According to a letter that Wilde wrote in 1894, he said that he saw in this novel three sides of himself. In Basil Hall Ward, he creates what he believes is a true perception of himself. In Lord Henry, he projects the person whom the world believes him to be. In Dorian, he presents the self whom he would like to be in some other age.

How seriously one can take this assessment remains a matter of scholarly speculation. The Lord Henry that Wilde projects is, in accordance with Wilde's expressed philosophy, the ultimate artist. He molds raw material, shaping it with sure hands into what he wills it to be. In this sense, he is a Pygmalion as much as he is a Mephistopheles.

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## Chapter Two

### Morality and Hedonism

Oscar Wilde's novel brings new concepts in the traditional way of life in Victorian England. The author was the first to explore the issue of aesthetic lifestyle. Patrick Duggan admits, "The explosion of aesthetic philosophy in fin-de-siècle English society, as exemplified by Oscar Wilde, was not confined to merely art, however." (Duggan 3)

"Aestheticism can be defined broadly as the elevation of taste and the pursuit of beauty as chief principles in art and in life" (Livesey 1). This new concept formed in Europe in the nineteenth century denies moral values and beliefs of the Victorian society, exalting beauty and pleasures. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggests new moral norms and views that the author shares encouraging aestheticism. Oscar Wilde was not an innovator of the Aesthetic movement but "he was a spokesman for the late 19th-century Aesthetic movement in England, which advocated art for art's sake" (Luebering 133). After the first published version of the novel was strongly criticised the author edited his work adding a preface and other six chapters to it.

The well-known preface became a kind of anthem of aestheticism and it arouses a great discussion about the aim of art and its moral concept. According to Wilde, "...the artist is a creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim." (77). Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. The only aim of art is beauty that brings pleasure without any moral content. Furthermore, in his interpretation of aesthetics Oscar Wilde criticizes human beings who obediently behave according to social norms instead of allowing themselves to be free and happy at the greatest extent.

Aestheticism advocates whatever behavior was likely to maximize the beauty and happiness in one's life, in the tradition of hedonism. To the aesthete, the ideal life mimics art; it is beautiful, but quite useless beyond its beauty, concerned only with the individual living it. (Duggan 61)

The aesthetic values and hedonistic approach to life are emphasized throughout the novel. The character Lord Henry Wotton is aimed to express the author's insights on moral, aesthetic ideas and hedonistic lifestyle. He enlightens Dorian and teaches him the philosophy of "New Hedonism" being a proponent of it. Lord Henry easily influences Dorian and gives the young innocent man the faith in life dedicated to seeking forbidden pleasures regardless of reproach from society. "We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us... Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden itself" (99). Life is worthy only if one lives to its fullest with no fear of disapproval of others. Dorian implements the idea of self-indulgence and egoistic amusements in life. Beauty and sensual pleasures become a main aim in his life.

Despite the worship of aesthetic ideals, constant following one's passionate desires and ambitions to have the most enjoyable life inevitably leads to some immoral acts. Living a pure aesthetic lifestyle without prudence brings destructive consequences. Dorian Gray shows how aesthetic beliefs can ruin the life if one pursues them blindly. In this way, Oscar Wilde not only demonstrates the Aesthetic movement in all its glory but also tells about its poisonous effect. Inexperienced, impressionable and untutored Dorian Gray neglects social norms and moral values being involved in disgraceful affairs driven by lust and forbidden pleasures. Taboo and rules do not exist for him and he became uncontrolled in his acts. "All excess, as



well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment" (Duggan 5). That was his conclusion about morality in *Dorian Gray*. In the letter to the editor of the *St. James's Gazette* he wrote:

The painter, Basil Hallward, worshipping physical beauty far too much, as most painters do, dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous and absurd vanity. Dorian Gray, having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure, tries to kill conscience, and at that moment kills himself. Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded than those who take part in it. (412)

From the one hand, aestheticism stays against one's denial from ambitions and desires, nevertheless, from the other hand, blind and uncontrolled self-indulgence can be harmful and even fatal. In this way, even supporting aesthetic ideals Wilde warns to be cautious and prudent choosing this lifestyle. The character of *Dorian Gray* clearly demonstrates what awaits for one who thoughtlessly lets his passions go. Meanwhile Lord Henry remains an indifferent observer of his monstrous creation *Dorian Gray*, whom he inspired to live this life of sins. The first change in his personality occurs when he rejects Sibyl Vane. The young actress symbolizes for *Dorian* the beauty of art but her failed performance ruins his aesthetic ideal and he leaves the girl with no regrets. "Without your art, you are nothing." (182). Later his compassion after the news about the suicide of desperate Sibyl transforms into indifferent observation of this as if it could be a dramatic play. Therefore, *Dorian's* blind obedience to aestheticism is contrary to morality while the hero remains unconscious about it.



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It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded. (198)

Excessive disposition to unconditional aestheticism and hedonism start to poison his soul and mind. Seeking for his egoistic pleasures Dorian turns to be really selfish, narcissistic and indifferent to the adversities of others. Thus, the imminence of the conflict between the moral values and pure aestheticism becomes obvious. Narcissism is an important component of unconditional aestheticism. In arrogance, Dorian discloses lack of moral in his actions. The portrait illustrates the process of degradation of the hero and withering of his soul whereas Dorian enjoys his youth and beauty that seems to be eternal. Nevertheless, the retribution is not long to wait. Afterwards when the hero decides to start a new life and attempts to destroy his portrait he kills himself. The only heritage that is left after his death is his jewel as a symbol of his real essence lies in admiration of the pure aesthetic life.

According to Wilde, aesthetic tendencies have to be taken with prudence and have reasonable limits that imply moral responsibility. Only being controlled is possible to avoid its adverse effects on society and on a person who preaches aestheticism itself. Otherwise, an unconditional application of these ideas can only have negative consequences. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* clearly demonstrates the fatal result of leading a pure aesthetic life on the example of the main hero. Dorian realizes all the consequences of his unrestrained actions and acting on impulses too late when the destructive effect has been already done. Regardless the pursuit of happiness and beauty forms an aesthetic ideal for Wilde, he notes the particular importance of moral obligation and deliberate approach. Uncontrolled aestheticism kills moral values depriving compassion and promoting egocentrism and degradation



of personality. Sometimes vain wishes and desires must be ignored in order not to harm others or to engage self-destruction. Aesthetic principles have to be in conformity with the moral ones and coexist together. Thus, only deliberation before action instead of blind pandering to the whims can preserve morality.

Aesthetic tendencies together with arising decadence were shocking for the Victorian society as it was a great challenge to the traditional values and social norms of those times. However, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was rather to warn people to be saner before to go under influence of the new movement than to popularise it. According to Geoffrey Schöning,

The period in which beauty can express itself to the most and sensibility reaches its peak does not last very long of course: It is fleeting youth. The very circumstance nearly forces to lift it up into the hedonistic triumvirate of self-development, the permanent chase after new sensations, and physical beauty. (Schöning 5)

Therefore, it comes with no surprise that the cult of youth and beauty can easily be transformed to selfish hedonism as it happened with the main hero of the novel.

The worship of youth and beauty is one of the central ideas in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The preface serves as a kind of manifest of aesthetic beliefs. Talking about beauty from the aesthetic point of view, the author implies its wider meaning and only its concept in art. For the main characters of the novel beauty is placed over morality. "For the sake of beauty" became a kind of lifestyle, the reason that drives to act in a certain way. Supremacy of beauty and youth is shown straight from the first chapter of the book. Celebrated artist Basil Hallward bewitched by the great beauty of young Dorian Gray paints his portrait to immortalize his aesthetic perfection. The



main hero is a muse for the artist who inspires him to create a masterpiece of art for the sake of its beauty.

When the portrait is near to be finished Basil visits Lord Henry Wotton, wit and cynic proponent of aesthetic philosophy and hedonism. In the conversation with Basil, he expresses his belief that beauty is the most important dignity of the human. At the same time, he meets handsome fellow Dorian and starts to admire his perfect appearance at first sight. Lord Henry assures Dorian that there is nothing impossible for one who has two privileges: beauty and youth. Impressionable Dorian easily falls under the influence of his senior fellow and shares these superficial values. The beauty of art firstly affects Dorian when he meets young actress Sibyl Vane who captivates him with the beauty of her talent on the stage. The transformation of the hero starts to disclose when he rejects Sibyl, as she does not implement his aesthetic needs.

Furthermore Dorian admires beauty to such an extent that he even uses it to escape from awareness of the terrifying consequences of his reckless acts. The hero spends a lot of time studying and enjoying the beauty in different things like theatre, music, gems and other luxuries.

For these treasures, and everything that he collected in his lovely house, were to be to him means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape, for a season, from the fear that seemed to him at times to be almost too great to be borne. (247)

Meanwhile, his belief in the power of beauty is reinforced by the adoration of society. Society of all times highly appreciates beauty and youth. People saw in Dorian, "... a type of which they had often dreamed... he seemed to be of the company of those whom Dante describes as having sought to "make themselves perfect by the worship

of beauty." (233). Until Dorian Gray ruins his reputation with his scandalous disgraceful affairs that became known to the public, he is always a guest of honor at the banquets. The hero represents a nobleman and an exemplar for "the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows" (233). The great beauty that lies in his appearance, perfection of his manners and fashionable dresses evokes fascination for him. Moreover Dorian's flawless appearance could not allow suspect him in debauchery: "even those who had heard the most evil things against him . . . could not believe anything to dishonor when they saw him" (231).

However, unconditional devotion for beauty and youth sooner or later leads to its negative consequences. Afterwards Dorian Gray pays a perilous price for his blind obedience to the superficial values that cost him his own soul. The fatal end implies the revaluation of values must be done in order not to end up like the main hero.

According to Alex Ross, "Wilde's aestheticism, his fanatical cult of beauty, was the deepest and most lasting of his passions, and it is now the most radical thing about him" (Ross 5). Oscar Wilde not only expressed these values in the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is also a kind of moralistic story through which the author attempted to warn his contemporaries against overvaluation of physical appearance at the expense of one's common sense and conscious.

Oscar Wilde is a proponent of hedonism and aestheticism. During the nineteenth century one could not spout off his beliefs without fear of reproach, if not from the government, at least from society. Clever artists, such as Wilde, express their views through works of art. In his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde uses the character Lord Henry Wotton to expound his thoughts on morals, aestheticism, women, art, and life as a hedonist. (Burkholder1)



Lord Henry is a proponent of hedonistic lifestyle "A new Hedonism – that is what our century wants." (105). He stands against fear of criticism and condemnation of society in pursuit of pleasures. Lord Henry enlightens Dorian with Hedonistic philosophy telling that life is worthy only if dedicate it for seeking amusements and new sensations regardless to the opinion of society. He claims, "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it" (99), and Dorian takes the literal interpretation of this provocative statement. Lord Henry praises selfish enjoyment and debauchery. According to his belief, sane life is a waste of time. Life is now and it has to be lived to the fullest. Seize the moment and use all the chances that life generously presents no matter how it can affect the others – that is Lord Henry's admonition. Eloquent and cynic aristocrat convinces Dorian that "We are punished for our refusals" (99).

Arrogant Lord Henry plays with his young fellow friend like with a puppet who obediently implements his provocative and vicious ideas in life. Meanwhile he remains an impartial observer of the regression of once pure soul. Being a member of high-class society, Lord Henry is safe and stays indifferent to the consequences of debauchery to which he provoked naive Dorian. New horizons and orientation in life are opened now for the hero. The idea of life full of joy and idle pleasure acquires a crucial importance for an inexperienced fellow. Afterwards these superficial values are the main motivation to act. Dorian recklessly dedicates his life to the chase for new adventures and vain desires. Thus, the new evil of society appears in the face of the main hero of the novel.

Oscar Wilde was the first to raise the issue of hedonism in the nineteenth century. He dared to talk about a subject that already took place in the Victorian society, but was a forbidden topic for discussions. Despite being mentioned centuries ago, the topic still preserves its topicality nowadays. The parallels of hedonistic



programme of modern society are observable in the present time. "These are on the one hand self-realization and the motive to be always seeking sensations, and on the other hand the cult of youth and beauty mania." (Schöning 2)

The most influential character Lord Henry is a cynical man with a sharp wit who manipulates others to act in pursuant to his own hedonistic beliefs. According to Liebman

Henry's beliefs are based on the assumption that there is no moral order the universe is purposeless and indifferent to human needs that the self is not only multiple, but at war with itself and driven by forces beyond its control; and the morality is arbitrary and relative. This moral position leads to a withdrawal from human engagement, the pursuit of pleasure both sensual and intellectual as a distraction from disillusionment, and the manipulation of others for one's own enjoyment and edification. (Liebman 298)

Lord Henry puts art higher than life, praising it for the possibility to experience emotions without being really affected by them. Lord Henry plays the role of the so-called serpent that encourages Dorian's self-absorption and provokes a pliable young fellow to be fearless in his selfish pursuit for pleasures.

Meanwhile Wotton stays apart being only an idle observer of other's life of degradation and the process of decay of the Dorian's formerly innocent soul. Obviously, Lord's eloquent expression of hedonistic ideas put a great input into the hero's evil transformation. Impressionable Dorian easily allows his elder fellow to influence his thoughts, to alter his personality and perception of life. "Yield to temptation" is a belief which praises Lord Henry, but he does not implement it in his own life. He is a kind of tired aristocrat who exploits the main hero, playing with him

like with an obedient puppet. Lord Wotton lives his life through the impressions that he receives from sensual pleasures and disgraceful acts of his young friend. He enlightens Dorian with the principles of "New Hedonism" and seduces him to live a sinful life chasing for his egoistic desires.

Lord Henry was not directly involved in any dubious affairs; however, he was an advocate of sin, having a poisonous effect on everybody who he encounters, including Dorian Gray himself. Despite the fact that Lord Henry only voices his ideas but not lives them in his life, he is the main evil from the beginning of the novel. The ambiguity attitude to life is only seeming. Wotton is only a circulator of infection, but the main reason why he does not implement his ideas in his own life is to avoid wounds, not to be hurt by. "...Lord Henry's ideal, which is to cultivate an intensity of experience whilst paradoxically remaining undisturbed and untroubled by it." (Aubrey 4). Consequently, this bored aristocrat attempts to live his aesthetic life through young, beautiful and naïve Dorian Gray.

Dorian Gray is an embodiment of human's dual nature – his body and soul are symbolically divided. The duality of the hero is obvious. While he acts being unconscious of his deeds, his distorted portrait plays a role of his own soul, separated from him. In this way, the main hero shows what can happen with one who is entirely devoted to superficial values like beauty and youth. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist appears innocent and inexperienced. The situation changes dramatically when he meets an eloquent and tricky Lord Henry- a stickler of a "New Hedonism". "Totally under Lord Henry's spell, this refined young man with high ideals adopts his mentor's words to the best of his ability." (Aubrey 10).

Easily adopting a clear hedonistic approach to life, Dorian Gray makes a step to the way of degradation. He tries to escape from all unpleasant things that occur in



his path and unconsciously seeks for new sensations and amusements. His behavior is characterised by evasiveness. Dorian does not want to be aware of any consequences of his actions and take any responsibilities of his deeds. For instance, he avoids talking about Sybil's death, when Basil Hallward tells him this news. The hero believes that only expression gives reality to things. In this way, "He felt that the secret of the whole thing was not to realize the situation" (270). Dorian seeks for shelter from all his evil deeds' effects in art. He sticks to pure aestheticism in life. For example, despite mourning after Sybil's death he goes to the opera the same evening. The moral conduct of traditional society does not have any importance for him. Dorian remains indifferent to everything and everybody excluding himself and his vain wishes.

More involved in the world than Lord Henry and giving full rein to his love of beauty and his quest for novel sensations, he allows himself to become a poisonous influence on those around him. He becomes indifferent to the effects of his actions, which not only destroy others in ways never specified but also leave him fatally marred, despite the illusion — for that, ultimately is what it is generated by his unchanging youthful, beautiful appearance. (Aubrey 12)

Being impressed by the wit statement of Lord Henry "to cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul" (102), Dorian attempts to implement these beliefs in his life. However, he only quenches the thirst for sensual pleasures, whereas the soul remains contaminated by his misleading acts.

The only character who wants to purify Dorian's damned soul is Basil Hallward. He also dedicates his life to art, but in a certain sense. Basil is a creator of art rather than its indifferent spectator. Being an outstanding artist, Basil has a great sense of beauty and after meeting Dorian Gray, he becomes devoted to the youth and



allure of his new charming friend. However, Hallward represents an old-fashioned aesthetic movement since he puts morality higher than art and can abandon one for the benefit of the other if it will be necessary. Basil is a withdrawn but a decent man who in contrast with Lord Henry wants to improve Dorian and to instruct him on the right path. Nevertheless, he does the same mistake that Dorian does with Sybil Vane. According to Bryan Aubrey, "He allows himself to be drawn out of the sphere of Art into that of Life, and no good results from it." (Aubrey 11).

Afterwards Dorian reproves him telling that Basil flattered him and taught him to be vain of his appeal. In this way, the artist unconsciously influenced Dorian in his way of self-destruction. Nevertheless, Basil preserves his moral and ethical beliefs and awareness. Basil Hallward notices how mean and indifferent becomes the main hero and tries to call for his reason. Unfortunately, Dorian goes too deep in his dissolute life and there is no hope for salvation anymore. Instead of cure of the soul, Basil's sermons provoke the hero to commit a crime in a fit of rage. Dorian finally feels remorse and wants to change his way of life. However his attempt to confess Lord Henry to the murder of Basil fails due to aristocrat's firm aesthetic belief that a man of great beauty has no vulgarity to do something like this. Therefore, Lord Henry's implicit faith in his aesthetic ideals brings him to illusions as harmful as those that accompany Dorian leading his unconscious life. Bryan Aubrey states, "The worship of art and beauty may have its place, but it proves to be an inadequate guide through the troubled maze of real human experience" (Aubrey 14).

The heroes, their values and attitudes to life, emerge a parallel between the subjects that have been preoccupations of the society centuries ago and the issues that remain topical nowadays. The types of personalities that represent each of the hero with their personal beliefs about life can be easily recognised among our contemporaries. The main hero was a kind of precursor to our modern generation.

### Chapter Three

#### Battle of Good and Evil

The battle of good and evil exists in every soul. Each person will face the choice between good and evil during a lifetime. Dorian is aware of that. He knows he is under the influence of Lord Henry and that Basil is trying to persuade him to remain on a good path. The novel is a story about a spiritual journey for Dorian Gray, his struggle to choose between good and evil. The conflict is made evident to the reader by the oppositions that Basil and Henry represent. "Their principal task is to articulate mutually exclusive moral positions and, in so doing, to define the moral options available to Dorian" (Liebman 15). Basil and Henry represent the opposite forces of good and evil, in a way they fight over Dorian's soul. Dorian represents a man who struggles to live his life surrounded by temptation. Dorian is the only character in the novel that faces this decision.

Basil and Henry have already chosen a side. Therefore they do not face the choice between good and evil. "They simply demonstrate by their actions the consequences of thinking and living as they do. In this way, they show the reader and Dorian the limitations of their respective positions" (Liebman 22). Basil and Henry reveal the sacrifice and cost of choosing one position rather than the other. If Dorian had chosen Basil's moralism, he would not have lived the life of sin that he did. "And if he had chosen to adopt Henry's theories he would never feel remorse or guilt and ask for redemption" (Liebman 26).

Dorian is the middleman in the conflict between Basil and Henry. He is unable to deny his guilt and yet he cannot repress his desires. Dorian does not choose a side, he represents the "everyman, whose dilemma is a product of his



human endowment" (Liebman 34). His dilemma is the same as exists in every human.

Dorian notices a difference between Lord Henry and Basil, "He was so unlike Basil. They made a delightful contrast"(12-13). Basil is a middle class man while Lord Henry speaks against middle class values. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* presents mostly characters that are from the upper classes and have "a great deal of money" (Kohl 139). Basil believes that evil is punished and good is rewarded, Henry does not believe in such a moral order. Basil and Henry are thought by many not only to represent good and evil forces but also a conflict between ethics and aesthetics (Liebman 40). Basil believes in art over beauty and Lord Henry believes the exact opposite. Lord Henry believes in beauty and pleasure and lives a very hedonistic and aesthetic life.

Lord Henry believes that appearances and reputation are everything. As he says: "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about" (3), and "It mattered to be known. It is only shallow people that do not judge by appearances" (15-16). Honour and goodness are more of a priority for Basil. Dorian adapts Henry's theory on the importance of reputation, his only reason for breaking off the engagement with Sibyl because she has embarrassed him in front of Basil and Lord Henry, by her poor acting. He was afraid her bad acting would reflect on his reputation.

Sibyl's suicide is a critical point in the novel; it is in that scene that the reader can see Dorian changing. When he first notices a change in the portrait and hears about Sibyl's death Dorian feels remorse and guilt, he regrets how cruel he was to her. Lord Henry tries to convince Dorian to ignore his guilt and forget what has happened, he tells him not to "waste his tears on Sibyl Vane" (66). After

talking to Lord Henry, Dorian admits that the tragedy did not affect him as he thought it should. "It seems to me simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play" (65). Dorian tells Henry that he is his best friend and no one understands him as well as he does. Dorian feels like Harry knows him more than he knows himself: "You have explained me to myself, Harry" (67). Dorian decides that they should not talk about this again and simply look at it as a "marvelous experience" (67).

When Harry leaves, Dorian starts to feel as if he is at a crossroad. He has a choice to make between good and evil.

He felt that time had really come for making his choice. Or had his choice already been made? Yes, life had decided that for him – life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasure, subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. (68)

He wonders how life will be and how the portrait would change. For a moment he considers praying for this curse to end. "After some time thinking about which way to go, Dorian puts a screen in front of the picture and walks away smiling" (68). Dorian is aware of his decision, he knows he is under the influence of Lord Henry and accepts it.

When Basil comes to console Dorian, he is shocked that Dorian does not feel sad about Sibyl's death. He wonders how Dorian could go out and act like nothing had happened. Dorian says he does not want to be controlled by emotions:

A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them. (69)



Basil is shocked, he says Dorian has changed and is no longer the Dorian he once knew and blames this change on Lord Henry. Dorian defends himself and his mentor, he says he owes more to Harry than he does to Basil, who only taught him to be vain. Dorian talks about how he has changed and of course he is no longer the same Dorian that Basil once knew, then he was a schoolboy and now he has become a man with new passions and ideas. He says that he is what he is, there is no changing him and he asks Basil not to fight him and accept that (70-71). Dorian:

Of course I am very fond of Harry. But I know that you are better than he is. You are not stronger – you are too much afraid of life – but you are better. And how happy we used to be together! Don't leave me, Basil, and don't quarrel with me I am what I am. There is nothing more to be said. (71)

Basil hopes this is a phase Dorian is going through and believes he will move and be good again.

After hiding the portrait, Dorian regrets not telling Basil the real reason he didn't want him to see the picture, he thinks "Basil would have helped him to resist Lord Henry's influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament...it was too late now"(76). Dorian goes on to live a hedonistic life of pleasure.

After murdering Basil, Dorian feels how corrupt he has become, he feels guilt and tries to push the emotion away. He knew his soul was "sick to death", he knew he could not be forgiven so he tries to forget (117). He remembers what Lord Henry had once said to him "To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the sense by means of the soul" (117). Dorian decides to numb his guilt by visiting an opium den "where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of



old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new" (117). Dorian feels that "life had suddenly become too hideous a burden for him to bear" (131).

After escaping James Vane and his vengeance for his sister, Dorian feels as if he has got a second chance. Dorian decides he wants to change and be good. Dorian says he has done too many dreadful things and he is not going to do any more. Lord Henry tells Dorian that "he is perfect as he is and there is no need for him to change" (133). Dorian says to Henry: "Don't try to persuade me that the first good action I have done for years, the first little bit of self-sacrifice I have ever known, is really a sort of sin. I want to be better. I am going to be better"(34).

Although Henry argues against him, Dorian believes that there is a soul in each person, "The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned, or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it" (136-137), and Dorian wants his soul to be good, he thinks that the only way for him to cleanse his sins is to confess, "it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement" (141). Dorian starts questioning if Lord Henry is right in saying that he cannot change and become good. He is convinced that he can, he has already started to change. He goes to look at the portrait, hoping that the marks of cruelty had faded because of the good he has done, but, to his remorse, he sees that there is no change in the portrait.

In this mood of remorse, combined with the realization that he cannot stop sinning, Dorian decides to kill his conscience by destroying the portrait that, to him, embodies his moral sense. When he acts on this desperate impulse, of course, he kills himself because he has been, all along, a child of both Henry and Basil, and, unlike either of his mentors, both a hearty sinner and a reluctant

penitent. (Liebman 68).

Basil Hallward represents good in the novel. He is a kind and good-hearted man who never speaks badly about anyone or anything and he believes in the good in people. In his views of life and art, Basil Hallward is a moralist and an idealist, whose values are essentially middle class, consisting as they do of such criteria as honour, goodness, purity and a clean name, a fair record. (Kohl 54). Basil is a professional artist and therefore he highly values beauty. He values art over beauty, believing "there is nothing that Art cannot express" (8), not even Dorian's unbelievable beauty. Basil's character corresponds with the Lord or the three angels in *Faust*. God is said to be all knowing and that can relate to Basil's foreshadowing. When he asks Lord Henry not to poison Dorian because he knew nothing good could come out of it" (11) and when he said that the God would make them suffer for their blessings. "The blessings being Harry's rank and wealth, Basil's art and brains and Dorian's beauty" (4).

Basil cares for Dorian by the way he speaks about him. Kohl mentions that Basil has become a father figure to Dorian (155), however there was another kind of love that Basil had for Dorian. From the beginning Basil realises the bad influence Lord Henry could have on Dorian, Basil: "Lord Henry, has a very bad influence over all his friends, with the single exception of myself" (12). Basil tries to prevent Henry from influencing Dorian:

Dorian Gray is my dearest friend, he has a simple and beautiful nature. Your aunt was quite right in what she said of him. Don't spoil him. Don't try to influence him. Your influence would be bad. The world is wide, and has many marvellous people in it. Don't take away from me the one person who gives to my art



whatever charm it possesses; my life as an artist depends on him.

Mind, Harry, I trust you. (11)

Basil both proves his knowledge of the influence Lord Henry could have on Dorian and admits how much Dorian means to him and how much it would affect both his life and art if Dorian were to be spoiled by Lord Henry. However, he says to Lord Henry: "You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose" (5). This implies that Lord Henry's hedonism is merely an act, still it is an act that gives him pleasure. Lord Henry of course breaks his promise not to spoil Dorian almost instantly. Dorian has become corrupted and his opinion is that Basil is to blame for the misery he has to suffer: "Basil had painted the portrait that had marred his life. He could not forgive him that" (107). Dorian hopes to free his guilt by showing Basil the portrait. When Basil tells Dorian to pray and ask for forgiveness, he realizes that he cannot transfer the guilt and blame onto Basil:

Tormented by the reproaches, he feels like a 'hunted animal', and instinctively wishes to rid himself of his tormentor, that is of the man who in fact represents his own super ego. And this is why Dorian kills Basil. Hallward's death results from the failure of his concept of life and art. His murder marks the climax of Dorian's corruption, and it is presented with great psychological sensitivity (Kohl 155-156).

The main difference between the Lord in *Faust* and Basil is that the Lord gives Mephistopheles permission to try and tempt Faust while Basil asks Harry not to poison Dorian, on more than one occasion. And in Job, God is the one who makes the pact with the Devil. When Basil hears rumours about Dorian's corrupt



behavior he goes to see his friend and speak to him about it. Basil tells Dorian he has been hearing awful rumors about his behavior and his influence on other people, he says Dorian has spoiled his friends:

One has a right to judge of a man by the effect he has over his friends. You seem to lose all sense of honour, of goodness, of purity. You have filled them with a madness for pleasure. They have gone down into the depths. You led them there.(96)

Dorian does not want to talk to Basil, he says he is not interested in scandals that are about him, just ones about other people. Basil reminds Dorian that having money and a position is not as important as having a good reputation. Basil says to Dorian: "They must interest you, Dorian. Every gentle man is interested in his good name. You don't want people to talk of you as something vile and degraded"(94). Basil wants Dorian to change his and think about the consequences that his behavior has on his reputation.

I want you to lead such a life as will make the world respect you. I want you to have a clean name and a fair record. I want you to get rid of the dreadful people you associate with. Don't shrug your shoulders like that. Don't be so indifferent. You have a wonderful influence. Let it be for good, not for evil. (96)

Basil's good nature can be seen through the fact that he never loses faith that Dorian can change his ways and become good again: "There was so much in him that was good, so much in him that was noble. His indifference was a mood that would pass away" (71). Basil says: "I want the Dorian Gray I used to paint" (70). This is an unsuccessful attempt to hold on to the

moral perfection of the old Dorian; Basil is struggling against the

inescapable fact that everything earthly is transient, and his words reflect his dependence on illusion, which prevents him from accepting the reality of Dorian's life"(Kohl 115).

Basil's faith in Dorian's good nature corresponds with the Lord's faith that Faust and Job will remain good and faithful servants. Job does remain faithful to God and gets rewarded for that. Sadly they are past a point of no return and the evil of Lord Henry and Mephistopheles triumphs over the good of Basil, the angels and the Lord.

"Even though Dorian may blame his misery and terrible fate on the portrait and Basil, the creator of the portrait, the reader knows that it is actually Lord Henry Wotton who has the worst influence and is to blame for Dorian's fate" (Kohl 153). Lord Henry is often called Harry, Harry is a synonym for trouble and Old Harry is a name used for the Devil. Basil calls him Harry most of the time, he introduces Harry as Lord Henry to Dorian and that is what Dorian calls him until after he gets to know Lord Henry and his hedonistic lifestyle. The narrator of the novel mostly refers to him as Lord Henry, however his aunt Agatha and uncle George call him Harry. The people who know him the best call him Harry, implying that they are aware of his corrupt thinking and bad influences.

The relationship between Dorian and Lord Henry is very similar to the relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles: "Because you have the most marvellous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having", says Lord Henry (15). This sentence ultimately changes Dorian's life. This sentence installs the fear of growing older and losing his beauty and causes him to make his wish, not knowing that it would come true. Dorian asked Lord Henry if he really did have a



very bad influence as Basil said. Harry replied saying that there was no such thing as good influence. All influence is immoral – immoral from the scientific point of view. Because to influence a person, is to give them one's own soul. He does not have independent thoughts, or natural passions. His sins, if there is such a thing as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of some one else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. Dorian falls under Lord Henry's influence from their first meeting. He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him and that it was the words of Lord Henry that were influencing him. His words "touched some secret chord that never been touched before" (12-13).

Dorian says to the Duchess of Monmouth that "Lord Henry is never wrong, and he always agrees with him" (125). Dorian does not start to change until he meets Lord Henry. Lord Henry poisons Dorian's mind with ideas of the pursuit or devotion to pleasure. Henry tells Dorian that "there is no point in refusing his impulses or desires (13). As Kohl points out there are many instances throughout the novel "where Lord Henry guides Dorian in a certain direction" (Kohl 156). Dorian is the slave of another's attitudes. Also, as Riquelme argues, "Dorian's behaviour and his thinking are, by contrast, chosen for him, just as he chooses and manipulates the actions and thoughts of others" (621).

From their first meeting, Lord Henry starts influencing Dorian with ideas of new hedonism, which is the philosophy that Lord Henry lives by. He says to Dorian "live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing" (15-16). New hedonism is a philosophy that believes pleasure to be the highest value in life. Lord Henry believes in self-fulfilment and that a person should never have to deny himself or



herself anything, as "self-denial makes the soul sick" (Kohl 157). Dorian is extremely fascinated by these ideas and the character of Lord Henry. "He is very tempted by Lord Henry's influence and he cannot resist it. At the same time Dorian's friendship with Basil is weakening" (Kohl 143).

The first remarks of change in the portrait are seen after Dorian breaks off his engagement with Sibyl, when he knows he has done wrong and feels guilty. He realizes that his soul was turning evil and he could see it in the portrait. He wanted to be a good man. "I know what conscience is, to begin with. It is not what you told me it was. It is the divinest thing in us. Don't sneer at it, Harry, any more - at least not before me. I want to be good. I can't bear the idea of my soul being hideous" (62). His plan was to reach out to Sibyl and honour his commitment to become her husband. When Dorian Gray learns from Lord Henry that his fiancée, Sibyl Vane, has committed suicide he feels guilty and terrible. Lord Henry encourages "Dorian to ignore his guilt and move on and look at this as a learning experience" (64).

It is at this point in the action that Lord Henry's Mephistophelian function becomes particularly clear. Instead of taking his friend seriously, he is all the more insistent on stylizing Sibyl's death to a sort of aesthetic spectacle, so that he can relieve Dorian of his responsibility for it. (Kohl 152)

Often Dorian would sneak up to the locked room where he kept the portrait and spend a long time looking at it, "he grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul" (82). When Dorian begins to gain pleasure from seeing the changes in his portrait, it becomes clear that Lord Henry's influence on Dorian is taking control over him.

When Harry first notices that his words have influenced Dorian, "he smiles subtly and remembers a book he read when he was 16 years old" (14). This is early in the story, however Henry does not give Dorian the yellow book until much later. After Henry gives Dorian the book it absolutely takes over his life. The book becomes like a Bible or a road map of a hedonistic lifestyle to Dorian, who starts collecting copies of the yellow book. "Dorian bases his life around the yellow book as some people base their book in the fire" (Kohl 138). Oscar Wilde wrote in his preface: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written, that is all" (2). Which is the same thing Lord Henry says to Dorian when Dorian accuses Lord Henry of poisoning him with the yellow book and asks him not to give it to anyone else (138).

Under the guidance of Lord Henry and of the secret Yellow book, Dorian spends eighteen years enjoying all the opportunities open to a prosperous man of many interests, until finally vice and evil have become nothing but a means of experiencing intense sensual and aesthetic pleasures. (Kohl 144)

Dorian spends years seeking further pleasure, but after years of wanting more he can never be satisfied. He strives for instant gratification and does not think about the long-term effects his actions have. He lives a carefree libertine life. He is very self-centred and starts having bad influence on the people around him. Lord Henry is metaphorical Devil. He intentionally influences Dorian and manages to persuade him to live a guilt free hedonistic life.

Henry enjoys watching Dorian's decline without suffering any consequences. Lord Henry encourages Dorian to live a 'life of sensual pleasure, while he himself enjoys looking on from a safe intellectual distance'. Herein lies the Mephistophelean aspect of his character. Dorian's fatal error is to take Lord Henry's theories as practical guides for life; he does not realize that in reality they represent the cynicism of a rich, bored and irresponsible idler, who finds that talking to Dorian is like playing upon an exquisite violin (Kohl 156).



## Chapter Four

### The Supremacy of Youth and Beauty

Emotion for the sake of emotion is the aim of art, and emotion for the sake of action is the aim of life. Beauty is something very pure, very different from everything else. Beauty reveals everything because it expresses nothing. Things are because we see them and what we see and how we see it, depend on the arts that have influenced us. To look at a thing is very different from seeing a thing. One doesn't see anything until one sees its beauty.

Aestheticism is an intellectual art movement supporting the emphasis of aesthetic values more than social-political themes for literature, fine art, music and other arts. It was particularly prominent in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but contemporary critics are also associated with the movement, such as Harold Bloom, who has recently argued against projecting social and political ideology onto literary works. Oscar Wilde did not invent aestheticism, but he was a dramatic leader in promoting the movement near the end of the nineteenth century. Wilde was especially influenced as a college student by the works of the English poet and critic Algernon Charles Swinburne and the American writer Edgar Allan Poe. The English essayist Walter Pater, an advocate of "art for art's sake," helped to form Wilde's humanistic aesthetics in which he was more concerned with the individual, the self, than with popular movements like Industrialism or Capitalism. Art was not meant to instruct and should not concern itself with social, moral, or political guidance.

In the opening of the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's way of visualizing the studio of Basil Hallward, and his garden, makes the readers feel the little beauty of nature. Oscar Wilde slowly turns his view over the portrait of the

young man. He says that the portrait is such a beautiful art, that it even makes Basil wonder at his own painting. "The full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty"(1) The way Basil expresses his feelings about Dorian Gray, and their first meeting, to Lord Henry, shows that he is bound by the innocence of the beauty and young man Dorian. Later, when Lord Henry sees Dorian for the first time he thought,

Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him. (15)

This line states that, both youth and beauty is considered superior to anything in this world. And also Lord Henry is attracted by Dorian's youth and beauty.

Lord Henry's speech influences Dorian. The words of Lord Henry, "Because you have the most marvelous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having"(20), brings out the pride of youth, meaning that if youth is gone everything is gone.

To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible. . . . Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. (21)

The words of Lord Henry state that nothing is permanent in this world. Thus youth and beauty also vanish one day. He also means that only until a man has his own



beauty, the world will look at him, if it is lost the world will not care for him. Oscar Wilde visualizes that youth and beauty is the important one, if it is lost the man loses all his reputation.

The influence of youth and beauty has changed the mind of the person as an evil house. Thus even after seeing the beautiful portrait Dorian utters,

How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June....If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that for that I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!"(24).

Urge for youth and beauty had even made a man pledge his soul. This also makes impression that soul has become less important than youth and beautiful appearance.

As time passes, Dorian fell in love with Sibyl Vane, a young actress. Dorian, who is attracted by the beautiful act of Sibyl, wanted to marry her. On the other hand, Sibyl, who gets influenced by the beauty and youthful appearance of Dorian called him as Prince Charming. Sibyl also got drowned in love with Dorian in such a way that he is not ready to take the advice given by her mother Mrs. Vane, and her brother James Vane, "We don't want him anymore, Mother. Prince Charming rules life for us now" (58).

The madness over beauty had even let a girl love a boy without even knowing his name and any other details about him. As Dorian loved Sibyl only by seeing her excellence in acting, breaks their engagement, when he found her not acting properly.



Thus the love which has beauty as base will soon disappear. Even Sibyl's death doesn't affect Dorian. Dorian notes the minute changes in the portrait. He just examines it. When he found the changes in portrait is true, he decided to be good, and also felt little happy about his eternal youth and beauty. Dorian hides the portrait and doesn't allow anyone to see it. Thus Oscar Wilde has used the concept of 'art the reflection of life'. Oscar Wilde represents the portrait as the soul of Dorian Gray.

Dorian decided to place the portrait, at the top room of the house, which is locked up for several years.

But there was no other place in the house so secure from prying eyes as this. He had the key, and no one else could enter it. Beneath its purple pall, the face painted on the canvas could grow bestial, sodden, and unclean. What did it matter? No one could see it. He himself would not see it. Why should he watch the hideous corruption of his soul? He kept his youth that was enough. (118)

Even the dreadful changes don't bother Dorian instead he worried that anyone will find his secrets. Thus youth and beauty is like a great pleasure to him.

Dorian not only felt proud about his eternal youth and beauty, but also thinks that he can overcome time. Dorian's pride made him think foolish, his wish to do anything as he likes, and believe that he can change everything in his life, make him choose the evil side again and again. As time passes, Dorian's eternal youth and beauty became the great issue.

It was remarked, however, that some of those who had been most intimate with him appeared, after a time, to shun him. Women who had

wildly adored him, and for his sake had braved all social censure and set convention at defiance, were seen to grow pallid with shame or horror if Dorian Gray entered the room. (137)

Dorian doesn't bother about any rumors and curse. Instead the words of Lord Henry's philosophy about life, and the influence of the yellow book gifted by Lord Henry, played the major part of Dorian's as he brought a dozen of the same book, covered it with different color and read it according to the color which suited his mood. Oscar Wilde says that the bad influence has made the man lead a life in the wrong path.

Basil meets Dorian, after a very long time, Basil goes on asking questions about the rumors and about his cruel behavior. Dorian who doesn't show any interest in answering to Basil decided to show the portrait when Basil talked about soul. "I keep a diary of my life from day to day, and it never leaves the room in which it is written. I shall show it to you if you come with me" (149). Dorian took Basil along with him to the room, On seeing the portrait Basil's face turned astonished.

Good heavens! It was Dorian Gray's own face that he was looking at! The horror, whatever it was, had not yet entirely spoiled that marvelous beauty. There was still some gold in the thinning hair and some scarlet on the sensual mouth. The sodden eyes had kept something of the loveliness of their blue, the noble curves had not yet completely passed away from chiseled nostrils and from plastic throat. Yes, it was Dorian himself. But who had done it? He seemed to recognize his own brushwork, and the frame was his own design. The ideal was monstrous, yet he felt afraid. He seized the lighted candle,



and held it to the picture. In the left-hand corner was his own name, traced in long letters of bright vermillion. (152)

This line shows Oscar Wilde's skill in seeing beautiful things even in an ugly one. Evil thought came out once again, and made Dorian kill Basil. Further he also blackmailed Alan Camphell, and made him destroy the body of Basil, with the help of chemicals.

As time passes, Dorian's pride on eternal youth and beauty went higher. One day, when Dorian was at opium den, a lady addresses him as Prince Charming "Prince Charming is what you like to be called, ain't it?" (187). On hearing the name, James Vane followed Dorian and tried to kill him. "For years I have sought you. I had no clue, no trace. Two people who could have described you were dead. I knew nothing of you but the pet name she used to call you. I heard it to-night by chance. Make your peace with God, for to-night you are going to die" (188-189).

Dorian's youthful appearance saved his life from James Vane.

The face of the man he had sought to kill had all the bloom of boyhood, all the unstained purity of youth. He seemed little more than a lad of twenty summers, hardly older, if older indeed at all, than his sister had been when they had parted so many years ago. It was obvious that this was not the man who had destroyed her life. (189)

After Dorian left the place, James Vane comes to know about Dorian, "Little more than a boy!" she sneered. "Why, man, it's nigh on eighteen years since Prince Charming made me what I am." (190)



During a hunting party James Vane is accidentally killed. On knowing the death of James, Dorian's happiness reached its high level. Even after several years Lord Henry's philosophy about life doesn't change, "To get back my youth I would do anything in the world, except take exercise, get up early, or be respectable." (215) this line also says that he is jealous over Dorian's eternal youth and beauty. Dorian further proposed to Lord Henry, that he has decided to give up all his bad habits, and lead a happy and new life.

From his decision Dorian feels that he had become pure, and all his sins have vanished.

Then he loathed his own beauty, and flinging the mirror on the floor, crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel. It was his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the youth that he had prayed for. But for those two things, his life might have been free from stain. His beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a mockery. What was youth at best? A green an unripe time, a time of shallow moods, and sickly thoughts, why had he worn its livery? Youth had spoiled him (220).

Even after doing all wrongs, Dorian is not ready to accept his fault, instead he reasons out that, youth had spoiled him. Dorian went to the room and sees his portrait with lot of hope that the portrait will regain its originality. But he sees the portrait horrible,

He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that meant. It would kill the past, and when that

was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it. (223)

Dorian's foolish act of destroying the portrait leads to the end of his own life. Dorian doesn't even realize that he is destroying his own soul. The servants of Dorian rushed to the room when they heard a loud cry,

When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was (223-224)

Thus the death of Dorian says as a moral, that youth and beauty are gifts given by God, it must be used as such. If it is correctly used it is a blessing of life and if it is misused, it will turn to be the curse, and it even destroys one's own life. If beauty overrules a person it will destroy him.

Oscar Wilde doesn't give much importance to the female character. Even though many female characters appear here and there in the novel, they all don't have any impact. Among the many female characters only Sibyl Vane has a little more importance, as she is the heroine of the novel. Sibyl Vane, the seventeen-year-old actress who is attracted by the beauty of Dorian Gray calls him as Prince Charming and eventually commits suicide because of him. Lady Victoria Wotton, Lord Henry's wife, meets Dorian, while he is waiting for Lord Henry. Lord Henry often teases or insults Victoria while speaking about her. Lord Henry goes on mocking at Lady



Agatha during the get together. Lady Brandon, did not appear anywhere in the novel, she is just introduced by Basil Hallward to Dorian Gray at a party. Margaret Devereux, Dorian's deceased mother also does not appear anywhere in the novel. Lord Fermor tells Lord Henry about her as Lord Henry asks about Dorian's past. Duchess of Monmouth, attractive and younger than her husband, flirts with Dorian. Lady Narborough, a flirtatious, elderly friend of Dorian, hosts a dinner party attended by Dorian and Lord Henry. Mrs. Vane, Sibyl Vane's mother, with a secret past, considers the practical side of her daughter Sibyl's relationship with Prince Charming. Mrs. Leaf, Dorian's housekeeper gives the keys of the attic room to Dorian.

Oscar Wilde used the device of the painting to address various agendas. The most obvious message is that there is always a price to be paid for iniquitous and self indulgent behavior. The painting is also about the confessional in the Catholic Church. Like the priest behind the screen, the painting absorbs Dorian Gray's sin, so that he can walk away and continue with his debauchery. The story of Dorian Gray is autobiographical. Oscar Wilde saw that his own behavior was leading him down a path that could only end in disaster. The novel is a portent of his own abrupt end, yet it seems that he could not help himself and prevent it from happening.

Youth and Beauty has supremacy over Dorian, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It is often compared with *American Psycho*, a novel by Bret Easton Ellis, published in 1991. The protagonist, Dorian Gray, who felt proud about his youth and beauty, committed many sins and wishes to lead the life with pleasure. Similarly, Patrick Bateman, who is a Wall Street businessman, from the outside he looks perfect, but he is very fond of his looks and appearance. He has a life as a serial killer and also a sex addict. Both these characters are considered similar to each other in many ways. Both of them cared about themselves and the way to lead their life, this shows their



selfishness. The two characters also share their focus on their appearance and give great importance to these superficial values. Dorian Gray wants to remain young and look handsome forever, while Patrick Bateman undertakes many rituals every morning in order to look good.

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, also gives us the idea of soul, the portrait set as the soul of Dorian. Thus when he destroyed the portrait, which is actually his soul, Dorian automatically dies. Similarly in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, the Dementor's kiss is actually the Dementor, an imaginary character, which sucks the soul of persons, leading them to death. If the soul is destroyed automatically life ends.

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is also compared with Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Dr. Faustus, the protagonist, pledges his soul to the devil, in the urge to learn and know about everything. Thus he used black magic as his tool, and enjoyed happy life. Similarly, Dorian Gray pledges his soul, as he wanted to be young and beautiful forever. The portrait which turns to be the soul of Dorian bears the burden of Dorian's body. Thus in both cases, even though the circumstance is different, Dorian as well as Dr. Faustus pledges their souls for their selfishness. If anyone goes against God or nature they will surely meet their downfall.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is also related with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the painting is so good that when Dorian receives high praise for his looks by a man named Lord Henry, he believes that looks conquer all. He begins to obsess over avoiding ever aging even becoming ugly one day, so he sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for eternal youth. Instead of his physical body aging, the painting would change. *Frankenstein* is about a man by the name of Robert

Walton who retells the story of a scientist named Dr. Frankenstein. He is a scientist who tries to create a human being from dead human parts, but instead creates a monster that wreaks havoc in the town. Supernatural forces present in the novel rebel against society's image of beauty. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian sells his soul to the Devil for eternal youth whereas in *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein goes against the laws of nature and religious beliefs of the era when he creates his "monster". In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the thought of aging and one day becoming old, wrinkly and may be even ugly startles Dorian. He wants nothing to do with it and the people he is surrounded by highly influence this, In *Frankenstein*, nobody even goes near the monster as he scares everyone away with his "hideousness" and as soon as Dr. Frankenstein creates him he is disgusted by the ghastly creature he has created. No one gives this monster a chance because of his disfigurement and he is ostracized by society. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian realizes the beauty that has blinded him and influenced his love for Sibyl Vane falls out of her for her poor acting and she ends up killing herself. In *Frankenstein*, the monster realizes he needs a partner, someone who can love himself, someone who can be his companion that is alike him and he explains the reason he was so malicious was because no one could understand this, in both cases, they kill out of lack of love. Dr. Frankenstein and Dorian Gray experience a sort of pain and realization once they have had a second hand encounter with what they have created.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

Oscar Wilde was a member of the Aesthetic movement, a movement that said art should exist for its own sake. Much of what he wrote in *A Picture of Dorian Gray* was a reflection of this idea, from its aphorisms to its ornate prose to the allegorical nature that characterizes the story. Wilde uses aphorisms to draw his reader into the story. In his preface, for example, he says, "The artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim." (22). In the very first line of the novel, Wilde tells us that art, the creation of beauty, is what is most important. This applies not only to the way he writes, but also to what he writes about. He says, "Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated," (9) challenging the reader to find those beautiful meanings. He also challenges the reader to go beneath the surface of his narrative when he says, "All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril." (10) Telling the reader not to search for meaning beneath the surface only makes the reader inclined to do just that.

Wilde's use of ornate prose throughout the novel is another great example of the aesthetic style. Wilde could use simpler words, and he could construct his sentences differently. He does not do this because, after all, part of his purpose is to write beautifully for the sake of writing beautifully.

The story Wilde is trying to tell is an allegory. In keeping with the aesthetic movement, Wilde structures the story as an allegory in order to celebrate this style.



Dorian's story is the story of an innocent young man who falls from grace as a result of the corruptive influence of evil in the form of Lord Henry. Dorian essentially sells his soul to keep his youth. In using the portrait as part of the allegory, Oscar Wilde challenges the reader to discover that art cannot be life, and that beauty for its own sake also has its flaws.

The first thing Lord Henry does after meeting the young Dorian Gray is to discover all about him because he is fascinated by the power of influences, both hereditary and of upbringing in shaping an individual. The story of Dorian's parentage turns out to be a crucial element in his personality and it hints at his future role in the world.

Dorian, as Lord Henry finds out, is the outcome of his mother's affairs with a man of inferior status, at the end of which the man is murdered on her father's orders. Soon after giving birth, Dorian's mother dies, too, leaving the child to the care of his bitter grandfather. This disastrous background hints at Dorian's monstrous condition: first, because his origins are related to crime and sin, which means that symbolically Dorian would be condemned to an equally sinful life; second, because it suggests that Dorian's passionate, crime-inclined temperament is an atavistic quality that would later determine his actions, even in spite of himself; third, because it gives Dorian a tragic, myth-like genesis that partly explains his extraordinary circumstances, his unmatched beauty, his exacerbated evil, and eventually his wish to kill himself. The monster would be, then, a horrid form of punishment sent to people in a particular place and time because they disrespected the divine commandments. The Victorian society depicted in Wilde's novel proves well deserving of such punishment, for in

breaking the laws of the commonwealth they are also breaking man's covenant with the Creator, since it is God's wish that the commonwealth be obeyed for life to prosper. To offend it is to offend Him. In this context, we can understand Dorian Gray as a monster inflicting the Victorians with the shame of their own sins. However, Dorian must not be seen as the strange frightening other; he is the same in his entire monstrosity; his mentality, and pursuits are things made possible by the way he and men chose to live. Like Joyce Carol Oates writes, the social maladies portrayed in the novel are "symptoms of a highly advanced and sophisticated civilization itself" (426) so much so that Dorian's deeds are greatly influenced by a philosopher in his own way, Lord Henry Wotton, and an artist, Basil Hallward. Wilde's protagonist cannot be understood without those two representatives of his age beside him.

The supernatural elements are explained through the changes in the expression of the portrait. The story starts at Basil Hallward's studio, and Oscar Wilde uses the opening chapter of the novel to create an atmosphere quite fertile to the birth of the supernatural.

And now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted

Across the long tussore-skil curtains that were stretched in from the huge window. The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long grass, or circling with monotonous, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive (1).



With the evocation of shadows of birds, opium cigaretts, sounds of bees and sound coming from the city, Wilde succeeds in creating an atmosphere of corruption that makes the reader ready to accept any incredible or improbable thing. We can also notice the regular use of words such as fantastic, fanciful, fantasy, fascinating, mysterious and marvelous in order to prepare the reader to accept the events connected with the world of fantasy, mystery, fancy, phantoms and so on.

The story of *Dorian Gray* is about the portrait that Basil Hallward created of a young Adonis named Dorian Gray. Basil has many times perpetuated Dorian's features on canvas before, but his latest picture is a real master piece, which the painter does not like to exhibit because he is afraid that he has shown in it the secret of his own soul. He then wishes to become Dorian's good angel and to protect him from the evils of the world. That is why he does not like to introduce Dorian to his friend Lord Henry, whose wicked theories he does not approve. Lord Henry and Dorian met and are at once attracted to each other. Dorian is quite fascinated by Lord Henry's low musical voice and brilliant talk. It is under the influence of Lord Henry's tempting theories about the cult of youth, beauty and pleasure seen as modes of perfection and aversion to pain and ugliness as modes of imperfection that Dorian first realized his youth and beauty, their importance in his life, and what use he can make of them. Therefore, Dorian expresses the mad wish that he himself should remain young and the picture grow old.

How sad it is! I shall grow old and horrible dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June. If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be



always young and the picture that was to grow old. For that I would give everything yes there is nothing in the whole world! Would not give! I would give my soul for that (33).

The idea of a young man selling his soul in exchange for youth and beauty is old in the history of literature but Oscar Wilde claims to have given it a new form. This fanciful fatal wish uttered by Dorian for eternal youth and beauty, is consummated by a devil's pact in which the face on the canvas bears the burdens of these passions and sins, in return for lasting beauty with final Gothic retribution. Indeed, Dorian's terrible wish is granted. And the first supernatural event that allows to say so is the result of this love affair with the beautiful young actress Sibyl Vane. Dorian falls in love with Sibyl Vane because of her beautiful acting, and after having learnt that the girl cannot act well any more, Dorian leaves her in spite of her plea for pardon. It is now that Dorian, for the first time notices the change in the picture.

In the dim arrested light that struggled through the cream-coloured silk blinks. The face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth (103).

This supernatural event has the aspect of something strange, something disdainful and horrible.

The definition of Gothic literature can be hard to pinpoint, due to what Jerrold Hogle refers to as an "uneasy conflation of genres, styles, and conflicted cultural concerns"(2). However, Hogle concedes that there are some "general parameters by which fiction can be identified as primarily or substantially Gothic"(2).

The setting for these stories is nearly always in an antiquated space, such as a castle, abbey, crypt, graveyard, theatre or a large old home. The concealed secrets of the past disturb the characters being portrayed in the stories. These disturbances can take many forms, for example ghosts, monsters or anything that assault from the outside, to shed light on some unresolved crime or conflict that cannot remain under wraps. Gothic stories also tend to "play with or oscillate between the earthly laws of conventional reality and the possibilities of the supernatural" (3).

London is not an antiquated space a city notoriously often described as grey, rainy and foggy, which does add an air of coldness, mystery and obscurity. Wilde was one of the authors that repositioned the setting and placed the story in his own backyard, the drearier element of London to his advantage. During the progression of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, every time something evil is about to take place, the streets or weather of London seems to foreshadow its coming or amplify what has taken place. For example, when Dorian has cruelly rejected Sybil Vane, the description of his surroundings is ominous, "Where he went to he hardly knew. He remembered wandering through dimly-lit streets, past gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses" (103). In chapter twelve the weather foreshadows the dark events of the night ahead, as Basil and Dorian meet on the streets, in the mist,



during a "cold and foggy" night (169). Later in the chapter, Dorian murders Basil, thereby actualizing the ominous tone set in the beginning.

The next feature of Gothic fiction listed by Hogle resonates with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and deals with the placement of the painting. Dorian lives in the grand old home he inherited from his grandfather. In this house there is an unused room that Dorian chooses to keep his secret. The room is placed at the top of the house, where one would normally have an attic, with all its spooky connotations. While the room is described as big and properly furnished, the servant, who Dorian calls upon for the keys, states that the room is "full of dust" (137) and "cobwebs" (137). Thus this hiding place of the secret painting is given an air of neglect and dilapidation, which in turn adds a fitting setting to this dangerous object. This helps establish the Gothic elements in the story, which fluctuates from obscure to obvious, moving between subtle changes in the weather to dark and dreary places in the depths of London. The painting itself begins to haunt the main character, its changing image often horrifying Dorian, "He drew back with a shudder. What was that loathsome red dew that gleamed, wet and glistening, on one of the hands, as though the canvas had sweated blood?" (199). It is perhaps an unusual form for such a haunting to take, as it is an unanimated object that haunts Dorian with its transformation, but there is clearly life in the portrait, though the reader never actually witnesses it changing nor sees it move. It clearly has power over Dorian, when he kills Basil,

Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his



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ear by those grinning lips. The mad passion of a hunted animal stirred within him (182).

The portrait starts as an object that is created with all the lofty aspirations of an artist that clearly values the aesthetics in life. Upon its completion it is a beautiful object portraying, by all accounts, a beautiful man. Thus the portrait, an aesthetic object impregnated by the Gothic nature of the supernatural, not only hunts Dorian Gray but influences his very life.

Wilde portrays aestheticism alongside the Gothic and hence his aristocratic characters move around and visit spaces that are beautiful and not antiquated. He offsets the beautiful places and objects, such as "costume ball" "rose-pint and wine yellow topazes"(156) by every now and again placing his characters in settings that add a more Gothic air to the proceedings. For example, the theatre in which Dorian first sees Sybil Vane is described as "horrid", "vulgar", and "tawdry" (60). The theatre is a place devoid of the elements of beauty and finesse that generally surround the major characters. The theatre then becomes the scene for Dorian's first real act of cruelty, which is meted out with all the high handedness of someone believing himself to be better than his fellow man.

The description of his visits to the locked room where the picture is hidden is a prime example of the changes in him,

Looking now at the evil and ageing face on the canvas, and now at the

young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure; He grew more and more enamoured by his own beauty, and more and more interested in the corruption of his soul.(148)

Dorian's ego grows, and much like Narcissus before him, his heightened self belief in his own ability or power will bring him down. The portrait sheds a light on whatever crimes or sins Dorian has committed by showing things such as bloody hands after he has committed murder. However the portrait will eventually also bring him down as is foreshadowed, "it was here the fatal portrait was to be hidden away" (141).

The magical portrait is presented as a real and actual object that is in the real world yet endowed with the magical properties that allow Dorian to maintain his youth and beauty. Its existence implements the Gothic allusion to the paranormal, by fluctuating between the supernatural and conventional reality. There is no explanation offered for the existence or origin of the magic behind the portrait, but we are repeatedly told of how it absorbs the age and sins of Dorian Gray. After Dorian rejects Sybil, he sees on the picture "the expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth" (105). Additionally, during the dramatic conclusion, where Dorian stabs the portrait to rid himself of its haunting presence, it is he who is killed. It is that conclusion to the story that cements the magical power of portrait, for as Dorian kills it, he kills himself.

Karl Miller believes that "the doubling characteristic of Gothic fiction evokes the mixed ambiguous character of human experience, which holds the potential for both destructive and creative transformation" (591). All people will have experienced a person with a dual nature, capable of both very good and very evil, and reading



about these types of characters will then resonate with the reader further than a reading of one that has no inner conflict between these binary pairs. Such characters contain the power to affect the way you view your life, by offering cautionary tales of those who are given all they desire or give into the duality of their nature. Dorian's duality, his capacity for both good and evil means it is possible to see both the best and the worst in him.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* seems to fit within the parameters of the so called "terror Gothic" (Hogle 3). The portrait does confront Dorian's psychological state every time he looks on the ever-changing image on the canvas. The portrait clashes against the normality of the life that Dorian led. His disbelief of its power is evident but he cannot deny the changes taking place on the canvas. It forces him to examine his life. At first he wants to be better only to absolve himself from responsibility. The portrait's effect on him changes his behavior, which is up to a point shocking enough to shatter norms of those he associates with. Neither Alan Campbell nor Sybil Vane recover from their dealings with Dorian and take their own lives. Such is the extent of damage he manages to inflict with his cruel and selfish behavior. In that sense, elements of both "horror"(3) and "terror Gothic"(3) can be applied to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Matthew Arnold in his essay "Culture and Anarchy," provides reasoning against the ethos of Lord Henry's aestheticism and an unconditional application of it. Arnold focuses on its detrimental effects on society and the possibility for societal improvement when aesthetic tendencies are properly controlled. There appears to be agreement, then, between Wilde and Arnold; Wilde's novel provides failed examples of the purely aesthetic life, and when scaled to a larger society, a similar result is



understandably expected. As Arnold views his contemporary society, it is arranged hierarchically, dividing the aristocrats, the middle-class, and the working-class, all of which, Arnold laments, are inclined to live hedonistically, pursuing pleasure and only what is comfortable and easy. Dorian Gray embodies just his defect in Arnold's society. Arnold argues, however, that

There are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self with a bend for seeing things as they are . . . for simply concerning themselves with reason and the will of God, and doing their best to make these prevail; for the pursuit, in a word, of perfection. (Arnold 277)

Arnold is optimistic that may pursue beyond the immediately pleasurable and act to perfect themselves both morally and intellectually. This pursuit of perfection, however, is likely an arduous and uncomfortable task, and is therefore incompatible with pure aestheticism.

Dorian Gray, fails to embody Arnold's ideal, as in his hedonistic life he is seen "creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise in the foulest dens in London, despite being once too honorable for such debauchery" (118). Dorian exemplifies a regression in social intellect from his beginnings rather than the kind of transcendence hoped for by Arnold. Dorian displays no such pursuit of intellectual perfection as he is slowly corrupted and in turn corrupts others, luring them with him into the slums and opium dens of London. Arnold refers to "these able to transcend social classes in society as "aliens" hinting at their rarity to the point of foreignness and to their almost mythical quality" (277). The mere existence of these aliens, however, provides hope that the utter hedonists of society may learn to harness their

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and to their almost mythical quality" (277). The mere existence of these aliens, however, provides hope that the utter hedonists of society may learn to harness their damaging tendencies, and in doing so, better the intellectual and moral state of humankind.

Wilde, too, recognizes this ability to control the hedonistic temptations associated with aestheticism, as demonstrated by the last stages of Dorian's life. Mitsuharu Matsuoka, in his essay "*Aestheticism and Social Anxiety in The Picture of Dorian Gray*," notes that, as Dorian's death approaches, "Dorian ultimately reacts against his lifestyle, choking on his New Hedonism," at which point "a great sense of doom hangs over Dorian" (Matsuoka 78). Indeed, Dorian appears to realize the consequences of his unbridled aestheticism; however, he is much too far gone to salvage. Dorian reveals his epiphany to Lord Henry; "The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it" (211).

Unfortunately for Dorian, this realization comes too late to save his soul from its degradation, long-nurtured by a purely aesthetic life, and he is destroyed. The realization itself, however, is indicative of Wilde's argument woven throughout *Dorian Gray*. Despite Wilde's publicly advocating the principles of aestheticism, Dorian's demise illustrates Wilde's recognition that aestheticism needs to be properly controlled. While the pursuit of beauty and happiness in life is always Wilde's ideal, he also implies that the consequences of one's actions must be thought out and the impact of one's decisions, beyond oneself, must also be carefully considered before acting on any impulse.



and to their almost mythical quality" (277). The mere existence of these aliens, however, provides hope that the utter hedonists of society may learn to harness their damaging tendencies, and in doing so, better the intellectual and moral state of humankind.

Wilde, too, recognizes this ability to control the hedonistic temptations associated with aestheticism, as demonstrated by the last stages of Dorian's life. Mitsuharu Matsuoka, in his essay "*Aestheticism and Social Anxiety in The Picture of Dorian Gray*," notes that, as Dorian's death approaches, "Dorian ultimately reacts against his lifestyle, choking on his New Hedonism," at which point "a great sense of doom hangs over Dorian" (Matsuoka 78). Indeed, Dorian appears to realize the consequences of his unbridled aestheticism; however, he is much too far gone to salvage. Dorian reveals his epiphany to Lord Henry; "The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it" (211).

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The Aesthetic Movement in *fin-de-siècle* England, revolved around the ideal that the utility of one's actions should be to create the maximal amount of beauty and pleasure in one's life, and nothing more. Wilde's *Dorian Gray* appears, at first glance, to promote this philosophy unequivocally. Indeed, a lifestyle based on this aestheticism is espoused in Wilde's opening preface as well as throughout Lord Henry's professorial lectures. Upon closer inspection, however, Wilde's novel is not as wholly embracing of aestheticism as this implies. Wilde realized and depicted in the life of Dorian Gray, a need for a more controlled and deliberate approach to aestheticism, without which morality will inevitably be elusive. The adoption of unrestrained aestheticism, as exhibited by Dorian, results in a lack of remorse, self-absorption, and intellectual regression. For the sake of preserving morality, a concept proven incompatible with pure aestheticism, more deliberation is necessary from the aesthete in deciding upon action. If, in the pursuit of one's desires and of the beautiful aspects of life, the condition of others' or of one's own intellect is jeopardized, the enjoyment garnered must sometimes be sacrificed for the greater good. As Wilde makes clear, it is only through a more restrained philosophy that aestheticism and morality may eventually align.

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**Riot and Rebellion in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the reward of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

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**(REG. NO. 17APEN30)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

**OCTOBER 2018**



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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project **Riot and Rebellion in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

J. Sumitha

SUMITHA J.

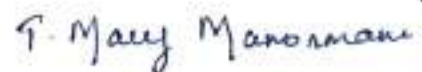
## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Riot and Rebellion in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Sumitha J. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

This project entitled **Riot and Rebellion in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*** subsist the issues of identity and culture and how the internal tribal conflicts and the intervention of the missionaries to dislocate the Igbo people from their religious concerns.

The first chapter presents Chinua Achebe's biography, discussing the general characteristics of his works and establishes Chinua Achebe as the greatest African novelist in English.

The second chapter **Discursive Ethopoeia** focuses on the representation of issues of law, political domination and power in *Arrow of God*.

The third chapter **Dislocation of Nigerian Culture** reflects the issues of religion, culture and pacification of the Igbo identity. It also presents the disruption, disintegration and invasion of the Igbo people.

The fourth chapter **Androcentrism** deals with masculine and feminine discrimination in *Arrow of God*.

The fifth chapter sums up all the highlighted aspects discussed in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

African literature has been defined by several dominant threads and accompanying paradoxes. In both its oral and written forms it has a long history rooted in the continent's famous storytelling and performance traditions. Its classical civilizations are as old as that of any other geographic region of the world. The linguistic traditions of Africa are ancient, dating back to the Egypt of the pharaohs, the Carthage of the Romans, the Sudanese empires, the Eastern Christian traditions of Ethiopia, the kingdoms of the lakes region and southern Africa, and the Islamic heritage of West and Eastern Africa. Yet it is only in twentieth century, especially its last half that African literature became an institutionalized, subject of study and debate in the institutions of education and interpretation. Thus, African literature has the sense of being simultaneously old, almost timeless in its themes and forms, and new, the latest addition to global literary culture.

Written and oral literature in Africa is now associated with the continent's drive for freedom from foreign domination and the search for a common identity. Yet the most powerful and compelling literary texts are associated with some of the most catastrophic events in the history of the continent, most notably slavery and colonialism. The first African writers in the European languages in the eighteenth century were slaves, or former slaves, who turned to writing to assert their own humanity, reclaim the memories lost in the process of enslavement, or affirm their new identities in the enslaving cultures. At the same time, the foundations of modern African literature were laid by the process of colonization. In fact, it was the institutions of colonialism, most notably Christianity, the school, and later the



university, which enabled the production of what are *now* the dominant forms of African literature.

It is, of course, true that forms of creative expression developed in Africa outside the orbit of colonialism and that the continent's living heritage of oral literature bears witness to autonomous tradition; it is also true that literature in ancient African languages such as Arabic and Geez emerged outside the tutelage of colonialism. However, it was during the high colonial period in the nineteenth and twentieth century's that written literature spread across the continent and became an important ingredient of its cultural geography. The major periods of African literary history have been associated with the colonial encounter and its aftermath, still, this association between colonialism and the production of African literature calls attention to an irony that has to be considered one of the key features of the continent's literary history. While the majority of African writers were the products of colonial institutions, they turned to writing to oppose colonialism, especially its political, cultural and social programs and practices, or to question the central claims in its doctrine of rule and conquest. It is not accidental that the most significant period in the history of African literature, the first half of the twentieth century, was also the great age of African nationalism in both the continent and its diaspora. African literature seemed to reach its high point with the two decades of decolonization, the 1950s and 1960s, when the majority of African countries became independent of their European colonizers. Literature celebrated the coming into being of the new African nation and the assertion of a new culture and identity.

By the late 1960s, it was apparent that the narrative of independence was not the Utopian moment many writers and intellectuals had anticipated and celebrated. Contrary to expectations, decolonization did not represent a radical break with the

colonial past; rather, the institutions of colonialism seemed to persist and thrive and to become Africanized. Intellectuals and writers unhappy with the continued domination of African countries by Western political and economical interests conceived literature to represent the crisis of decolonization and to imagine ways out of it. In effect, amidst what later came to be known in the 1980s and 1990s, as the crisis of postcoloniality, creative writing and other forms of cultural expression continued to bear witness to the changing nature of African societies and cultures in the age of globalization. If literature has become important to the study of Africa's history and culture in a variety of disciplines ranging from anthropology to natural science, it is because it constitutes an indelible record of the continent's long past, its complicated present, and its future possibilities.

In calling attention to the dominant threads and paradoxes of African literature, there is always the danger that the diversity of the continent and its complicated history will be subsumed by the desire for a larger narrative of culture and society. It is perhaps the case that one of the lasting legacies of the association between literature and cultural self-assertion is the emergence and consolidation of a master narrative of African literature. But beneath this larger story, the cultural geography of African literature is defined by multiple traditions and contexts. The fact is that while it is easier to talk about a unified literature, creativity on the continent takes place in hundreds of languages, draws on thousands of diverse ethnic, national, and regional traditions; Africa is a continent of many countries, religions, politics, and styles. The *Encyclopaedia of African literature* is intended to capture these diverse traditions while at the same time recognizing the things they share in common.

The eminent 20<sup>th</sup> century African writer Wole Soyinka was the first African to win the Nobel Prize in 1986, for his accomplishment in the fields of literature. His



works are based on society, culture, tradition and politics of Africa. The traditions and customs of Yoruba are typically presented in his plays. His famous work *The Lion and the Jewel* is a light and amusing comedy, and also renowned for its complex themes and allegorical structure. His other works are *The Swamp Dwellers*, *A Dance of the Forests*, *Death and the King's Horseman*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, etc.

Chimamanda is part of a new generation of Nigerian authors swiftly growing in reputation. Each of her three novels has garnered universal acclaim and a slew of awards. Her first two books dealt largely with the political atmosphere of her native country through the prism of personal and familial relationships. *Purple Hibiscus* was published in the year 2003, winner of the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best First Book. It tells the story of the 15-year-old Kabila, whose father is mysteriously involved with a military coup that destabilizes the country. The publication of *Half of a Yellow Sun* was published in the year 2006 confirmed that the author has a uniquely talented voice. Set amidst the Nigerian-Biafra war, the book *Chronicles* presents the everyday horrors through the differing lives of its four protagonists. Her latest novel *Americana* published in the year 2013, is at its heart an enduring love story between Ifemulu and Bonze, childhood sweethearts who are separated when one goes to study in America. Nonetheless, it still manages to take in such themes as racism, immigration and globalization.

Woman political activist, Nadine Gordimer was a South African writer and recipient of the 1991 Nobel Prize in literature. Her writing dealt with moral and racial issues, particularly apartheid in South Africa. Gordimer's first novel, *The Lying Days* published in the year 1953, is a semi-autobiographical work. She was honoured with many awards including the Booker Prize. The Booker was awarded to Gordimer for her 1947 novel, *The Conservationist*.



Albert Chinualumogo Achebe was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1930. He was raised in the large village of Ogidi, one of the first centres of Anglican missionary work in Eastern Nigeria. He is a graduate of University College, Ibadan. Achebe joined the Biafran Ministry of Information and represented Biafra on various diplomatic and fund-raising missions. He was appointed Senior Research Fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and began lecturing widely abroad. Achebe has written over twenty books-novels, short stories, essays and collections of poetry-including *Things Fall Apart* was published in the year 1958, which had sold over ten million copies worldwide and had been translated into more than fifty languages; *No Longer at Ease* published in the year 1960, *Arrow of God* published in the year 1964; *Beware, Soul Brother and other poems* published in the year 1971, was winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize; *Anthills of the Savannah* published in the year 1987, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize; *Hopes and Impediments: Selected essays* was published in the year 1988; and *Home and Exile* was published in the year 2000. Achebe died on March 21, 2013, at the age of 82, in Boston, Massachusetts.

Chinua Achebe, like most other African novelist, has a new challenge to face in his attempt to make African writing in English more contemporaneous dealing with legitimate themes of topicality like - state politics, urbanization, sophisticated life, coup d'état and civil wars in recent past, and appealing to his native audience and outsider as well by establishing the relevance of tribal values in contemporary urban life. He is greatly concerned with the historical, political, social and cultural complexity of the Igbo traditional society in particular and modern African society in general in his works. 'Africa' fraught with conflicts - racial and political - and engaged in a self-conscious quest for identity, has now become more a creative theme and its literature has gained special significance in the world of letters. The native

tradition and rituals in Africa still influence and control the actions and conscience of the individual. The early novels of Achebe re-interpret the 'colonial theme' of disintegration of tribal life caused by the individual pursuit of material progress at the expense of communal harmony and his cultural estrangement. Achebe is not a sentimentalist to idealize his past. On the other hand, he tries to give a true and distinct perspective of African life in conflict with the values of modernity. In *Things Fall Apart*, the umuofia traditional society has a confrontation with the white missionaries who have enthusiastically tried to civilize the highly superstitious Igbos with their new faith and new education. In *No Longer at Ease* Obi trying to purge his society of its maladies like corruption, superstition and distortion of values of life, succumbs to corruption under duress. Ezeulu (*Arrow of God*), who is no more than an arrow in the bow of his god has failed to understand the social realities. *A Man of the People* is not about colonialism but about the whiteman's legacy.

These four novels of Achebe together form a chronological survey of life in Eastern Nigeria from the 1890s when the white man penetrated into Western Africa to the fall of the civilian government in 1966. Like W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming' which describes the collapse of the two-thousand-year old tradition of Christian Civilization in Europe, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* records the disintegration of Igbo society. The novel is not about Okonkwo but about the imaginary typical villages - Umuofia and Moanta of the lower Niger between 1850 – 1900 A.D. Achebe's third novel *Arrow of God* traces the Igbo history under colonial rule to dramatize how Ezeulu the chief Priest of Umuaro has failed to perform his sacred duties. *No Longer at Ease* illustrates the plight of the elite, a product of hybrid culture in the new social dispensation. Achebe's fourth novel *A Man of the People* is set in the contemporary world of a country confronting imported values.



In the novels of Achebe the thematic setting is the environment of Africa. Achebe like Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, and Charles Dickens gives elaborate descriptions of landscapes and minute details of surroundings to create mood and atmosphere and for effect. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe describes the quiet night and its bewitching darkness as the town-crier with his Ogene summons the villagers of the nine villages of Umuofia to assemble at the market place in the morning.

Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits- Dangerous animals become even more sinister and uncanny in the dark. A snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. It was called a string. And so on this particular night as the crier's voice was gradually swallowed up in the distance, silence returned to the world, a vibrant silence made more intense by the universal trill of a million forest insects.(9)

The African folk tales and the proverbs which give African flavour to the narrative and the African idiom as its medium do not merely speak of anthropological peculiarities but are well integrated into the narrative. Achebe doesn't focus the 'spiritual void and mental stresses' of African elite in his novels. He seems to acknowledge the fact that the educated African lives at the cross roads of culture which gives a new meaning, quality and atmosphere to life. There is hymn-singing and Bible-reading but the people also offer food to idols. "Some of Umuofia men are of two faiths like Ogbuefi Odogwu. He was not a Christian, but he knew one or two things about Christianity. Like many others in Umuofia, he went to church once a year at harvest."(52)



The values of life of the traditional society in transition have changed as acknowledged by Odugwu in *No Longer at Ease*:

Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large number of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the White Man. And we too have changed our tune.(54)

Achebe's vision of mutation in African character is more philosophical than historical. Achebe is more concerned with the nature of cultural change than the specific changes due to cultural interaction during the colonial rule.

Colonialism, which is a fact of history, is the moving force of the novels of Achebe that has revolutionized African life and tradition. The novels, as history novels with tragic ending, tend to reinterpret the African past in the present context and advocate a kind of 'anti-racist-racism'. In *A Man of People* the cultural conflict between the two divergent systems is depicted through a more powerful and convincing dramatic relationship of principal characters than the estrangement of Obi Okonkwo because of new ideas acquired through western education.

The sense of tragedy in the novels of Achebe springs from the traumatic experiences of colonial rule and social disintegration. In a literary tragedy the human soul triumphs over suffering and disaster. This 'tragic idea' has ennobled the human characters confronting fate and adverse circumstances in the novels of Achebe. In *Things Fall Apart* Okonkwo's suicide at the end becomes not an act of abomination but is acclaimed as an act of martyrdom for patriotic cause. Okonkwo is still one of the greatest men in Umuofia. In *Arrow of God* Ezeulu strives till the end for Wmuaro solidarity and tries to preserve the dignity, the offer to be warrant chief of Umuaro. Though he is demented in the end, people, would say 'he is the man of Umuaro'.

The Igbo sense of tragedy is characterized by man's futile but persistent attempt to prove his 'chi' good. The Igbo novelists in English- Flora Nwapa, Ottobara Nzekwu, Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi etc have created situations in their novels where 'chi' is quoted with fate, luck, god, guardian, creator and companion. Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* wrestles with his 'chi' throughout his life only to submit his heroism to this enigmatic fatality. Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, *The Great Ponds* and *The Slave* are not mere tragedies based on the Igbo concept of 'chi'; they are also literary tragedies. Abiola Irele thinks that "Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* is a failure as a tragedy because the chief character in the novel does not cut a tragic figure" (174). But the readers have to look for the Igbo tragic sense in other aspects of the novel. The tragedy is meaningful when it is viewed in relation to a culture, a period (transition), a system of life or a generation. To perceive the tragic sense in the novel it is necessary to assess the events responsible for the tragic fall of Obi against the Igbo value-system. In the novel the Igbo sense of tragedy has envisaged two levels of conflict between the individual and his 'chi' and between the individual and the social forces he confronts within his society operating on the psychological level and the sociological level.

As in a classical tragedy there appears a fatal tension between the hero and the moral force of his society. Okonkwo inspite of his heroic qualities and 'orderliness', proves himself unfit to be the hero or leader of his clan by twice mishandling his loaded gun and by disregarding native customs (beating his wife during Peace Week, an offence against Ani, Earth goddess) and opinion of his clan. In *Arrow of God* the tension springs from the Chief Priest's defence of his deity Ulu and himself against the new faith and culture. Unlike his predecessors, Ezeulu meddles with the natural rhythm of life, acts against the will of the clan, disregards the communal harmony



only to be punished in the end by his own god (Ulu) and his people of Umuaro. Achebe, like George Eliot and Thomas Hardy has presented in his novels a tragic universe in which individuals are routed by the stronger socio-cultural forces. Okonkwo's aggressive individualism impelled by his fear of being weak, inner driving force to 'survive anything', his hatred for what his father has liked and his desecration of native customs and rituals, is punished in the end and the equilibrium of forces is restored. The individual is punished but the tribe (Igbo society) remains unaffected. Ezeulu (*Arrow of God*), the obstinate and haughty old man is continually lacerated by his own people as he tries to wound them by meddling with the natural rhythm of seasons.

Achebe's novels narrate not only the story of the protagonists and their misfortune, but also demonstrate the collapse of the traditional society. The central characters have certain flaws in their character which are suggestive of some sort of moral failure and which lead them to their eventuality. Okonkwo (*Things Fall Apart*) gives himself to excessive rage, is overbearing, inordinately ambitious to become one of the lords of umuofia, but has failed to get into an accommodation with the alien culture. Ezeulu (*Arrow of God*) is also ruled by a great passion to be the king-priest of Umuaro but his hubris, unbending nature and jealous drive him to his disaster. Obi (*No Longer at Ease*) and Odili (*A Man of the People*) easily succumb to the charms of modernity and are caught in the web of uncertainty and are victimized by the new formidable forces.

Achebe has chosen the tragic medium to document the events in a particular order of social disintegration of Igbo society and the modern Nigerian society. There is a kind of dualism- character and society - an interaction between the individual growth of the central character and the established traditional life. The little system



checks the growth of the individual in the traditional African society. Okonkwo is destroyed by the outside historic forces which he could not control. When things have fallen apart in the historic confrontation, Okonkwo is alienated and left alone with his own emptiness. The events of *Arrow of God* exhibit the three spheres of existence of Ezeulu-as religious head and repository of the spirit, mmo, and officiating for Ulu, the protector of Umuaro, as head of his family, and as head of his community involved in political struggle with alien forces. Ezeulu's inordinate ambition to be the king-priest of Umuaro is checked by the men of titles like Nwaka and the rival priests like Ezidemili.

Achebe's novel render meaningfully the Igbo encounter with historical change and cultural crisis and subordinate anthropology to human condition to record profound human truths valid for all times with universalizing imagination. Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart* tells the tragic story of Okonkwo, who, determined to overcome the example of his lazy and imprudent father, elevates himself to a position of respect in the Igbo community of Umuofia through acts of strength, courage and endurance. Unfortunately, Okonkwo's obsessive fear of failure makes him a humourless and short-tempered man whose pride and violence undercut his reputation in the community. By erasing the effeminate from his character, Okonkwo makes himself into a man who is unable to fully enjoy his success, and by focusing for so long on his individual struggle to be successful, he distances himself from the communal life of Umuofia. Achebe effectively counters the persistent and self-serving European stereotypes the notion that traditional African cultures are authoritarian, amoral and unsophisticated. In refutation of this stereotype, Achebe carefully describes the complexity and fluidity of Igbo culture, disclosing its essential pluralism. It is however, a society that cannot survive unaltered in a modern world.

Like Yeats' "*Second Coming*", from which the novel takes its title, "*Things Fall Apart*" presents an ironic and apocalyptic vision of the failure to maintain order and balance.

Second novel, *No Longer at Ease* was published in 1960. It won the Nigerian National Trophy of Literature. The novel underlines the moral degradation and degeneration suffered by the Western educated young men of modern Nigeria. Their situation is tragic because they were torn between their loyalty to their native roots and the cosmopolitan tenets of the Western origin. They were miserably in a half-way house. Mercedes Mackay of the Royal African society noted that "This second novel of Chinua Achebe is better than his first, puts this Nigerian at the forefront of West African writers" (The writing of Chinua Achebe 23). The novel was widely praised for its realistic and vivid depictions of life in Lagos in the early 1960s. However, some reviewers felt that Achebe's attention to setting was executed at the expense of fully fleshing out his character who were representational rather than real. His fourth novel, *A Man of the People* published in 1960, is reputed to be prophetic for in the same year there was a coup de tat in Nigeria as it happens at the end of the novel. It is all about the spreading of corruption in Nigerian politics and the growing distance between people and the government.

Achebe's fifth novel and so far the last novel is *Anthills of the Savannah* published in 1983. 'Anthills' stand for the leaders and the 'savannah' is a symbol of the people at large. The novel manifests the invariable fact that the leaders are temporary and the insincere ones are even more fleeting. What is lasting is the nation at large, not the people who somehow climb the ladders of power. At the individual level, the novel reveals the terminal truth that self-examination is vitally important element in one's life and without it life is an amorphous waste. The novel also



discusses the necessity of national integration and religious harmony. *Anthills of Savannah* takes up the matter of interference and dominance of the army in a society where democracy is still in its infancy.

His third novel *Arrow of God* followed his book *No Longer at Ease*. These two books along with the first book, *Things Fall Apart*, are sometimes called The African Trilogy, as they share similar settings and themes. The novel centers on Ezeulu, the chief priest of Igbo villages in Colonial powers and Christian missionaries in the 1920s. The novel was published as part of the influential Heinemann African Writers Series. *Arrow of God* is drawn from an Igbo proverb in which a person, or sometimes an event, is said to represent the will of God. This novel won the first ever Jock Campbell / New Statesman Prize for African writing.

The novel is set amongst the villages of the Igbo people in British Nigeria during the 1920s. Ezeulu is the chief priest of the god Ulu, worshipped by the six villages of Umuaro. The book begins with Ezeulu and Umuaro fighting against a nearby village, Okperi. The conflict is abruptly resolved when T.K. Winterbottom, the British colonial overseer, intervenes. After the conflict, a Christian missionary, John Goodcountry, arrives in Umuaro. Goodcountry begins to tell the villages tales of Nigerians in the Niger Delta who abandoned their traditional "bad customs" in favour of Christianity.

Ezeulu is called away from his village by Winterbottom and is invited to become a part of the colonial administration, a policy known as indirect rule. Ezeulu refuses to be a "white man's chief" and is thrown in prison. In Umuaro, the people cannot harvest the yams until Ezeulu has called the New Yam Feast to give thanks to Ulu. When Ezeulu returns from prison, he refuses to call the feast despite being implored by other important men in the village to compromise. Ezeulu reasons to the people and to himself that it is not his will but Ulu's; Ezeulu believes himself to be half spirit



## Chapter Two

### Discursive Ethopoeia

The novels of Chinua Achebe have been read as text which both totalize and detotalize. On the one hand, a grant narrative of the colonial encounter with what Jeyifo has described as "History capitalized"(54) which centres on great people and events and, on the other hand, counter-narratives and fragments of stories of decentred or subaltern groups. Achebe's novels, and in particular his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, established, the novelistic exploration by African authors of pre-colonial and colonial Africa. It has been widely recognized that in his work a profoundly but subtly emancipator politics figures as a sustained project of demythologization of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial myths of legitimation and delegitimation. Achebe often contrasts the Igbo view of the world, which 'lays a great deal of emphasis on differences, on dualities, on otherness' and on 'the complexity of the world', with the Western view of the world, which is "fanatically singleminded in its own self-centredness"(65).

Achebe has figured as a celebrated and prominent post-colonial writer. Jeyifo asserts that most writers in this field would argue that the post-colonial task in literature and critical discourse is culturally to portray the ways in which the fixities of both the empire and the colony were disrupted by European rule. According to him, the elements of this disruption can be identified as the creation of bounded colonial territories as exclusive 'spheres of influence' of one metropolitan country, the development of nationally administered capitalism, and ultimately, the rise of nationalist anti-colonial challenges to foreign domination. Post-coloniality, on the other hand, takes place in an age of American hegemony, of late capitalism, and of 'imperialism without colonies'. This post-coloniality is marked by the end of bounded

enclaves and subjectivities so that to post-colonial is to be more than merely and adventitiously "ex-colonial". It is within this post-coloniality and its concern with subjectivity, identity, and tradition that Achebe should be located. Moreover, 'Jeyifo identifies the author with a particular articulation of post-coloniality which has its own textual practices and discursive, rhetorical strategies. He refers to this type of post-coloniality as normativity and points out how it entails a 'return to source' and a rediscovery or reassertion of the traditions which colonialism sought to destroy or delegitimize' (56). This is the literary tradition within which Achebe has carried out his task of demythologizing. Achebe's novels engage in the war over representation by portraying both narratives from below and the totalizing and exclusionary representations within the colonized.

The main theme of *Arrow of God* is the efforts of the priest of the God Ulu, Ezeulu, to cope simultaneously with the adherents of the rival God, Idemili, who hold political power, and the British District Officer, Captain Winterbottom, who is keen to make Ezeulu his warrant chief in Umuaro. Ezeulu refuses the chieftaincy, despite realizing that it would give him great power over his enemies. The District Officer imprisons him far from home for daring to refuse the position. During this time Ezeulu conceives of a plan to punish his enemies. He does not eat his two sacred yams during the two-moon period of captivity, and the yam harvest to be called in the name of his God, Ulu, cannot proceed. Umuaro is faced with famine. The Christians offer immediate absolution to those faced with famine for they incur the wrath of Ulu. They ask the people of Umuaro to bring 'thank offerings' to Christ during the harvest festival, abandoning the God Ulu and his priest.

*Arrow of God* has been described as the richest, most mysterious of Achebe's novels. In marked contrast to Achebe's earlier novel in the trilogy, *Things Fall Apart*,



in *Arrow of God* the narrative voices are many and various. *Things Fall Apart* offers a unified perspective whereas *Arrow of God* offers multiple rivalries, interpretations, and points of view. Amongst the British administration, the readers encounter differing attitudes to modes of rule. Amongst the inhabitants of Umuchu, there are conflicts between the generation, and between Christians and traditional believers. There are differing perspectives and interpretations of the events of the novel: regarding the founding of Umuchu and the status of the Gods; the claims of the Okperi to farmland, the ownership of which is contested; and the motives of Ezeulu at various stages.

The central issue in *Arrow of God*, the problem of knowing, is intricately bound to its outlook on law. Achebe spins a detailed web of different interpretations which are offered by a multitude of narrative voices. Most importantly, he interrogates the sources and limitations of the authority exercised by Ezeulu. In so doing he sows the seeds of disorder by admitting into the novel the existence of an 'infinite range of normative possibilities, a diversity of disputing processes ... and intricate connections between everyday behaviour and the living law' (Innes, 72).

Achebe may be said to be incorporating an unconscious and textured ethopoeia in his representation of African negotiations with the sites of power and authority; sites introduced to them by European colonial authority. Ethopoeia - a rhetorical term denoting the imitation of another person's characteristics, identified by the sixteenth century in a work called *Progymnasmata* by Aphthonius - is crucial as a narrative element in the discussion regarding the invocation of legal-pluralist paradigms by Achebe. According to Aphthonius, ethopoeia has for its subject a known person, so that the invention concerns the character only (Kennedy, 203). The European assumption of native discursive systems in the *Arrow of God* follows the pattern of an



ethopoeic narrative trope: prior knowledge, at an ethnic and culturally essential level, being the basis of the individual essay of positional variations. Here representation is a problem that Achebe deals with in his novel, and also creates himself, his same novel being the context for this problematization.

Early in this novel, Ezeulu contemplates the forces which limit, contest and circumscribe his power:

Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real. It was true he named the day for the feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and the New Yam feast; but he did not choose it. He was merely a watchman ... What kind of power was it if it would never be used? (3)

Ezeulu's consciousness of the uncertainty of his power is contrasted in the novel with the approach of the British administration towards him. Whereas Ezeulu perceives his power as one which 'would never be used', the colonial project requires him to exercise the authority of a warrant chief. The 'creative misunderstanding', which is necessary for the British to make an administrative chief out of a man who is certain of the limitations of his own spiritual role, is examined in this novel. This may also be phrased as the narrative invocation of a discursive ethopoeia whereby generation by substitution is the representational law. Achebe demonstrates this both in terms of legal praxis in colonial Nigeria and also in the culturally essentialist terms of power reduced to spiritual terms, typically African, and thus derided as an inferior discourse, like the dilemma faced by Ezeulu.

McDougall has argued convincingly that there is a "complex kinetics" to *Arrow of God*. In examining the meaning of the novel "in terms of mode", McDougall

points out that "the hermeneutic principle of *Arrow of God* is one of fluid movement from one position to another"(7). The idea of fluidity, and of the existence of a multitude of different positions from which it is possible to contemplate the world, is crucial. It is possible to understand Achebe's attitude to law, power and authority only by refusing to stay still through an adherence to the dominant legal centralist paradigm. The work of a number of writers who have discussed legal pluralism will shed light on an alternative approach to law and power. The object here is to explore the main contours of the two approaches, paying particular attention to the arguments by which legal-pluralist scholars have sought to distinguish themselves from legal-centralist work.

Legal-centralist assumptions have been implicit in, but are often openly asserted by, the work of almost all western legal theorists of the past two decades, guided by Bentham on the one hand and Napoleon on the other. The formal or legal-centralist stance may be summarized as the insistence that the 'law' should be confined to the law of the state, that there is distinction between law and positive morality, and that there is an ultimate unifying source of norms in a legal system. The advent of a challenge to this authoritative conception of law in the form of legal pluralism has taken place in approximately the last twenty years. Legal pluralism is generally defined as a situation in which two or more legal systems coexist in the same social field. Griffiths describes the functioning of that which he calls legal-centralist 'ideology':

According to what I shall call the ideology of legal-centralism, law is and should be the law of the state, uniform for all persons, exclusive of all other law, and administered by a single set of state institutions. To the extent that other, lesser normative orderings, such as the church,



the family, the voluntary association, and the economic organization exist, they ought to be in fact are hierarchically subordinate to the law and institutions of the state. (2)

In the legal-centralist conception, law is an exclusive, systematic and hierarchical ordering of normative propositions, which can be looked at either from the top downwards as depending from a sovereign command or from the bottom upwards as deriving their validity from ever more general layers of norms until one reaches some ultimate norm. It is the factual power of the state which is the keystone of an otherwise normative system, which affords the empirical condition for the actual existence of law.

The legal-centralist view has been criticized on a number of grounds. The principal objections levelled against this theoretical persuasion stem from its avowal that all law is and should be the law of the state and that such law is exclusive of all other law. It has been noted, first, that the province of state law is not as extensive as is asserted and, secondly, that the legal-centralist paradigm is incapable of accounting for the frequently observed failure of state law to achieve the outcomes it promises. Thirdly, the formal or centralist paradigm fails to explain why law-like patterns of social behaviour occur even though they lack some of the apparently essential characteristics of formal law.

*Arrow of God* presents with an opportunity to contemplate enduring structures of power embedded in other normative orders such as the lineage or the clan which legal centralism refuses to characterize as law. The failure to recognize *Arrow of God* as a novel that has a lot to say about law may be a consequence of a legal-centralist outlook which views all law as deriving from the state. The adoption of a legal-



pluralist stance alerts the readers to the working of other sources which generate law, to the ways in which they secure compliance and to their effects.

These issues are explored in the novel through Ezeulu and his consciousness that his power, although immense, may not be real. Ezeulu is all too aware of other sources, which generate law and that he himself is not always able to determine the outcome of matters the way he might wish.

There are two key areas in *Arrow of God* around which Achebe explores law and colonialism. The first of these is the claims of the rival Okperi clan that a piece of farmland, the ownership of which is contested, in fact rightfully belongs to them. As a number of different interpretations of the land dispute reveal themselves, it becomes apparent that Achebe is grappling in the novel with the problem of knowing and of truth. The second issue central to the novel, and which enables Achebe to explore colonialism, and the role of law in it, is that of indirect rule. Achebe interrogates both the political and epistemic aspects of indirect rule in this novel. The particular event around which Achebe explores the links between law and customary authority is the forced labour which the British District Commissioner extracts from the inhabitants of Umuaro. In order to obtain this labour, which is constructed as a customary obligation, the colonial power needed first to identify customary authority. This it did by investing in Ezeulu the role of chief. The intimate connections between labour and customary law and authority are explored in the chapter.

In dealing with the claims of the rival Okperi clan that a piece of farmland occupied by Umuaro rightfully belongs to them, Ezeulu finds himself unable to disagree, despite the fact that this will entail siding with the enemies of his own people. He is not oblivious to the protests emanating from his own people, even less to the call for war against the Okperi. Yet, he asks himself, can he hide from himself

what he knows to be truth: "when our village first came here to live, the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi who gave us a piece of their land to live in"(15). Ezeulu finds it impossible to assert otherwise: How could he fail to tell the story as he had heard it from his own father? This 'truth' is disputed however by Nwaka, who wants war: "we know that a father does not speak falsely to his son. But we also know the lore of the land is beyond the knowledge of many fathers ... Ezeulu ... speaks of events which are older than Umuaro itself ... My father told me a different story"(16).

Achebe does not resolve which story is true in the novel and indeed presents a third alternative interpretation of the claim. As District Officer, Captain Winterbottom intervened in the war and settled the dispute in favour of Okperi, which from Ezeulu's perspective is the white man "coming to tell the villagers the truth they knew but hated to hear. It was an augury of the world's ruin"(16). Captain Winterbottom sees both the cause of the war and his intervention differently. He describes the origins of the war: "This war between Umuaro and Okperi began in a rather interesting way. I went into it in considerable detail ... this was started because a man from Umuaro went to visit a friend in Okperi one fine morning and after he'd had one or two gallons of palm wine ... reached for his ikenga and split it in two"(37).

For Winterbottom, the issue of the land claim "was the remote cause of all the unrest"(38). Thus, the readers are presented with a third, and altogether different, variation of the 'truth' about the Okperi claim to the land. The land dispute demonstrates both the problems of knowing and perhaps also that it is undesirable to try to settle on one truth. Achebe writes "wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own"(63). This approach to uncertainty is in stark contrast to the quest for certainty of the British administration. The need for political and epistemological control leads the administration into a creative misunderstanding. Just as the colonial



administration is prepared deliberately to misunderstand the origins of the Okperi-Umuaro rivalry, it also readily misreads the role and purpose of a spiritual chief such as Ezeulu. In the latter case, the deliberate failure to understand the limitations on Ezeulu's power is creative in that it enables the colonial power to install an administrative chief amongst previously stateless people. The colonial state is skilful and adept in finding a chief where none has existed before.

In recent years, there has been a growth of interest in the nature of the state in Africa. The African state, in its colonial and post-colonial manifestations, has been the subject of a vast body of theorization. Here the state has been categorized variously as patrimonial, a weak Leviathan, in decay, or in crisis. Within this wider scholarship, there has been a distinct interest in the creation of the African state under colonial administration and in indirect rule and the role of law in colonialism. These themes occupy Achebe in *Arrow of God* and it is therefore worthwhile to explore contemporary discussions of the nature of the colonial African state before turning to the author's account.

In *Arrow of God*, Captain Winterbottom receives a memorandum from the Lieutenant-Governor reminding him of the importance of appointing native authorities. Indeed, the memorandum makes it clear that his superiors are concerned about the Captain's "stonewalling on the issue of the appointment of paramount chiefs". The urgency of setting up indirect rule is clear from the Lieutenant-General's memorandum which mirrors Lugard's words set out above:

My purpose in these paragraphs is limited to impressing on all Political Officers working among the tribes who lack Natural Rulers the vital necessity of developing without any further delay an effective system of 'indirect rule' based on native institutions.(54)



Achebe is drawing attention to the fact that the British, in their eagerness to set up indirect rule, developed native authorities even "among the tribes who lack Natural Rulers". There has been some important scholarship amongst anthropologists and historians in particular on the construction of customary law which is of relevance here. As Innes has noted: "In 1900, the British imposed their administration upon the Igbos by dividing South-Eastern Nigeria into areas ruled by District Commissioners and appointed selected Igbos to act as warrant chiefs, clerks and messengers to assist them"(70).

Achebe's interest in, and engagement with, modes of colonial rule is most clearly manifest in *Arrow of God*. The relation between Clarke and Captain Winterbottom in its early phase might be said to embody two different approaches to British rule in Nigeria. Through them, Achebe explores the debate over indirect rule which occupied the minds of the colonial administration from the early part of this century. In their first conversation, Clarke mentions a book he has recently finished reading, entitled *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the lower Niger*. Its author, George Alien, is "pretty dull"(33) according to Clarke and also "much too smug" for he "doesn't allow ... for there being anything of value in native institutions"(36). Captain Winterbottom's response to this is: "I see you are one of the progressive ones"(36).

While the recent work on Africa mentioned above has been concerned to explore the administrative and political power exercised by the British through native chiefs, it has neglected the epistemic aspects of this power. Thus when Padmore wrote of Nigeria that "the chief is the law, subject only to one higher authority, the white official stationed in his state as advisor"(317). He was referring not simply to the

administrative and political power vested in chiefs by the colonial power but also to the epistemic or discursive authority exercised by the colonial administration.

A recurrent theme of *Arrow of God* is the attempt of the British Administration to install Ezeulu, a spiritual chief of Umuaro, as a warrant chief. Here Achebe is touching upon and exploring a dilemma which preoccupied the British in Nigeria and elsewhere: once it was accepted that the best way to proceed was by governing through native rulers, what was to be done about those regions of Africa which were stateless and where no native chiefs existed? For Lugard, the answer was obvious. If they did not exist, they must be created. In attempts to find a chief, men were often selected whose traditional roles had little to do with political authority. They were ritual experts or merely presided over councils of elders with equal status. Indeed the introduction of Indirect rule on the Northern Nigerian pattern to the Igbo people and their similarly organised neighbours of Eastern Nigeria proved impossible. From the beginning of the century, administrative officers had created 'warrant chiefs', men who often had no traditional authority but who seemed powerful enough to act as British agents in recruiting labour.

Captain Winterbottom is charged with finding an appropriate person to appoint as warrant chief, so called because they were created by warrant of the colonial Governor, from amongst the stateless Igbo people. This Lugard viewed as the necessary first step in creating indirect rule. It was crucial: "to endeavour to find a man of influence as chief, and to group him under him as many villagers or districts as possible ... to support his authority, and to inculcate a sense of responsibility"(70).

This clearly shows, the explanation of British colonialism's investment of traditional authorities with the title of warrant chief lay in their interest in utilizing them as agents to recruit labour. By harnessing the authority of the chief, the colonial



administration tapped into a rich pool of labour. This was the means by which colonial countries were able to extract periods of work on emergency or developed projects such as roads despite the abolition of statutory forced labour. Achebe explores the intricate connections between customary authority and labour in the novel. This "white man's new, wide road" is built using unpaid labour chosen by the elders from amongst the age groups of Umuaro, in countries under the regime of indirect rule: "modern civil law ... was presumed to apply to the domain of the modern civic power only, not to the customary practices of Native Authorities in the local state" (156).

Simply by constructing labour as a customary matter, the colonial power ensured its continuance. Control over labour was located within the customary sphere and Native Authorities managed such labour through a series of bylaws. It is the attempt to install Ezeulu as a warrant chief which triggers key events in the novel around which issues of power and authority coalesce.

This urge on the part of the British to create these politically expedient positions reinscribing the latent cartography of difference and prejudice, as Achebe shows, was no mean task amongst the Igbo people who were organized in decentralized village self-government rather than under a monarchy or a state system. This is a rich context in which Achebe is able to problematize British rule in Nigeria. It is worth bearing in mind that open rebellion broke out amongst the Igbo people in reaction to the imposition of warrant chiefs by the British, as it did in the form of the Maji-Maji rebellion against German rule in Tanganyika between 1906 and 1909.

Whilst Winterbottom's scepticism about indirect rule is obvious, he has no choice but to comply with directions and decides to approach Ezeulu. Ezeulu is a religious leader such as the British sought to convert into administrative chiefs. This



was successfully accomplished amongst the Masai for example. Achebe presents with the administrator's musings on chiefship. He has experienced nothing positive in the system and the readers are told of Chief Ikedi who, after his appointment, became high-handed and corrupt, setting up an illegal court and a private prison and engaging in mass extortion. This confirms the powers of the appointed chief. To reiterate what Padmore, writing on Nigeria, had commented: "The chief is the law, subject only to one higher authority, the white official stationed in his state as advisor" (317).

The British government's legal engagement with the frontier of Igbo land has entailed, at the level of representation, for Achebe, a referring back of both narrative and event to the indefinite past. Thus every 'present' is already framed as a citation, or everything is continually fabricated in the 'present'. What is considered stake is the possibility of defining limits, a 'structure' that colonial administrators required in order to have adequate knowledge of events. What Achebe grapples with in *Arrow of God's* situation of the 'legal' is that if the present exists only as passing instantly, then it must be true that every instant is always already past and future at the same time.

This chapter has explored *Arrow of God* and shown how a legal-pluralist approach is crucial to an understanding of Achebe's world and to that of his novels. This chapter has argued that it is not possible to understand Achebe's writing within the dominant legal-centralist paradigm. It is only by beginning to contemplate a multitude of normative orders that can start to understand issues of law, power and its representation in Achebe's *Arrow of God*.

## Chapter Three

### Dislocation of Nigerian Culture

The issues of identity in *Arrow of God* are mirrored with the clash between tribal beliefs and the colonial administration during the 1920s and before the sustained Igbo community in contact with Europeans. As a sequel to *Things Fall Apart*, it portrays the significant change in the Nigerian villages after the arrival of the missionaries. The second novel *No Longer at Ease* is projected with the issues of identity and culture during the 1950s and 1960s in Nigeria. But in the third novel, *Arrow of God* Achebe goes back to reflect the Igbo village life on the threshold of the British arrival in Nigeria. The missionaries imposed their administration upon the Igbo by the division of southern-eastern Nigeria into areas ruled by District Commissioners and appointed the Igbo as the chiefs, clerks and messengers to help them. Simon Gikandi rightly puts in;

The conflicts in Umuaro are not a rivalry between two gods Ulu and Idemili but actually a struggle between two conflicting ideological interests and authorities represented by Nwaka and Ezeulu.(153)

The disruptions of Nigerians traditional customs during the colonial power caused the issues of identity when Ezeulu refuses to become a 'white man's chief'. He wants to be an 'Arrow of God' to monitor the Igbo people in order to challenge the new faith Christianity. The resentment among the villagers about their beliefs is one of the responsible factors to raise the issues of identity. In the context, the change in the cultural patterns, customs and rituals result in the conflicts between the Nigerians and the British Christian missionaries. The identity issues of Igbo clan in Nigeria with social order, patriarchal aspects, religion and culture are reflected during colonial

power. Identity is a social construct and it projects the society with the change of cultural patterns. Stuart Hall points out;

Identities are about the questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or where we come from' ... identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation.(4)

The relationship of Igbo people within the tribe and the colonial power represents the social identity, which is all about the positioning of subjects through the representations which are ideologically constructed the masculine identity, feminine identity, religious identity, cultural identity and the questions of belongingness through the novel. It was difficult for the Igbo people in Nigeria to construct the unified identity during the colonial process. The indigenous identity of them is blended with the influence of the colonizer's culture. Achebe tries to project that the culture of the missionaries' cannot be completely abolished through the recollection of the past. The resistance of Igbo people was not merely the rebellion against the disruption of the culture but also the necessity to get free from the clutches from the colonial influence. The persistent struggle of the native people to identify themselves as unified clan poses the questions of identity which was concerned with their desires, predicaments, aspirations and failures. Therefore, the issues of identity are visionary throughout the novel.

Igbo identity in *Arrow of God* represents as the indigenous tribe with the relationship between the religious institutions and traditional beliefs. It portrays their perception to set the principles of their society with certain customs and social patterns. Ezeulu, the priest of Ulu is at the centre to give insight about to preserve the cultural patterns. The Igbo people in Nigeria believe in the supernatural things as a



part of the superstitions of their clan. It portrays the illiteracy among them which makes them to follow the traditional beliefs. Before the arrival of the missionaries, they were known as the primitive tribe of Nigeria. Achebe points out the identity of the African people in the primitive society;

African peoples did not hear of culture from the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity that many African people all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity they must regain.(157)

The identity of Igbo people is projected with the religious influence of the domestic forces and their nature, effect and manner. The '*Ikenga*' is described the strength of a man's right arm. The Igbo clan had the protective deities in the villages like Idemili, Ogwugwu, Udo and other Gods of Umuaro and Ogba of Aninta. Individual life of the Igbo people was controlled by the spiritual forces. The relationship between a man and his '*chi*' (personal God) fosters the communication with the ancestors. It regulates the traditional norms among the people to get control over the evils. The rituals and the festivals generate the social identity and unify them at the time of the crisis. The festival of '*Pumpkin Leaves*' provides an opportunity for them to cleanse the evils and sins, on the other hand, it creates the sacred mood among all. The prayer of Ugoye to the God Ulu mirrors the religious beliefs among Igbo people.

Great Ulu who kills and saves, I implore you to cleanse my household of all defilement If I have spoken it with my mouth or seen it with my eyes, or if I have heard with my ears or stepped on it with my foot or if

it has come through my children or my friends or kinsfolk let it follow these leaves.(74)

The identity of the Igbo clan reflects through the celebration of the festivals which gives the firm sacred dimension and the ritual reinforcement to unify them in the community. In addition to this central festival Igbo people, the prayers are performed to all the minor deities in the six villages. Achebe says that "it was the only assembly in Umuaro which a man might look to his right and find his neighbour and look to his left and see the God standing there"(203). The social structure of the Igbo people is based on the religion and the leadership. But the confused leadership in Umuaro constitutes the issues of social identity in the clan on the issue of land ownership with Okperi. The different attitudes of Nwaka and Ezeulu, the chief priests of the deities Idemili and Ulu respectively, make the fertile ground for the missionaries to eradicate the religious beliefs of the Igbo people.

The cultural identity of the Igbo clan is changed by the intervention of the missionaries. The colonial administration averted the war between Umuaro and their neighbours, Okperi. The appointment of the warrant chiefs from the Igbo clan disrupted the social identity and the missionaries as the 'breaker of the guns' made a formidable appearance in the Igbo land as the ruler. It became an evident that the Chief Priest of the Ulu, Ezeulu predicts the forthcoming catastrophe about the disharmony and the disintegration of the clan. He instructs his son, Oduche regarding the value of the Igbo cultural identity. "When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned to another thing... your people should know the custom of this land; if they don't you must tell them"(13). Ezeulu seeks social balance and coexistence between the indigenous tradition and the new colonial forces.

The missionaries were able to convince the Igbo people regarding the superstitious and bad customs of the clan and appealed them to join Christianity. "Mr Goodcountry told the converts of Umuaro about the early Christians of the Niger Delta who fought the bad customs of their people, destroyed shrines and killed the sacred iguana"(47). Oduche, the son of Ezeulu comes under influence of the missionaries and tries to harm the sacred royal python which is known as a symbol of ancestor worship. Oduche's effort to put the snake into the box, made by a missionary carpenter, is symbolic of the efforts of the Christian forces to vanquish the traditional Igbo religious faith. Ezeulu defends his act and it intimates the indirect approval of the new force of the missionaries. The issues of identity of the Igbo clan in Nigeria explore the dilemma of the Chief Priest Ezeulu including all the people, whose traditional roles had little to do with missionaries. The Igbo people were ritual experts or merely presided over councils of the elders with equal status. Critic Lugard comments that the dislocation of the Nigerian culture under British influence was crucial;

To endeavour to find a man of influence as chief, and to group him under him as many villages or districts as possible...to support his authority, and to inculcate a sense of responsibility.(70)

Achebe spins a detailed web of different issues which are the sources and the limitations exercised by Ezeulu. By the time, he sows the seeds of disorder and mistrust of power. But Ezeulu defied the clan averted the war with Okperi, which brought Winterbottom to break the guns. He testified in favour of Okperi, and against Umuaro, in the land dispute. It made Ezeulu to send his son to learn the knowledge of missionaries. It is interplay of the forces, domestic and remote. By taking into



account, the pacification of Igbo people in *Arrow of God* relates the issues of identity of Igbo clan in Nigeria.

The social identity of pre-colonial and colonial Igbo people is reflected through the conflicts between continuity and change in the social patterns. The resistance of Igbo to colonial power through their culture, customs, and traditional patterns is the manifestation of the problematic relationship of two powers. The social identity of Igbo people is filtered through the belongingness and the different social layers of the customs. The dispute on the land ownership between Umuaro and Okperi reveals an internal crisis of the social and political knots of the tribe. Umuaro villagers decide to send an emissary to Okperi to resolve the matter either by peace or war. Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of the Ulu resist them by saying: "I know", He told them, "my father said this to me that when our village first came here to live the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi, who gave us a piece of their land to live in"(16). But Nwaka, one of the 'titled' men of Umuaro convinces the people that the Okperi people were the wanderers and they were driven by the people of Umuofia, Abame and Aninta respectively.

The clash between Ezeulu and Nwaka to identify as the most respectable and powerful persons in Umuaro testifies the social identity of their belongingness of the land issue. The approvals and disapprovals of the leaders rest at the end to send an emissary to Okperia. It reminds the way to prove the social power through the war with Okperi. Akukalia goes to Okperi with three companions but fails to communicate properly and breaks the 'ikenga' of the town-crier, which is known as the strength of man's right arm. As a result, the bullet from the Ebo's gun pierced through the chest of Akukalia and the issues of social power to identify each other that take place by killing the people. Achebe states;

The war was waged from one Afo to the next. On the day it began Umuaro killed two men of Okperi. The next day was Nkwo, and so there was no fighting. On the two following days, Eke and Oye, the fighting grew fierce. Umuaro killed four men and Okperi replied with three, one of the three being Akukalia's brother, Okoye.(28)

The fight between the two villages makes the fertile ground for the missionaries to take over the charge of the society. It is evident that the missionaries win the favour of Okperi by giving them the disputed land. It is from the views of Ezeulu, "white man should come from so far to tell them the truth they knew but hated to hear. It was an augury of the world's ruin"(7). He points out that the disintegration of Igbo social identity is caused by the missionaries. For Winterbottom, the issue of the land claim "was the remote cause of all the unrest and found without any shade of doubt that it belonged to Okperi"(38). The colonial administration is prepared deliberately to misunderstand the origins of the Okperi-Umuaro rivalry. Achebe adds that "Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion was like a leper"(43). It is all about to pacify the Igbo clan and to rule the society. Ezeulu's imprisonment in Okperi by the missionaries for thirty-two days prevented him to perform the ritual of eating the sacred yam as he was not at home. It was the time to announce the *New Yam Feast*, but Ezeulu couldn't name the day of the *New Yam Feast*. It caused the hostility among the clan. The missionaries deliberately caused the crisis by taking Ezeulu away from Umuaro to prove that the God Ulu is a false God. As a result, the Igbo clan pacified from their beliefs and accepted the new religion.

The issues of social identity of the Igbo become the stepping stone for the missionaries to disrupt the traditional patterns of the society. Ezeulu sends his son Oduche as a spy to know the Christian ideology to protect the identity of the Umuaro



Igbo people when he comes to know the possible results of the changing tribal social patterns. The missionaries disrupted the culture of the Igbo people by trade and converted some of them to Christianity.

Ezeulu realizes that the social status can only be obtained by performing well within the society. But the role that had given to him by the society was not the influential one. His desire to identify more influential makes him to send one of his sons to join the missionaries. Nwaka's active conviction in the society deteriorates Ezeulu's power. As a result, he goes against the traditional ethics of the society. According to Fanon, "traditional authorities, sanctioned by the occupying power, feel threatened by the growing endeavours of the elite to infiltrate the rural masses"(66). The social identity of the Igbo finds disrupted due to the colonial impact. David Carroll points out;

The authoritarian agent (Ezeulu) in seeking to escape from the uncertainties of the new situation identifies himself with the source of his power and resists involvement in an uncertain dialectic. Each man becomes vulnerable through the rigidity of his view; in demanding that the world conform to their premises they become the victims of the new contingency.(117)

Ezeulu makes the people to believe in Ulu and then surrenders by the inexplicableness of the events. "It looked as though the Gods and the powers of event finding winterbottom handy had used him and left again in order as they found him"(232). The social identity of Igbo people is based on the gender equality. Achebe points out that "The Igbo sensibility has never been comfortable with anything so absolute and clear cut" as "man is boss"(41). It is evident from the novel that the



issues of social identity are explored through the internal and external conflicts in Nigeria.

Igbo religion portrays the beliefs of the Igbo people subsequently the judicious system that evokes the issues of the social identity as far as individual roles concerned with the cultural patterns of the clan. The town crier's instrument '*ikenga*' is considered as the most effective 'tool' of the tribe to inform everyone about the different issues of the clan. Akukalia, as an emissary of the Umuaro, goes to Okperi to settle the land issue, but is not treated politely and provoked to break the '*ikenga*' of the town crier. It leads the murder of him by Ebo from Okperi and it was the justice made by the Okperi clan to initiate the war between two villages. According to the clan, it is believed that the breaking of '*ikenga*' is an inauspicious act and the concerned person and the village is an enemy. It is a strange belief and the judicial system of the clan to decide the social power of them.

The beliefs of the clan may be termed as the 'superstitions'. The wicked medicine man like Otakekpele, provides the strong medicines to the clan to drive away the evil spirits from the bodies of sick people by booming the gunshots as the healing process. The Igbo people follow the instructions of the medicine man to keep the clan away from the evil spirits. Obika challenges the power of Otakekpele and throws him away into the bush during mask dancing spirits. The narrator says;

Obika had dropped his machet, rushed forward and in one movement lifted Otakekpele off the ground and thrown him into the near-by bush in a shower of sand.....Otakekpele struggled powerlessly to his feet pointing an impotent finger at Obika who had already turned his back on him.....The Mask arrived appropriately on the crest of the excitement. The crowd scattered in real or half-real terror.(198)

According to the clan, it was an abomination against the God of Ulu because the power of the cruel medicine man doesn't allow Ezeulu to declare the *New Yam Festival* and the elders pass the order about the death of Obika, who is killed as a kind of sacrifice to the God, Ulu instead of a goat or a cow. The belief of the clan to scarify the clansman to the God is a heart-wrenching one which poses the issues of their judicious system. It may be called the victory of the Idemilli over God, Ulu. The clash between Ezeulu and Nwaka grapples in the terms of 'power' in the clan as the issues of individual identities to regulate the social order.

Both the beliefs among Igbo people fall them apart from each other. The foremost carries out the division between the villages like Umuaro and the later made them to accept Christianity due to the delay in declaration of the festival by Ezeulu. Firstly, it can be noted that the war between the villages was imposed by Nwaka's decision which made possible for the missionaries to rule over there by finding out the kind of source to execute their power. Secondly, the 'excessive pride' of Ezeulu regarding the declaration of festival results with an encroachment of missionaries in the religious issue which convinced the people about Christianity is more powerful than the God Ulu to protect them, which fall them apart.

The religion of any society regulates the social order and cultural patterns as the cohesive force to bound people together with certain values of traditional aspects. The rituals and the ceremonies activate the reciprocal relations between the people as a bond of the religious identity. The downfall of the Igbo religion by the missionaries through the religious power of Christianity is a responsible factor in posing the questions of the issues of religious identity. The chief priest of the god Ulu, Ezeulu performs the religious rituals, offer prayers and sacrifices to the deity on behalf of the Igbo people of Umuaro. The festival of the Pumpkin Leaves marks the end of the old



year and the arrival of the New Year. He is considered as the man of religious power among Igbo people. "Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real"(3). The Igbo people follow the instructions of Ezeulu to celebrate the festival of purification, which is known as the *New Yam Year*. Achebe puts in the religious identity of Ezeulu as;

It was true he (Ezeulu) names the day for feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam Feast; but he did not choose the day. He was merely a watchman. His power was no more than the power of the child over a goat that was said to be his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know who the real owner was. No! the Chief Priest of Ulu was more than that, must be more than that. If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival- no planting, no reaping. But could he refuse? No Chief Priest had ever refused. So it could not be done. He would not dare.(3)

The religious power of Ezeulu is the superficial one which cannot be exercised. On the other hand, as a man of thoughts, he executes his equation with his deity, Ulu. The Igbo people believe that they are protected by the power of Ulu. The belief constitutes unity among them in the six villages. According to Satyanarain Singh; "God in the novel is de-mystified and brought right into the midst of the people's struggles with the creation of Ulu as the guardian deity of Umuaro"(133).

Nwaka, the "owner of the words", is well-acquainted about the God Ulu, and he considers Idemili than Ulu. The dispute between Nwaka and Ezeulu shifts the focus of the Igbo people in order to refuse Christianity. It poses the questions of the religious identity and leads to the complexity among them about the social concerns.



As a result, the Igbo tribe was trapped in the web of dilemma regarding the security and solace. Ezeulu, as a priest of Ulu, fails to understand the mighty power of Christianity and sends his son to learn the magic of the missionaries. His justification regarding the same leads to the acceptance of Christianity. He reveals;

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place.(47)

Ezeulu accepts the fact that the missionaries are powerful. The new religion of them is on the verge of shattering the religious power of the village. He wants to find a way to balance his individual religious power by maintaining the Igbo traditions. His disapproval of war on Okperi is one of the reasons to resist the colonial power. The narrator puts in;

The man who carries a deity is not a king. He is there to perform its ritual and to carry sacrifice to it. But I have been watching this Ezeulu for many years. He is a man of ambition; he wants to be king, priest, diviner, all.(26-27)

The python is considered as the most revered animal among Igbo people. It is worshipped as 'father'. But Oduche, Ezeulu's son keeps the python into the box and tries to kill it. It is an abomination against their deity. Ezeulu's consideration to the act of his son without any punishment signifies the duality in the religious faith among the Igbo clan, which is considered as the issue of religious identity of the tribe. David Carroll identifies the religious control of Ezeulu. He observes;

Ulu has reasserted his control over the divine half of Ezeulu's ambiguous nature in an unmistakable way, all doubts and the

perplexities are resolved.....Now the priest becomes once more the remote agent of the supreme god, rather than the representative of the clan.(116)

The tragic death of Obika lessens the religious power of the Igbo clan. Ezeulu seems a failure to convince his clan about the power of Ulu to celebrate the New Year by offering the sacrifices. He loses his power to see the moon in the sky subsequently he cannot guide his people about the religion of the tribe which was replaced by the new change. The collapse and the ruin of the religious power of the Igbo clan is an instance of the agony for the worshippers of Ulu.

Christianity ruled the Igbo tribe by its laws and promised security against the possible wrath of Ulu. It made Igbo to believe; "praying that the day would not be far when the priest and all his people would turn away from the worship of snakes and idols to the true religion"(214).The missionaries promoted Igbo to abandon the 'snakes and idols' and join the church to become civilized and find a salvation. Christianity provided the stronger protection than the deity, Ulu. Christ is believed to be the strong, merciful and forgiving and Ulu in comparison to Christianity is weak and stubborn; the stubbornness of the native deity caused the religious identity. The missionaries declare, "Ulu who is a false god can eat one yam the living God who owns the whole world should be entitled to eat more than one"(215-216). It is evident in the novel when Igbo people accepted the white man's religion. It marks the changes in the religious identity. The alien indigenous gods were replaced by the change invented by the missionaries. Ezeulu's power, in the beginning to instruct the harvesting had lost its magic at the end subsequently his religious identity and ambition to maintain the Igbo tradition by celebrating *New Yam Festival*. The narrator explains, 'Thereafter any yam harvested in his fields was harvested in the name of his



(Ezeulu's) son"(230). The religion of Igbo people got less importance than Christianity.

The struggle of the Igbo people in Nigeria in the pre-colonial and colonial period marked the disruption of their unified identity by the power of Christianity. As a result, Christianity is identified as the source of their power in *Arrow of God*. Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Umuaro fails to continue the tradition of the Igbo to celebrate the 'New Yam Festival' and the catechist at the church made the people to believe in Christianity by convincing them to protect their yams. The identity of the Igbo people was based on the seasons which are regulated by the rituals and festivals. Ezeulu, as a Chief Priest of Ulu, holds the religious power to monitor all the aspects of their culture. The agricultural tasks and purification rites are used to perform by the message of the God Ulu. Ezeulu thought that he had immense power over the year, over the crops and therefore over the people.

The disruption of the Igbo identity starts with the land issue of Okperi and Umuaro. The missionaries divided them and declared the decision in favour of Okperi. The power relations between Ezeulu and Nwaka is the another instance of the division in the tribe and Ezeulu tries to preserve the identity of the Igbo people, but his limited power didn't help him to resist the colonial impact. He permits one of his sons to join the missionaries to learn the power of their religion, but it heralds the disruption of his identity consequently the disruption of the clan. He becomes a 'tool' or an 'arrow' in the bow of his God with no power in his hands. Secondly, Ezeulu's decision to refuse the offer of the missionaries as the Chief of the village in presence of the elders or ndichie of his clan results into the thirty-two days imprisonment of him in Okperi by the missionaries.



Ezeulu is bewildered by the ways of the new age. He couldn't see the society changing. He regarded himself to be the god, who founded their town. He expected everyone- his wives, his children, his kinsmen, his friends and even his enemies to follow him and act like himself. His overconfidence of his power didn't favour him long. As a result, the people believed that no man is greater than the community. Achebe explains the inability of Ezeulu to keep pace with the time to announce the 'New Yam Festival'. The Igbo use ritual as a safeguard against the Europeans, to pacify the mysterious spirit world, which surrounds them. They spend the greater part of their lives with the dilemma, which marked them to understand that the two worlds never achieve any insight into each other's systems of value.

The Whiteman broke the guns of Umuaro which signals to the Igbo people about the brutal treatment given by them to the Abame villagers in the novel *Things Fall Apart*. The Igbo didn't speak about it. "The story of what soldiers did in Abame was still told with fear, and so Umuaro made no effort to resist but laid down their arms"(27). The fear of missionaries among Igbo people is revealed by the narrator. He say:

Everywhere elders and men of title heard the signal and got ready for the meeting. Perhaps it was the threat of war. But no one spoke of war any more in these days of the white man. More likely the deity of Umuaro had revealed through divination a grievance that must be speedily removed, or else ... But whatever it was-a call to prepare for battle or to perform a communal sacrifice-it was urgent.(141)

To some extent, the disruption of Igbo people is resisted by Ezeulu challenging the missionaries. At first, he tried to avert the war with Okperi on the land ownership so it could make certain impact to fight with the missionaries with unique

force. But he, unfortunately, didn't succeed in it. Secondly, he favoured his son to join the missionaries to keep an 'eye' there to know the secrets of them. Lastly, he rejected the call of the missionaries being as a Chief of the village under their rule. He says, "tell your white man that Ezeulu doesn't leave his hut. If he wants to see me he must come here"(139). His vision to keep the society united is seen from his intention when he cautions Akuebue, "We did many things wrong in the past, but we should not therefore go on doing the same today"(132). It is noticeable from the comment that the identity of the Igbo people was erased by the colonial power in the past. But the Igbo religion kept them altogether for time being and it was again at the cusp of the disruption of the clan.

Ezeulu's pride as a powerful religious man and Chief Priest in Umuaro is an example of the relational system of the Igbo community, which identifies them integrated. But the disruption of their identity due to diverse and disorderly elements of society creates chaos among the clan. The psychologists Laplanche and Pontalis state about the identification of the social system;

Identifications viewed as a whole are in no way a coherent relational system. Demands coexist within an agency like the super-ego, for instance, which are diverse, conflicting and disorderly. Similarly, the ego-ideal is composed of identifications with cultural ideals that are not necessarily harmonious.(208)

The concept of identity doesn't signal the stable and unchanging social patterns. It changes the way of belongingness and self-preservation. The pre-colonial Igbo identity demolishes in the demand of co-existence with an agency like Christianity.

Achebe tries to reflect the connectivity between illiteracy and ignorance. The Igbo people were simple and illiterate, but ignorant as well. They were captivated by the change- the change in religion, change in cultural patterns, change in customs and change in ethical values, but they paid for it a high cost that is the disruption of their identity as an integrated people in Nigeria. *Arrow of God* reflects the issues of identity through internal tribal conflicts and the intervention of the missionaries to dislocate the Igbo people from their religious concerns. In this novel Achebe focuses individual pride in fostering status in the form of identity issues versus social patterns of the Igbo people fall them apart during the colonial phase.



## Chapter Four

### Androcentrism

The concept of gender, as it is used today, came into common usage during the early 1970s. It was used as an analytical category to draw a line between biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviours and competencies, which are then assigned as either "masculine" or "feminine". Something is said to be gendered when its character is either masculine or feminine, or when it exhibits patterns of difference by gender. It gives expression to action, or doing of gender and it signifies outcomes that are socially constructed and gives men advantages over women. The term gender has been used to refer to social, cultural and psychological aspects of masculinity and femininity. Gender is also known as the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person. Gender is defined by Scott in Zinsser as:

A constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily difference ...(54)

This extract emphasises the social differences between female and male and it is this difference that prevents women and men from participating equally in social, political, economic and cultural life. Gender refers to culturally ascribed notions about "femininity" and "masculinity". Gender is used as a basic category, and once people decide what they were, they interpret everything they do in the light of that. Gender means the socially defined capacities and attributes assigned to persons on the basis of sexual characteristics. People make gender attributions; they decide whether someone is male or female when they see them. These gender attributions form the foundation for understanding other components of gender such as gender roles (behaving like a female or male) and gender identity.

Patriarchy is very important in the discussion of gender issues. Pilcher and Whelehan say that patriarchy literally means "rule by the male head of a social unit"(93). It also refers to the elder who has power over others in the social unit including other men, women and children. Feminists have used the term to refer to the social system of male domination over women. Male domination is very pervasive in African society. Women are regarded as "honorary children". The female is not regarded as a "whole" being; she is viewed as unfinished, physically mutilated and emotionally dependent. On the other hand, men are designed to be dominant.

Gender stereotypes are sets of beliefs about what it means to be female or male and include information about physical appearance, attitude and interest, psychological traits, social relations and occupation. Most important, these various dimensions are interrelated; simply knowing that an individual is female implies that this person will have certain physical characteristics (soft voice, dainty, graceful actions and certain psychological traits- nurturing, dependent, weak, emotional) and will engage in particular kinds of activities (child care, cooking, gardening).

These stereotypes can result in gender inequality, especially if people do differentiate their roles according to gender. From childhood, people are surrounded by gender stereotypes. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in social institutions, community actions, social beliefs and people's desires, that it appears to society as completely natural. Gender is not something people are born with, and not something people have, but something people do, something people perform. Some of these gender activities and spheres have greater power and prestige than others; a division of labour can also be a division of social value. Across societies, the gender division of labour involves differential power and status. Men, in most cultures, have more access to positions of public power and influence than women, while women, in most



cases, wield considerable influence in the domestic setting or in other non-public domains.

The patriarchal Igbo clan is represented in *Arrow of God* by holding the rights to make the laws, control the economy, declare the fight wars and follow the social norms through customs. Masculine identity in Igbo clan has two facets; one is social order that to be maintained with the norms of the community and the other is to regulate the religious beliefs by performing the rituals to their deities. Ezeulu is powerful in the context of his status a chief priest of the God Ulu. He is the intermediary between the God and the clan. Yam crop is at the centre of it, which connects the God and the clan. There is a strong relationship between Yam and masculinities. Yam becomes the yardstick to measure the manliness. It is marked with the respect as the Igbo men deserve such kind of respect in the familial relations.

The masculine identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria during the colonial period mirrors the issues of individuality and the status. Ezeulu struggles to continue his identity as a Chief Priest of the God Ulu, while Nwaka makes an impression as a great orator being 'owner of Words'. Ezeulu declares the festival '*Pumpkin Leaves*' by his priestly power. "If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival-no planting and no reaping"(3). It is Ezeulu's dominant way of act among the Igbo people to hold the position as a Chief of the society. The leaders of the Umuaro decide to send an emissary with white clay to Okperi for peace or war. Ezeulu resists them by saying that the God of "Ulu would not fight an unjust war"(15). The decision of the leaders of Umuaro and the Ezeulu's prevention consist of the crisis of the masculine identity among Igbo tribe on the issue of land ownership.

Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to join Christianity though his wife opposed him. "Oduche's mother, Ugoye, was not happy that her son should be chosen for sacrifice



to the white man. She tried to reason with her husband, but he (Ezeulu) was impatient with her" (47). Ezeulu responded her by saying that she has no concerns with the son's fate. Achebe points out: "How does it concern you what I do with my sons?" (47). It signifies the polygamy of the men in the house to decide all the things. It makes the women voiceless in certain decisions. The royal python is treated as the sacred animal by calling it 'father'. The manliness is reflected through the belief. Mr. Goodcountry convinces the converts of Umuaro that the royal python is the deceiver who had deceived the first mother, Eve. He makes them to believe to go against the belief. He says, "You address the python as Father. It is nothing but a snake, the snake that deceived our first mother, Eve. If you are afraid to kill it do not count yourself a Christian" (48). The new faith Christianity also provokes them to divide the feminine and masculine acts.

The Igbo women are given the protection by the clan in the familial context. The disputes and revenge are based on them. On the other hand, they do not want to spoil the masculine identity of them in the society. When Obika's sister returns after her husband's beating, Obika beats Ibe (his brother-in-law) almost to the point of death as a part of revenge. Ezeulu states that it is not manliness, but it is an act of insulting the manhood subsequently the in-laws. Ezeulu says;

We cannot say your son did wrong to fight for his sister. What we do not understand, however, is why a man with a penis between his legs should be carried away from his house and village. It is as if to say: You are nothing and your kinsmen can do nothing. This is the part we do not understand. (12)

In any patriarchal society, women are considered as a part of the masculine act and power. Masculine identity in such a system of signification is associated with the

incorporation and the exercise of power. Man's act, in other words, is related to the power conferred on them by social norms. The power relations among Igbo people have reflected the masculine identity in which social norms are executed directly or indirectly. The narrator points out the power relations of Igbo people. He says;

Perhaps it was deliberate, perhaps accidental. But Ebo had just the one thing that nobody should ever have told Akukalia who was impotent and whose two wives were secretly given to other men to bear his children.(24)

The Igbo clan permits the incest act as a part of the power relation to hiding the weakness of the Akukalia, who himself is unknown of the fact. Since, it is worst thing for Igbo people being impotent. As a result, two wives of Akukalia are exploited sexually in order to preserve the manliness of Akukalia. The guilt of drinking excess palm wine by Obika is the part of the masculine act and it is deliberately ignored by the clan even his father Ezeulu.

According to Bristor and Eileen; gender identity "is a pervasive filter through which individuals experience their social world, consumption activities are fundamentally gendered"(519). The social restrictions for manly acts are always in the favour of the patriarchy. It is observed in the *Arrow of God*. The Igbo women didn't make a hue and cry over the guilt of Obika. "The women ignored him and went on with their own interrupted meal. It was clear he had drunk too much palm wine again"(10).The colonial power of the missionaries disrupted the masculine identity of the tribe when Obika was whipped by the missionaries for being late to the road-work due to drinking excessive palm-wine. Ezeulu responds to it by saying;

I think he was late in going. But the white man would not whip a grown man who is also my son for that. He would be asked to pay a

fine to his age group for being late; he would not be whipped. Or perhaps he hit the white man first ... (89)

The polygamy of masculinity through religious power is lessened by Christianity who succeeded to convince the Igbo people about the false Igbo Gods. Mr. Goodcountry told; "If Ulu who is a false god can eat one yam the living God who owns the whole world should be entitled to eat more than one"(218). The Igbo people believed that Christianity has the power to protect them from the anger of Ulu. As a result, Ezeulu loses his position as a Chief Priest of the God, Ulu. Subsequently the issues of masculine identity occur with the new faith like Christianity. Ezeulu reacts helplessly by saying; "If any man in Umuaro forgets himself so far as to join them let him carry on"(222). It is a kind of confession about the pacification of the Igbo community.

The identity of women in *Arrow of God* reflects the traditional gender manifestations with an imbalance of the female principles. The negative side of the women is revealed through some instances in the novel. In the opening slot of the novel, the image of Igbo women is described as a cruel foster-mother. Achebe says, "The moon he saw that day was as thin as an orphan fed grudgingly by a cruel foster mother"(2). The identity of the women in such a way is exposed in a form of the rank in a social order.

The marriage system in Umuaro among Igbo people flashes the light on the inequality and imbalance between men and women. Men are allowed to marry with several women as portrayed in this novel. Akuekbue has a couple of wives. Nwaka, one of the local leaders of the village has the five wives. Ezeulu, the chief priest has three wives, the younger wife Ugoye, is of the equal age of his first daughter. The custom of marriages about having more wives is continued in the colonial period in



Nigeria. The bride price issue reminds the selling of women by their fathers to the families of the bridegrooms. The women in *Arrow of God* are forbidden to share the property of their fathers after marriages. In short, they have to bear the burden of their husbands meekly without leaving their husband's house. The regular beatings of the women are the stereotype identity in the society. Achebe puts in the conversation among them regarding the married Akueke;

They said the man ill-treated her, But Ojiugo's mother said it was a lie and that Akueke was headstrong and proud. "When a woman marries a husband she should forget how big her father's compound was," she always said. "A woman does not carry her father's obi to her husband.(10)

The rape, incest and the molestation of women among Igbo people are evident of the insecure identity of the women. The Igbo people in Umuaro want to increase the numbers of male children to protect their clan from molesting the daughters of their villages. Ezeulu the chief priest says;

Why do we pray to Ulu and to our ancestors to increase our numbers if not for this very things?" said the leader, "No one eats numbers. But if we are many nobody will dare to molest us and our daughters will be able to hold their heads up in their husbands' houses.(12)

The virginity of the women before marriages is questioned by the Igbo customs. Okuata's relaxation after finding herself virgin is pointed out in the novel as a part of insecurity of them to prove them virgins. Achebe writes that "She (Okuata) felt greatly relieved for although she had always known she was a virgin"(122). It is a matter of pride for her that her husband Obika had decided to present a goat to his in-laws. But, "Obika had already chosen an enormous goat as a present for his mother-

in-law should his wife to be a virgin"(118). Actually, Okuata was at the risk to lose her virginity when she came in contact with Obiora. It is the matter that made her worried about her virginity. It makes a point that the virginity of the Igbo girls is seen at the risks of their beliefs. The identity of Igbo women is dominated by the male-oriented customs. Women are expected to consider their husbands' guilt if they beg a favour of their wives secretly. Ezeulu says in this context;

In our custom a man is not expected to go down on his knees and knock his forehead on the ground to his wife to ask her forgiveness or beg a favour. But, a wise man knows that between him and his wife there may arise the need for him to say to her in secret; 'I Beg you.' When such a thing happens nobody else must know of it, and that woman if she has any sense will never boast about it or even open her mouth and speak of it. If she does it the earth on which the man brought herself low will destroy her entirely.(172)

The male dominance of the Igbo people to treat the women in a social and judicial manner is revealed in the novel as a part of the patriarchal society. Women were not given importance in the social meetings, sharing and the spiritual practices. Ezeulu's return to the village in Umuaro is marked by the elders and the men of the society excluding women. Achebe says that "In the course of the second day, he counted fifty seven visitors excluding women"(187).The females in Igbo society are not given any kind of importance in the decision makings and the well-beings. But it is strange to point out that the different deities are given the names of the women and the social aspects are monitored by the orders of them. The deities such as *Ulu*, *Eru*, *Esdemili*, *Chukew* are known as the highest Gods of the male gender. The social image of the female is considered as the place of a mother before marriages that

occurs in the context by saying the 'son of our daughter'. The people belong to the same village are considered the 'son of the village'. According to the Igbo historian Felix Ekechi,

Woman was seen as subordinate to the male" in traditional Igbo society is an "enduring stereotype of male-female relations (Which) needs modification so as to reflect the African reality.(41)

The proverb 'A man does not speak a lie to his son'(93) is a discourse about the feminine identity that a woman, who teaches their children to speak a lie. The masculine identity overshadows the feminine qualities and the aspects related in the social framework. In *Arrow of God*, the narrator reveals the words 'my father' throughout the story which are associated with all the remedies, past knowledge, customs, moralities, justice and ethical values.

The dominance of masculine identity is reflected in *Arrow of God*. Achebe refers the dominance of masculine power to promote corruption, selfishness, and greed, which results into bad governance as well as the military coups. It is evident that the male dominance and their urge for the opportunities in the pursuits of the power relations depicted in relation to the ideological, social and economic suppression of women. In the patriarchal Igbo society, the Igbo women were deprived of the decisive power and they had no right to share their opinions in the familial and social arena. It can be argued that the root of the cultural change reflects the realities of postcolonial Nigeria subsequently the issues of their identity.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

Africa has a unique cultural heritage with a distinct past. African Literature often makes assumptions about the existence of the unified 'African' culture, but closer inspection reveals a far more complex and a problematic picture. It reflects the cultural traditions, colonial history, and inner conflicts of African people. While drawing together a wide variety of theoretical and critical perspectives of post-colonial literature in English, the present study aims at exploring perpetuate unequal economic and cultural relations with the struggle of the people concerned with race, religion, invasion and pacification in the form of the issues of identity.

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013), an Igbo writer in English, is one of Africa's most acclaimed authors and the pioneers in the portrayal of African life from the African perspectives. His writings introduced readers throughout the world to the creative use of language and form, as well as to factual inside accounts of modern African life and history. Not only through his literary contributions but also through his championing of bold objectives for Nigeria and Africa, Achebe has helped to reshape the perception of African history, culture, and place in the world affairs. The readers come across the theme of complexities of the Igbo society before and after the arrival of the Europeans from his literary work. To support this theme, he includes detailed descriptions of the justice codes and the trial process, the social and family rituals, the marriage customs, food production and preparation processes, the process of shared leadership for the community, religious beliefs and practices, and the opportunities for virtually every man to climb the clan's ladder of success through his own efforts. Achebe's theme of Igbo cultural complexity is the theme of the clash of cultures which poses the identity issues.

As a corrective to European literature's stereotypical portraits of Africans as an unvarying, primitive force, Achebe strives to communicate the human complexity of Nigerian existence, to establish the independence of African literature, and to demonstrate the value of traditional Igbo culture. However, Achebe does not idealize the pre-colonial past that cannot survive unaltered in a modern world; instead, he encourages his readers to explore continuities with the past that can coexist with modern society.

Achebe grew up in the middle of the Igbo cultural practices of his people and the influence of Christianity and the church. He began to write while a student at University College, Ibadan, fuelled by a passion for a literature as well as a sense of dissatisfaction with the ways in which African locations were often represented in the existing literature in English. His novels *Things Fall Apart* published in the year 1958, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* explore the colonialist prejudices concerning African civilization. They also depict the Igbo people at a period of transition, culminating by the arrival of British missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century. He has reflected the life of Igbo people with all its pains, pleasures, and puzzles. While describing the real picture of African people, he accepts the fact that if Africa has to progress, it will have to overcome many hurdles to be known as the nation of integrated people and the source of cultural treasure. He won several awards for his writing, the Man Booker International Prize in 2007 and the Dorothy and Lilian Gish Prize in 2010. He received honorary degrees from more than 30 universities around the world.

The ordering of the narrative sequences in *Arrow of God* is conventional according to the traditional European written narrative-chronological, linear, sectioned into chapters. Achebe has adhered to this framework rather than



experimented with sequencing, with the effect that it provides an orderly framework to contain complexities at other levels. But a more important function of sequencing is to give an impression of the historical events taking place or having taken place. The ordering of sequences is such that it creates a tension between the events which occur habitually or expectedly within the social framework, and events which are unprecedented. This division of actions is present in, most narratives, and has been classified- the known and customary events are the 'catalysers' and the new events are the 'nuclei' or cardinal functions according to Barthes' categorisation.

The features of orientation realise an important function: that of describing the Igbo world. The purpose of the orienting material however, is not only to describe the Igbo world but it also tells about the actions of people in this world and how far they are the agents in the creation and sustenance of this world. This can be understood by looking at the opening sequence in detail. This sequence which can be named 'Ezeulu's eating of the ceremonial yam' takes the readers into the 'obi' of the Chief Priest and to his thoughts, through a depiction of material processes and actions, such as the customary eating of the yam and even small everyday actions, the drinking of water from the calabash, and the picking up of the *ofo* staff. Also to be seen are cognitive processes such as Ezeulu's thinking, where he, as the subject and actor, sees his position in relation to the people of Umuaro who are affected by his actions. This thought process is in free indirect speech. Though narrated in the third person, the questions asked and answered by Ezeulu to himself remove the narratorial presence and upfront the character's consciousness. Interspersed with these processes are the verbal acts of story-telling and conversing amongst various members of Ezeulu's family. Even the natural world is a part of these processes- the moon that "hid itself... sits awkwardly.. kill boys..."(119) is the subject of the action here, and a vital object



in its syntactic occurrence at other points- Ezeulu looks up to it in order to announce the new month, and significantly, does not see it in Okperi, when he is away from his people. Thus, from the opening scene itself, a complex picture of the Igbo world emerges through a mixture of mental, verbal and behavioural processes that constitute the Igbo semantic universe. The actions of people in this world are described as complete and orderly- the children come and sit in their father's hut, they sing, talk and play, with each person's contribution specified, underlining the familial roles, such as the father's instructions to his sons. There is in fact, a degree of fixity in all these processes- the verbs are complete, the tenses perfective, subjects and objects clearly defined, with only a controlled amount of modification; all this creates a orientation or setting of the novel.

The world of the British administration lacks action, emphasises indecision and indifference- the weather upsets Winterbottom and he finally succumbs to it, falls sick and goes away; Clark is uncertain of his position, in the administrative hierarchy, his tour of the district and handling of situation is inept and he waits for orders rather than acts on his own-on the whole, the picture is that of a sleepy bureaucratic network, not that of the forceful, dominating colonisers. Even the missionaries do not act directly- the lessons have already been learnt by converts such as Oduche, and it is the latter who is active. The orienting focus of change are being shown as active and the events which effect reversals in the state of affairs are located within this world which is being propelled by its own inner dynamics more than by external factors. It is evident in the internal debate in Ezeulu's mind and in his thought processes.

From the Igbo society, the focus moves closer into the mind of Ezeulu and the intrusion of his god Ulu into his consciousness. A passage begins: 'Meanwhile, Ezeulu had pursued again his thoughts...' Midway through it the narrator disappears,

and Ezeulu's mind-style takes over, with its repeated self-addressed questions and answers, and the argumentative linkers such as 'so', 'perhaps' and 'although'. Then, suddenly, the narration changes to the direct speech of Ulu's intrusion with the unusual reporting verb 'barked Ulu, in his ear', and the comparator 'as a spirit would'. It is important here that Ulu's intervention is not narrated in free indirect style, in which case it would have been read as a part of Ezeulu's thought process, but is the direct speech of an actual character. The discourse that follows Ulu's directly enunciated dictates is again a mix of free indirect discourse and narratorial comment. The question 'who was Ezeulu to tell his deity...' (27) can be read both as one addressed by Ezeulu to himself, and as addressed by narrator to reader, as a rhetorical question, to imply that Ezeulu was now at the end of his authority and also at the end of his thinking. The question is followed by the 'answer': "It was a fight of the gods. He was no more than an arrow in the bow of his god. This thought intoxicated Ezeulu..." (28).

This conveys the sense that the previous thoughts are part of Ezeulu's consciousness, not the narrator's opinion. It is the last of the series of questions and answers that make up Ezeulu's thought process. Though referred to in the third person throughout, the impression of free indirect speech remains because of the semantic centrality of the thinker, and the persistence with which the thinker pursues his line of thought. Only the last statement appears to be one in which the free indirect speech and the narrator's comment are aligned:

One half of him was man and the other half mmo-the half that was painted over with chalk at important religious moments. And half of the things he ever did were done by the spirit side. (242)



The statement could be assigned to either, since it is continuous with Ezeulu's thought about himself and his god, and at the same time, it is Achebe's explanation of the mysterious motives of one who is half-man and half-spirit. Read in this way, it signals towards the narrator's upholding of and identification with the Igbo mythology.

The Igbo world is shown as complete, the people in it active as the doers, appear to have lost out in the contest with the coloniser. They start with resenting the white man's presence; they end by accepting the white man's religion. It may be that their very vitality propels them towards change. It may be that the circumstances- the events that happen- become too unmanageable for them and they make misreading of the situation. It can be seen that in their habitual actions within the social framework, they are well in control. But when unprecedented events take place, they lose their sense of orientation. For instance, Ezeulu's son Oduche is given one kind of instruction from his father- to learn from the white man and to report on the situation, so that their community can benefit. But instead of subverting the white man's faith after being converted, Oduche turns around and subverts the traditional religion. This is a focal point in the narrative because it marks an ironic reversal, totally unexpected in the existing order of things. Oduche's conversion and desecrating action is all the more startling because it is not done under any coercion or threat; Oduche acts willingly in what he thinks is in the service of his new religion. Thus colonisation is shown to have effects more subtle and far-reaching than even the colonisers might have anticipated- the narrator states at the end "the Christian harvest which took place saw more people than even Mr Goodcountry had hoped"(220). While Ezeulu has acted in the service of his god, Oduche has acted in the service of the Christian god, and this leads to the replacement of the Igbo cultural symbol by the Christian- not only a religious but a historical change has taken place. This statement also shows



how evaluation occurs at every important phase of this narrative. It is so mingled with the narration that it is often difficult to distinguish whether a statement is a narrative one, or one loaded with the narrator's own evaluative judgement. Evaluation also runs through the passage of free indirect speech in which Ezeulu's thoughts are presented, through character speech and narrative report, and is expressed through direct statement proverbs and sayings, and through other more complex means, such as manipulation of a point of view. In view of this, a distinction can be made between the narrative- internal evaluation and narrator- evaluation where the narrator is clearly seen as stepping back and evaluating a situation or action while reporting it. This can be understood by looking at passages where such differences in evaluative stance can be distinguished.

Evaluation is also done by episodes of story-telling and interactive narration in the Igbo world by the presentation of stories within a story, wherein characters tell stories to link past and present actions, and to reveal their traditional knowledge of their world. These function to place the larger narrative outside these stories in an evaluative context, because they intensify and compare the importance of various events that are taking place. The narrative logic seems to be that since the society must be revealed to the readers, its stories must perforce be told, so that the readers may understand the evaluative function that the new narrative must perform. This is why the representation of the discourse of the Igbo community in the novel represented through direct speech is contrasted with the representation of an individual's discourse. Ezeulu's thought-process is one kind of discourse with its ongoing individual evaluation of events and the speech interaction of the people is another kind of discourse containing another set of evaluations. Of course, Ezeulu is both an individual and a chief priest of the community and sees himself in both these

situations at different times in his thoughts. Thus, the readers have the performed narrative where Ezeulu is shown to re-enact the first coming of Ulu, telling the story as he enacts it, in direct speech, interspersing past tense narration with gerunds in the historic present. There is also the interactive narrative, the interaction of the mask and the drum and flute. The mask narrates its story in direct speech, the drum and flute reply; then the mask asks the assembled crowd to evaluate: "Tell me, folk assembled, a man who did this, is his arm strong or not? The crowd replied. His arm is indeed very strong. The flute and drum all joined in reply" (134). This is again both explanatory and evaluative of the beliefs shared by the community, with the community repeatedly reaffirming its beliefs by such interactive, enacted narration.

Finally, there are the stories told by mother to children and by Ezeulu to his sons. All these stories tell about the nature of narrative authority in traditional societies, where the teller determines the story to be told and comments on its significance. And Achebe, by recounting these stories, is perhaps implying that the same kind of narrative authority of the traditional storyteller, with its accompanying responsibility, rests on the author of the present narration.

The narrator combines the narrative clauses that tell of the final events. Instead of letting any of the characters evaluate the situation in its totality, the narrator takes up the role completely, for now he is to present the situation with the distanced view of a historian and assess the individual evaluators of Igbo society as well as the fate of that society itself. The last line of the novel, its 'coda', is the narrator's important pronouncement in the past tense and by the fronting of an adverbial: "Thereafter, every yam that was harvested in the man's fields was harvested in the name of the son" (230). The choice of this particular noun-phrase 'the name of the son' as the last mentioned person is significant because the son here is not only the Igbo farmer's son



who brings the harvested yam to church, but also Jesus Christ; and the son is also symbolic of the future. The Ibo past is gone; Christian future is here- this is the telling coda of the story.

The evaluative elements in this narrative- who evaluates what, and how, is thus significant in that it forefronts the role of the narrator and emphasises his narrative authority. The narrator controls the perspective from which the narrative is to be viewed and makes the narrative functional towards the ends and purposes of the narrator, which in this case are made explicit in the documentation and evaluation of processes of change in a society.

*Arrow of God* as a novel that has a lot to say about law, may be a consequence of a legal-centralist outlook which views all law as deriving from the state. A legal-pluralist stance, on the other hand, challenges an authoritative conception of law in the form of legal pluralism, where two or more legal systems co-exist in the same social field. There are two key areas in *Arrow of God* around which Achebe explores law and colonialism. First, the claim of the rival Okperi's clan to a piece of farmland, and the different interpretations of the land dispute, and secondly, the issue of indirect rule. This novel stresses on the idea of fluidity and of the existence of a multitude of different positions from which to contemplate the world.

*Arrow of God* mirrors the issues of Nigerian Igbo identity. The internal tribal conflicts make the fertile ground for the disintegration of the tribe. The political and religious powers mirror the discourse of their ethnicity. Ezeulu, the central character of the novel tries to hold the community unified by his thoughtful decisions, but the social aggression is seen to challenge the traditional religious ethos. It is evident from this novel that the change in the cultural patterns sows the seed in the minds of the people by the power relations. The missionaries succeed to fall them apart by the



influence of the religion, trade, education and justice. Ezeulu simply becomes an 'arrow' or the 'tool' of the religious power of the Igbo people for nothingness at the end when the natives were divided into two groups. One of them, the followers of the missionaries and the second becomes passive due to the 'pride' of Ezeulu, who deliberately delays the *New Yam Festival* to prove himself as the most powerful man in the clan. The missionaries divide them on the ground of the conflicts between Ezeulu and Nwaka regarding the war of Umuaro with Okperi.

The African Igbo society is reflected by relations with the Missionaries and the presence of the imperial power of colonization. The issues of their individual and social identity subsist in various dimensions of conflict: religious, patriarchal and cultural, as well as traditional. In each of these dimensions revolve around issues of identity and culture. The Igbo people express themselves in spiritual communal ethos by which the individual and social identity are found deeply rooted in a spiritual sense of the kinship that do not keep them vibrant with the changing pace after arrival of the missionaries. This novel, *Arrow of God* points out the issues of Igbo identity as they consider the changes are meant for to fall them apart from their values. The transmission of the cultural patterns due to imperialism is pointed out as the disruption of their identity.

*Arrow of God* describes the concepts of identity and culture along with the implications of them in the literary works. It has also focused its academic relevance by elucidating the pedagogical implications. The novel takes a cursory look on issues of identity and culture at present in Nigeria in relation to the issues depicted by Chinua Achebe in his novel. Identity is a dynamic and a continuing changing process; it is not static and it continues to be modified and finally becomes generally accepted with the times. The issues of identity are related with the framework of culture which

has different facets on the part of the individual and social identity. The affirmation or rejection of the cultural values effects on the sense of self both at personal and social levels in relation with the identity. On this ground, the issues of identity and culture need to be supported with a great deal of harmonious co-existence in the rapid age of globalization to keep the social norms vibrant with the changing pace. Achebe gives this message through his novel to explore continuities with the past that can coexist with modern society.

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**Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle*: A Study of the Jargon of Familial Dysfunction**

A project submitted to

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**Thoothukudi**

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle*: A Study of the Jargon of Familial Dysfunction** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

*Suriya Narayani. A*  
SURIYA NARAYANI A.

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle*: A Study of the Jargon of Familial Dysfunction** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Suriya Narayani A. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project entitled **Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle: A Study of the Jargon of Familial Dysfunction*** analyses how the novelist Jeanette Walls' growing up in poverty with a drunken father and a dysfunctional mother built her character and allowed her to understand more about life at an early age than most people learn in a life time. Transience, and the lack of a place to call home, provides a catalyst to find personal strength and to make different choices.

The first chapter throws light on the salient features of American Literature, with a short biography of Jeannette Walls and her unique contribution to American Literature.

The second chapter deals with Walls' family history of homelessness and how her girlhood has witnessed a litany of misfortune.

The third chapter discusses how Walls as a young girl elicits sympathy for her tough childhood and admiration for her pluck as she rescues herself time and again.

The fourth chapter presents the ideologies inherent in Walls as the western child who is simultaneously naive and resilient.

The fifth chapter sums up all the key premises dealt with in the preceding chapters and establishes confidence in people's undaunted willpower to emerge successful amidst all odds.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

American literature begins with the age of colonialism and is produced in the area of the United States and its preceding colonies. During its early history, America was a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present-day United States. However, unique American characteristics and the breadth of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition. The New England colonies were the centre of early American literature.

American literature is closely tied to American political discussions and culture. Before the American Revolutionary War, the written works of Samuel Adams, Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin served as rallying points among the populace to generate discussion and demand political change. Before the American Civil War, many works dealt with the moral implications of the practice of slavery and were heavily influenced by abolitionist beliefs.

The character of the early American literature is strongly influenced by several factors: it was the era of colonising the continent. Though the English explored and claimed the territories, the beginnings of American literature are more or less connected with the French, the Spanish and the Dutch literatures as well. The first writers brought forth mainly English ideas and ways of writing, which means early American literature, is based on the literature of England. Religion played an important part in the writers' lives. Many writings of the period were sermons and theological books. The fact that the Pilgrims landed in the Massachusetts Bay in 1620 had an immense influence on the culture of the newly developing colonial system.



As dissatisfaction with the colonial system and the relations with Britain grew, the literature gradually changed its shape. The writers became more politically, anti-British and revolutionary oriented, as a result rationalism and enlightenment prevailed. The period of romanticism represented a revolt against classicism and its values such as reason and form. The American variant of romanticism was different from the European one to a certain degree. There was a great interest in Indians and their culture. The writings were less political and religious, the topics were mostly American, and the writers stressed imagination, nature and individualism.

Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent from which a few hardy souls tentatively ventured westward. After a successful rebellion against the motherland, America became the United States, a nation. By the end of the 19th century this nation extended southward to the Gulf of Mexico, northward to the 49th parallel, and westward to the Pacific. By the end of the 19th century, too, it had taken its place among the powers of the world, its fortunes so interrelated with those of other nations. They became inevitably involved in two world wars and, following these conflicts, with the problems of Europe and East Asia. Meanwhile, the rise of science and industry, as well as changes in ways of thinking and feeling, wrought many modifications in people's lives. All these factors in the development of the United States moulded the literature of the country.

Many American writers were influenced by the transcendentalism movement, initiated by Ralph Waldo Emerson after 1836. They focused their message on the strength and inherent purity present within the individual. Individualism remains a prominent topic in later works of American literature. American writers expressed



disillusionment following World War I. The stories and novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) capture the mood of the 1920s, and John Dos Passos wrote about the war. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) became notable for *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* in 1954; he won the Nobel Prize in Literature. William Faulkner (1897-1962) is notable for novels like *The Sound and the Fury*. American drama attained international status only in the 1920s and 1930s, with the works of Eugene O'Neill, who won four Pulitzer Prizes and the Nobel Prize. In the middle of the 20th century, American drama was dominated by the work of playwrights Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, as well as by the maturation of the American musical.

Depression era included writers like John Steinbeck (1902-1968), who is notable for his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Henry Miller assumed a unique place in American literature in the 1930s when his semi-autobiographical novels were banned from the United States. From the end of World War II up until, roughly, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the publication of some of the most popular works in American history such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. America's involvement in World War II influenced the creation of works such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). John Updike was notable for his novel *Rabbit Run* (1960). Philip Roth explores Jewish identity in American society. From the early 1970s to the present day the most important literary movement has been postmodernism and the flowering of literature by ethnic minority writers.

Just as in Europe, the period of romanticism was followed by the period of realism. Writers left behind the styles and topics adopted by the previous generation and rather concentrated on describing life as it was with its negatives typical for the period. It was the era of industrialisation and migration, determinism was a major

paradigm of the age. Naturalism was an intensified form of realism. Other American writers towards the close of the 19th century moved toward naturalism.

Since the dawn of the 20th century, writers were looking for new ways of writing and new topics. Their writings expressed their feelings about living in the modern age, some of them wrote positively, some negatively. Their style became more complicated; experiments were quite common. Many movements appeared; together they might be called "modernism."

At the beginning of the 20th century, Mencken's major enthusiasms included the fiction of Joseph Conrad and Theodore Dreiser, but he also promoted minor writers for their attacks on gentility, such as James Branch Cabell, or for their revolt against the narrow, frustrated quality of life in rural communities, including Zona Gale and Ruth Suckow. The most distinguished of these writers was Sherwood Anderson. His *Winesburg Ohio* (1919) and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) were collections of short stories that showed villagers suffering from all sorts of phobias and suppressions. Anderson in time wrote several novels, the best being *Poor White* (1920). In 1920 critics noticed that a new school of fiction had risen to prominence with the success of books such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, fictions that tended to be frankly psychological or modern in their unsparing portrayals of contemporary life. Novels of the 1920s were often not only lyrical and personal but also, in the despairing mood that followed World War I, apt to express the pervasive disillusionment of the post-war generation. Novels of the 1930s inclined toward radical social criticism in response to the miseries of the Great Depression, though some of the best, by writers such as Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Henry Roth, and Nathanael West, continued to explore the Modernist vein of the previous decade.



The insensibility to another human life is genuine to the start and continuum of American literature. Michael De Cuneo, who referred to the Native American people as "cannibals," casually describes the rape of a woman bondage and is highly insensitive stating that she had studied at a school for whores. The vivid detail and nonchalant attitude at which he relives the scene is enough to appal. The physical abuse illustrated in American literature does not end there and this unloving nature and numbness America puts up is a powerful force to try to reckon with. There is no need for love or romantic interest in American literature.

America's two greatest 19<sup>th</sup>-century poets were Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). American poetry reached a peak in the early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, with such noted writers as Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, and E. E. Cummings. Mark Twain, the pen name used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) was the first major American writer to be born away from the East Coast. Henry James (1843-1916) was notable for novels like *The Turn of the Screw*. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American novelist included Edith Wharton (1862-1937), Stephen Crane (1871-1900), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), and Jack London (1876-1916). Experimentation in style and form is seen in the works of Gertrude Stein (1819-1891) who is notable for the books *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd*. Some of the famous novels of 20<sup>th</sup> century are Mark Twain's *The Huckleberry-Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell, *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov.

The 21st century is the current century of the Anno Domini era or Common Era, in accordance with the Gregorian calendar. It began on January 1, 2001 and will end on December 31, 2100. It is the first century of the 3rd millennium. Contemporary writers often consciously draw inspiration and ideas from the writers



who have come before them. As a result, many works of 21st literature grapple with the events, movements and literature of the past in order to make sense of the present. Additionally, the technological advancements of the 21st century have led other writers to hypothetically write about the future, usually to comment on the present and evoke introspection.

With increasing globalization, intersections of cultures and more vocal discussions of women's rights and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights, identity has become a common theme in 21st century literature. In a world that is now able to exchange ideas more quickly than ever before via the Internet and other technological advancements, people have relatively more freedom to draw from multiple cultures and philosophies and question the concept of the self and its relation to the body, brain and soul. For example, Sam Clay in *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon struggles to come to terms with his homosexuality. The novel, which is about young comic book collaborators during the World War II era, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2001. With her 2008 book *Infidel*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali became a feminist voice for the rights of abused Muslim women and religious freedom.

As contemporary readers are able to look back on history and see how history has been depicted differently for different audiences, history and memory have become themes in 21st century literature. Often contemporary literature explores the notion of multiplicities of truth and acknowledges that history is filtered through human perspective and experience. For example, *The March* by E.L. Doctorow fictionalizes yet still depicts the realities of General Sherman's famous march during the U.S. Civil War, and how people of the South were slaughtered; giving a slightly different perspective of how the North is usually depicted.

Today, technology is inevitably integrated into people's lives than ever before. Dreams of what technology could potentially help people become and anxieties regarding the demise of humanity as a result of technology can be seen in 21st century literature. On one hand, there are books about biotechnology helping people with disabilities, such as *Machine Man* by Max Barry. Additionally, many 21st century works of literature explore what it means when all of humanity's experiences are filtered through technology. For example, *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline depicts a futuristic world where everyone escapes reality by plugging into a virtual utopia.

In postmodern style, many contemporary writers recognize a piece of work as being one among many, throughout history. As such, many writers purposely include acknowledgements, references or parallels to other works of fiction, recognizing their place in a larger, broader conversation, context and body of work. Some intertextual themes go as far as to poke fun at a work's own lack of originality or the clichés that it seemingly cannot escape. For example, in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz, the text refers to many comics, movies and other books in order to describe events.

After being relegated to cookbooks and autobiographies for most of the 20th century, Asian American literature achieved widespread notice through Maxine Hong Kingston's fictional memoir, *The Woman Warrior* (1976), and her novels *China Men* (1980) and *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*. Chinese-American author Ha Jin in 1999 won the National Book Award for his second novel, *Waiting*, about a Chinese soldier in the Revolutionary Army who has to wait 18 years to divorce his wife for another woman, all the while having to worry about persecution for his protracted affair, and twice won the PEN/Faulkner Award, in 2000 for *Waiting* and in 2005 for *War Trash*.



The Indian-American author, Jhumpa Lahiri won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her debut collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), and went on to write a well-received novel, *The Namesake* (2003), which was shortly adapted to a film in 2007. In her second collection of stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, released to widespread commercial and critical success, Lahiri shifts focus and treats the experiences of the second and third generation.

Other notable Asian-American novelists include Amy Tan, best known for her novel, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), tracing the lives of four immigrant families brought together by the game of Mahjong, and Korean American novelist Chang-Rae Lee, who has published *Native Speaker*, *A Gesture Life*, and *Aloft*. Such poets as Marilyn Chin and Li-Young Lee, Kimiko Hahn and Janice Mirikitani have also achieved prominence, as has playwright David Henry Hwang. Equally important has been the effort to recover earlier Asian American authors, started by Frank Chin and his colleagues; this effort has brought Sui Sin Far, Toshio Mori, Carlos Bulosan, John Okada, Hisaye Yamamoto and others to prominence.

The partial list of 21st-century writers includes notable authors, poets, playwrights, philosophers, artists, scientists and other important and noteworthy contributors to literature. Literature is the art of written works. Literally translated, the word literature means "acquaintance with letters". The two most basic written literary categories include fiction and non-fiction.

Nonfiction's specific factual assertions and descriptions may or may not be accurate, and can give either a true or a false account of the subject in question. However, authors of such accounts genuinely believe or claim them to be truthful at the time of their composition or, them to a convinced audience as historically or



empirically factual. Reporting the beliefs of others in a nonfiction format is not necessarily an endorsement of the ultimate veracity of those beliefs; it is simply saying it is true that people believe them, for such topics as mythology. Nonfiction can also be written about fiction, typically known as literary criticism, giving information and analysis on these other works. Nonfiction need not necessarily be a written text, since pictures and film can also purport to present a factual account of a subject.

Jeannette Walls was born on April 21, 1960, in Phoenix, Arizona, to Rex Walls and Rose Mary Walls. Walls has two sisters, Lori and Maureen, and one brother, Brian. Walls' family life was rootless, with the family shuttling from Phoenix to California (including a brief stay in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco), to Battle Mountain, Nevada, and to Welch, West Virginia, with periods of homelessness. When they finally landed in Rex's Appalachian hometown of Welch the family lived in a three-room house without plumbing or heat, infested with snakes and rats.

Walls moved to New York at age 17 to join her sister Lori (at that point an artist for Archie Comics). Jeannette finished high school in the city with the aid of grants, loans, scholarships and a year spent answering phones at a Wall Street law firm. Walls graduated from Barnard College in 1984 with honors.

Early in her career Walls interned at a Brooklyn newspaper called *The Phoenix* and eventually became a full-time reporter there. From 1987 to 1993 she wrote the *Intelligencer* column for a *New York* magazine. She then wrote a gossip column for *Esquire*, from 1993 to 1998, and then contributed regularly to the gossip column "Scoop" at MSNBC.com (Microsoft/ National Broadcasting Company) from 1998 until her departure to write full time in 2007. Walls has contributed to USA

Today, and have appeared on The Today Show, CNN (Cable News Network), Primetime, and The Colbert Report.

Her book *Dish: The Inside Story on the World of Gossip* (2000), was a humorous history of the role gossip has played in U.S. media, politics and life. In that book, Walls incidentally ousted conservative cyber-gossip Matt Drudge as gay. In 2005, Walls published the best-selling memoir, *The Glass Castle*, which details the joys and struggles of her childhood. It offers a look into her life and that of her dysfunctional family. *The Glass Castle* was well received by critics and the public. It has sold over 2.7 million copies and has been translated into 22 languages. It received the Christopher Award, the American Library Association's Alex Award (2006), and the Books for Better Living Award. Paramount bought the film rights to the book and in March 2013 announced that actress Jennifer Lawrence would play Walls in the movie adaptation. On October 9, 2015, it was reported that Lawrence withdrew from the film and she would be replaced by actress Brie Larson. In 2009, Walls published her first novel, *Half Broke Horses: A True-Life Novel*, based on the life of her grandmother Lily Casey Smith. Walls' latest novel, *The Silver Star*, was published in 2013.

*The Glass Castle* is a 2005 memoir by Jeannette Walls. The book recounts the unconventional, poverty-stricken upbringing Walls and her siblings had at the hands of their deeply dysfunctional parents. The title refers to her father's long-held intention of building his dream house, a glass castle. The purpose to write this work by Walls is to give valuable messages which can increase the importance of humanity and can also increase our knowledge because it portrays human experiences with respect to love, family, ambition, among other themes.



The novel *The Glass Castle* main genre is Non-fiction. Non-Fiction, whose creator, in good faith, assumes responsibility for the truth or accuracy of the events, people, or information presented. In contrast, a story whose creator explicitly leaves open if and how the work refers to reality is usually classified as fiction. Nonfiction, which may be presented either objectively or subjectively, is traditionally one of the two main divisions of narratives the other traditional division being fiction, which contrasts with nonfiction by dealing in information, events, and characters expected to be partly or largely imaginary.

*The Glass Castle* is about Walls' childhood; her father was an alcoholic and her mother was a nonconformist, to put it mildly. Walls, her parents and her three siblings spent years living in rundown Arizona desert towns and then in a West Virginia shack without plumbing or electricity. Her parents became homeless; the children pulled together, saving to send the eldest sister on a bus to New York City. Walls followed after high school and eventually all the children made their way to New York. Walls graduated from Barnard College and became a gossip columnist for MSNBC. *The Glass Castle* has sold more than 2.5 million copies, and Walls, 49, has toured the country, meeting thousands of readers. She says, "I cannot tell you how many people came up to me and said, 'The details of our lives are very different, but you and I have a lot in common.' I think that's why people read memoirs for this emotional connection." (75) Walls connected with the readers so intensely, they provided the inspiration for her next book, *Half Broke Horses*, which Scribner will publish with a 500,000 copies first printing.

Readers told Walls that they wanted to know more about her mother. So Walls started interviewing her mom, who now lives with Walls and her husband in Virginia. But as Walls probed for details, her mother told her, "This book should not be about



me. It should be about my mother.”(35) Walls had always been enamoured of her grandmother, who died when Walls was eight but left vivid memories. “She was always cursing and dancing, whipping out her gun or whipping out her teeth,” Walls recalls. She liked the idea of writing about a woman who’d lived through droughts, floods, tornadoes and the Great Depression.

Walls’ agent, Jennifer Rudolph Walsh, and editor, Nan Graham, convinced the story was more immediate in Lily’s voice. But how could Walls write a nonfiction biography of Lily drawing only on her and her mother’s memories? Although Walls corroborated everything she could with family members and books about Lily’s grandfather like Robert Casey and the Ranch on the Rio Hondo by James Shinkle, she didn’t feel honest calling the book nonfiction. Once you start assuming or plugging up holes, jumping to conclusions, it’s no longer pure. Once it’s no longer completely nonfiction, then it becomes fiction. So *Half Broke Horses*’ subtitle is *A True-Life Novel*.

Walls’ hope for the book is that it inspires readers to examine their own family histories. “We all have these really interesting ancestors. Some people have really tough stories,” (43) she says. People ask Walls how she could forgive her parents. But for her, it’s more about acceptance and understanding. “We all have our baggage. I think that by looking at somebody’s story, the answer becomes clear. That’s why I’ve always been such a big fan of nonfiction, because the answer’s always there, if you’re willing to dig deeply enough. You might not love the answer. But if you’re willing to look and unearth things, you can understand people a little better” (78).

The familial dysfunctionality present in the Walsh household is far removed from the traditional conception of the providing, loving, nurturing image of the

family. The patterns of communication in the Walls family did not follow the linear view of communication in any way. Her parents did a positive thing by encouraging her not to give up under adverse situations of life. Throughout Walls and her family were constantly on the go, most likely escaping from one of their many problems. Walls simply could not escape her childhood. The novel continuously demonstrates dysfunctional communication, and shows no signs of nurturing. As the dysfunctionality runs over the Walls family, her sister and her brother Brian escalated to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they weathered their parents' betrayals and, finally, found the resource will leave home. Jeannette Walls is not just that she had the guts and tenacity and intelligence to get out, but that she describes her parents with such deep affection and generosity. This is a story of triumph against all odds, but also a tender, moving tale of unconditional love in a family that despite its profound flaws gave the fiery determination to carve out a successful life on its own terms.



## Chapter Two

### The Litany of Gothic Misfortune

Jeannette Walls is the second oldest of four children. Her father, Rex, is an alcoholic, and her mother, Rose Mary is a painter and teacher. Until Jeannette is six, the family moves around Arizona and California every few months when Rex's and Rose Mary's debts grow too numerous. When Jeannette is seven, the family moves to Battle Mountain, Nevada where they enjoy stability for the first time as Rex works for a mining company and the family lives in a converted railway station. Eventually Rex loses his job and the children grow hungry. Rose Mary, who has a teaching certificate, gets a teaching job at the local school, but Rex quickly siphons away her pay check. Even so, the family is happy there until a young boy develops a fixation on Jeannette and attacks her with a BB gun when the children are home alone. Jeannette's older sister Lori retrieves their father's pistol to scare him away but the police are called and when Rex and Rose Mary learn that the children might be taken away from them, they decide to flee to Phoenix, Arizona. Jeannette Walls initially believes they are moving to live with her maternal grandmother, but on the way she is informed Grandma Smith has died and that they are going to live on the property Rose Mary has inherited from her mother.

At first, life is happy for the children. Their mother's house is big, and Grandma Smith also left her a significant amount of money. However, the money quickly disappears and the house falls into a state of disrepair. Rex asks Jeannette what she would like for her tenth birthday, and Jeannette says she would like him to stop drinking. He ties himself to a bed for a week to overcome his addiction to alcohol, and then decides to take the family on a trip to the desert. When their car



breaks down in the desert, a woman who picks them up and takes them to the city refers to them as "poor," causing Rex to relapse. Rose Mary decides that since they have no money it is time to move again, and she takes the family to their paternal grandparents' in Welch, West Virginia.

In Welch the children meet their paternal grandparents and uncle for the first time. They are enrolled in school; however, since Rose Mary abandoned their records, and the children have accents unfamiliar to the locals, they are placed in a class for challenged children. Jeannette is repeatedly beaten up by local girls, but when she helps the neighbour of the lead bully, she is no longer targeted. Rex and Rose Mary decide to return to Phoenix to retrieve some valuable items they abandoned. While they are gone, Jeannette walks in on her grandmother molesting Brian. Lori gets into a physical altercation with their grandmother, and she and Brian realize their father was probably molested as well. Jeannette and Lori became upset. When Rex returns, he admonishes his children rather than defending them, but the family is asked to leave. They relocate to a small rotting house with no indoor plumbing, on land that Rex acquires with the intention of building his dream house, a glass castle.

Rex assures his children that their situation is temporary, but they live at the house for years as it falls further into disarray and Rex refuses to repair it. Their only money comes from the odd jobs Rex finds, and the infrequent cheques Rose Mary receives from an oil company leasing a piece of property she owns. The children resort to dumpster diving to survive. Jeannette begs her mother to leave her father so they can go on welfare, but her mother refuses. Eventually Rose Mary takes a teaching job after a man from child protective services pays them a visit. The children believe their lives will change after their mother has work, but their money continues

to evaporate and their mother suffers nervous breakdowns from the stresses of teaching.

The summer Jeanette is thirteen, her mother leaves to take teaching classes and her sister is away on scholarship. Jeanette gives her father some of the money her mother has left her to run the household. She ends up unwittingly working with her father in a pool hustling scam where she is groped and nearly raped by a much older man, then refuses to participate in any more of her father's schemes. In an effort to find money, she lands her first real job, working at a jewellery store.

When Rose Mary returns from her teaching seminar, she decides to quit teaching to refocus on her art. Disgusted, Lori and Jeannette hatch a plan for Lori to move to New York City with Jeannette following shortly thereafter. Lori, Jeannette and Brian work for the better part of a year to accumulate money for the move. Shortly before Lori is set to move, Jeannette discovers Rex has stolen their money. Lori is disheartened, but Jeannette gets an offer to babysit for the summer. She asks the couple to hire Lori instead, and to buy her a ticket to New York in payment.

Jeannette begins making plans to go to college in New York City, and realizes she can leave a year early and complete twelfth grade there. Rose Mary is indifferent to her leaving, but Rex seems heartbroken and accompanies her to the bus station. After graduating from Barnard College, Jeannette gets an internship at a newspaper. She encourages Brian to join her and Lori in New York, and he agrees. When her youngest sister Maureen is twelve, Lori asks her to move in with them as the house in Welch is on the verge of being condemned; Maureen readily agrees. A short while later, Jeannette gets a call from Rose Mary who tells her that she and Rex have moved to the city to be with their children. Though Lori and Brian try to help their parents,



they must eventually ban them from their apartments. The parents become homeless and end up living in abandoned buildings. When Maureen enters her twenties, she moves back in with them. A fight eventually breaks out between Maureen and Rose Mary, and Maureen tries to stab Rose Mary. She is arrested and forced to spend a year in a mental asylum. When she is released, she decides to move to California.

A few years later, Rex calls Jeannette and tells her that he is dying. He dies a few weeks later. Years later, the family gathers on Thanksgiving where they toast Rex. Jeannette was molested by a neighborhood pervert. Later, when her parents resolved to throw themselves on the slim mercies of Rex's family, they moved to West Virginia to a vile hamlet along a river distinguished by having, her father proclaimed, "the highest level of fecal bacteria of any river in North America"(133) where Jeannette was groped by an uncle. A visit to the zoo ended when Rex and his daughter reached inside the cheetah's cage to pet the giant cat; while a family holiday erupted in flames as prankish Dad set the Christmas tree ablaze with his cigarette lighter.

Along the way, the children enjoyed a characteristically idiosyncratic version of home schooling. Their mother taught them reading and the health advantages of drinking unpurified ditch water, while their father explained "how we should never eat the liver of a polar bear because all the vitamin A in it could kill us. He showed us how to aim and fire his pistol, how to shoot Mom's bow and arrows, and how to throw a knife by the blade so that it landed in the middle of a target with a satisfying thwack." Walls recalls that "by the time I was 4, I was pretty good with Dad's pistol, a big black six-shot revolver, and could hit five out of six beer bottles at 30 paces. . . . It was fun. Dad said my sharpshooting would come in handy if the feds ever surrounded us."(21) Surely it suggests something about the educational system that



whenever the Walls children did attend schools they turned out to be academically ahead of the local kids, who tormented them for their outsider oddness.

Walls has a telling memory for detail and an appealing, unadorned style. And there's something admirable about her refusal to indulge in amateur psychoanalysis, to descend to the jargon of dysfunction or theorize about the sources of her parents' behaviour. But what's best is the deceptive ease with which she makes us see just how she and her siblings were convinced that their turbulent life was a glorious adventure. In one especially lovely scene, Rex takes his daughter to look at the starry desert sky and persuades her that the bright planet Venus is his Christmas gift to her. Even as she describes how their circumstances degenerated, how her mother sank into depression and how hunger and cold and Rex's increasing irresponsibility, dishonesty and abusiveness made it harder to pretend, Walls is notably evenhanded and unjudging.

In the memoir, the metaphor comes from Walls's father's dream of building a glass castle for his family. Given the context of the novel, we also discuss various demons and how those demons get in the way of dreams. Struggling with alcoholism, Walls's father never builds the glass castle; however, with determination and perseverance, Walls's own dream becomes a reality and begins to flourish when she puts the demon in her life to rest by writing her memoir.

Readers will marvel at the intelligence and resilience of the Walls kids. They root for them when they escape, one by one, to New York City, where Jeannette attended college, married and found work as a magazine columnist. And they begin to fear for them all over again when their parents follow them to Manhattan, where Rex and Rose Mary exhaust their children's patience and hospitality and wind up

homeless, eventually living as squatters in an abandoned building on the Lower East Side.

At times, the litany of gothic misfortune is undergone by the Walls' household recalls Harry Crews' classic memoir, *A Childhood*. The two books have striking similarities; both, for example, feature the horrific scalding of a child. But to think about Crews' book is to become aware of those mysterious but instantly recognizable qualities the sensibility, the tonal range, the lyrical intensity and imaginative vision that distinguish the artist from the memoirist, qualities that suggest the events themselves aren't quite as interesting as the voice in which they're recounted.

"*The Glass Castle*" falls short of being art, but it's a very good memoir. At one point, describing her early literary tastes, Walls mentions that "my favorite books all involved people dealing with hardships." (168) and she has succeeded in doing what most writers set out to do to write the kind of book they themselves most want to read.

"*The Glass Castle*" is a compelling character drama about family. The story of a very unusual family plays on two time frames, with the emphasis on the past for quite a while. As newspaper columnist Jeannette Walls prepares to start a new life with her fiancé she struggles to break free from her homeless parents whose bohemian lifestyle constantly kept them on the move and in poverty throughout her childhood. There are slow moments, but overall the story remains fascinating, never entirely judging the unconventional parents, always on the fence between failure and deep love. And the script is incredibly well-written; telling parallel stories in the past and present that are both engaging and enhance each other, creating suspense and intrigue. However, the epilogueish ending seems force and kind of counters a lot of the

dramatic conflict and character growth. The fact that the pendulum ultimately falls very clearly on one of the two sides makes for a pretty touching ending, too. Yet despite its few weaknesses, *"The Glass Castle"* is a remarkably touching story.



## Chapter Three

### Juvenile Trauma

"But God shows his love for us that, While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory." (Rom. 3:23) God has a long history of working through people who come from dysfunctional families. After all, a dysfunctional family is any family with more than one person in it. And every human is a sinner. So when two or more sinful people form a family, it is not uncommon for the family to be dysfunctional on more than one level. And out of that chaos, comes God's story.

A family is a group of people, who often sticks together at every situation, even in better or worse. When the father works for the family at far off places the mother will take the place of the father. She showers her love on her children and the children obey their parent's words. This is what a family looks like. But in Walls' life it is like a traveling circus more than a family circus. Both the mother and the father were the ringleaders and their children were the performers. They did not think about the future of their children and the fact that they too grow old. They think about their self. But when we analyze through both the characters, Rex Walls is a charismatic and intelligent man when he is sober, cruel and selfish when he's not sober; metaphorically he was compared to Tyrannosaurs Rex. Apart from this he is much of caring nature compared to mother Rose, who prioritizes her art to her children. And Rex is considered as the patriarch of the family and is the one who guides Walls to rely on her and not on anyone. That could be seen in "If you don't want to sink, you better figure out how to swim (66)."

Here Rex not only teaches Walls to swim but to overcome any difficult situation on her own when she is about to drown. It indicates that the father has instilled the spirit of independence in his daughter at an early age. Jeannette accepts that whatever her father is doing is right for her and there was no other way to explain it.

Rose Mary is also a much brilliant woman who has learnt to accept all types of people and teaches the importance of acceptance to her children even though she has gone through many hard times herself. She always thinks of the bright side of the things and does not get down on people, because she could comprehend the innumerable account of pain it causes to individuals when they are wrongly judged by others. Since she had struggles her whole life because of wrong judgements about herself. She does not want anyone to feel that kind of horror and hatred by others. "You should never hate anyone, even your worst enemies. Everyone has something good about them. You have to find the redeeming quality and love the person for that". (144)

This line proves that people can still have something good inside them and do not need material goods to stay happy. There is good inside both Rex and Rose, but it is not often shown out. They guide their children both the good and worse part of their life. The chapter two titles *Dessert* resemble their life dryness and emptiness. But the real worst was seen in chapter three, the entry of their grandma, Erma.

If Jeannette's parents are cruel, her grandma Erma, dad's mom, was the worst part in their life. Erma is a humorless, racist child molester or in the word's infinite delusion "She's just an old woman who's had a tough life". (132)



She doesn't like anyone to call her as grandma because it makes her sound old. Erma's childhood experience itself was bad, so she inflicted the same ill treatment on her child and grandchildren. When Erma was young her parents died and she had been shipped off to one relative after another who had treated her like a servant. Scrubbing clothes on a washboard until her knuckles bled, she had undergone a torturous routine in her youthful days. She was molested by her relatives and that was the preeminent memory of Erma's childhood. But those incidents left an indelible wound in her heart which she tried to overcome by her own child, Rex when he was a child about eight- ten years old. Imposing it on her own child, Rex also molested her own grandchild, Brian. When Jeannette witnessed the scene where Brian was protesting against the advances of Erma, she rushed to her brother's rescue and shouted at her grandma. Hearing this Lori also joined the fight with grandma by slapping her. Jeannette and Brian were cheering Lori brave feats while Erma tried to resist all their protests.

"Erma jerked her hand out of Lori's grasp and slapped her so hard that Lori's glasses went flying across the room. Lori, who had turned thirteen, slapped her back. Erma hit again, and this time Lori struck Erma a blow in the jaw... and me and Brian were cheering on Lori..." (147).

Hearing of the fight against his mom, Rex gets angry and shouted at Jeannette for arguing with his mother and making wild accusations and Lori even more for daring to strike her own grandma, and at Brian for being such a jerk. He was furious and did not care about what Jeannette tried to explain, he was just simply hesitant. Here we could see Jeannette's care and love, and her protectiveness towards her siblings. The irony is that Erma brings out the good in the kids through her bad



gestures. The siblings team up against her their grandmother not break their bond worse situations. Dad defends Erma, even though she molested his child, maybe Rex is expecting his kids to defend themselves from bad situations, even from him when he does terrible things to them. "Sometimes you need a little crisis to get your adrenaline flowing and help you realize your potential (254)." He has in a way helped his children to fend for themselves.

Throughout life, these kids witnessed and have been prepare to face the adverse situations in their day to day life or victims many different cases involving rape and molestation. Jeannette was molested by a boy of her age when she was around seven to eight years old, later she was molested by her uncle, and witnessed her grandma molesting Brian. There have been countless other times the kids have been subject to molestation and possible rape, but their family helped them get over it. They helped them believe that it was simply something they had to forgive the molester for.

Dinitia Hewitt is the leader of a clique of girls, who beats up Jeannette. She's constantly cruel and makes fun of her poverty until she sees Jeannette help her neighbor. Dinitia slowly outcasts herself from everyone and reveals to her new friend Jeannette she was pregnant. Later she's arrested for stabbing her step father to death. Even though Walls doesn't seems share that state of mind. Jeannette grew up in a loving household whereas Dinitia grew up in a slightly abusive one. "One day before Christmas, Dinitia passed me a note to write names starting with D. I wrote as many as I could and asked, why? She passes a note back saying, I think I'm pregnant (199)."

"Life's too short to care about what other people think. Besides, they should accept us for who we are" (157). It's clear that as sophisticated as Jeannette has grown, in her pantsuits and pearls, she's never quite left her upbringing behind, boxing up leftovers at fancy restaurants and keeping her belongings in moving boxes. And as she prepares to get married, she must reconcile with her past both the good parts and the bad.

Walls story is riveting in and of itself, but the author finds a greater emotional resonance by exploring the complexity of the human condition. Rex and Rose Mary neither evil nor ideal, but rather complicated personalities at once whimsical and reckless, adoring and damaged, lovable and loathable. And Walls comes to realize that she wouldn't be the woman she is today without all of it.

Families often stick together, for better or for worse, but the Walls family falls into the worse category. Together, these family members hurt themselves more than they help themselves. Maybe some families are better off apart.

Eventually, Jeannette realizes Rex is never going to build the glass castle he's always promised for which he has even drawn detailed blueprints and hatches a plot for each of them, one by one, to escape. Eventually, the kids all end up in New York, and Rex and Rose Mary follow, living on the streets and then as squatters on the Lower East Side.

Apart from these there were many social issues in *the Glass Castle*. It deals with the family, perseverance, wealth, society and class, coming of age, identity, freedom and confinement, forgiveness, hunger and unconditional love. The family adapts a nomadic lifestyle. The author proves over and over again how she holds no bad feelings towards her parents and the horrendous childhood days that she endured



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because of their neglect. No matter how many times her parents betray, frustrate, belittle, or scare her half to death, Walls finds some way of turning their action into deeds of love. She never points fingers at her parents, blaming them for their neglect. Even though she sometimes would like to tell them what she honestly thinks of them, she holds these thoughts to herself and continues to nod her head in their favour. Her mother and father both squander money on themselves, often leaving their children with no food or warm clothes. And still, Walls does not wallow in self-pity. She sees who her parents are and moves on, finding solutions for her problems through pure determination to survive.

Unconditional love is another important theme, one that is closely related to forgiveness. Though she is anxious to get away from her parents and the life they have made her suffer through, Walls still loves her parents. She is disappointed when her parents follow her and her siblings to New York, and yet she loves them enough to want to help them better their living conditions. She never turns her back on them, though she certainly has enough reasons to do so. The only time that she pushes her father away is when she graduates from college and does not invite him to her commencement. She is afraid that he will show up drunk and begin to argue with the valedictorian. She feels guilty for her decision and later apologizes to Rex. But that is the only time she comes close to faltering in her love, especially for her father.

Hunger floats through this memoir, sometimes so desperately that readers begin to feel as if they too were starving. The children seldom have enough food to eat. But it is not just the hunger of the body that is expressed in this memoir. There is also the hunger for affection; the hunger for friends and acceptance; and the hunger for warmth and clean clothes.



Rose Mary and Rex stressed the need for their children to attain self-reliance, though readers might argue that neither of the parents was capable of it. The parents often stressed this value at times when they were incapable or unwilling to give their children the guidance and nurturing that all young children need. When one goes hungry, Rose Mary could well have said, one finds food wherever it is available. And thus Jeannette and Brian scrounge for tidbits of apples and bread crusts in the trashcans when there is no food at home. Jeannette takes a job at thirteen when she is legally too young to work so that she and her siblings can eat. The children walk miles into the woods to find branches they can burn in the stove to give them heat. This is the self-reliance the children have learned from their parents Rose Mary and Rex. "I wanted to let the world know that no one had a perfect life, that even the people who seemed to have it all had their secrets (270)."

This quote is important because the Walls family did not have anything close to perfect life. They were not ashamed. Even during their hardest times, Rex and Rose Mary refuse to become charity cases. They do not even accept help from their children in their late adulthood. The value of self-sufficiency descends mainly from Rose Mary, whose upbringing in an incredibly disciplined home leads her to forgo the rules when she becomes a mother. She insisted that her children must learn to live self-sufficiently and be strong always. Rose Mary prefers to treat her wound in home rather in a hospital. Thus their self-sufficient life is strong and they all learnt to depend on their own self and not on the society. "I lived in a world that at any moment could erupt into fire. It was the sort of knowledge that kept you on your toes" (34). This quote all the more haunts everyone, because of the emotional impact of Walls' entire childhood.

## Chapter Four

### Spectrum of Resilience

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the definition of resilience is the ability to become strong, healthy and successful again after something bad happens. The ability to withstand on the ground can be seen in Walls life. Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of hard times, to learn from failure, and to be motivated by challenges and to believe in your own abilities to deal with the stress and difficulties in life. This is a struggle for many teens today. One of the ways to get out of this is to talk to someone openly. *The Glass Castle*, a memoir based on her unconventional and often harrowing childhood characterized by persistent poverty and the chaos and confusion of dysfunctional parents and their nomadic lifestyle. Although Jeanette's parents were irresponsible, neglectful and careless, they did manage to instil in their children key commendable qualities and raise them as well-adjusted adults. Her parents taught their children to be resilient, independent and to have a love of learning. These are invaluable gifts that last a life time and breed success.

Jeannette was very optimistic and she always tried to look on the bright side of most situations, even when it was hard to do. The kids always stayed loyal to their parents throughout unimaginable hardships. The children in the walls family did not cry, most of the stuff they went through most people or kids would have cried over that. In the beginning of the story the parents of the walls children guided their children to resilience. In one part of the story dad had a cut on his head. Jeannette told her dad he should shave around the area and he said "It would ruin my image" (169). Rex was a good image for the children basically teaching them to be resilient. And I



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also think his actions possibly rubbed off on the kids. And also the Walls children could go through the most emotional pain (184).

Jeannette and her siblings didn't fight back when the kids from their school would pick on them and call them bad names. As Jeannette got older she knew that her family wasn't like most families, and she accepted that. Jeannette's resilience was being able to plan and be ready for her future. She didn't want to make the same financial mistakes as her parents did. Jeannette and her sister Lori started saving up their money so they could move to New York City as soon as they graduated high school. This is an example of what can scar people for life, but Jeannette Walls just acts like it never happened, so therefore she would be resilient to the highest level. To have resilience takes a lot and to have it in one's lifetime is good because it basically means you can undergo almost anything that comes your way. Jeannette's two sisters and her brother should've not had to endure that kind of pain in the rest of their lifetime. The Walls children had no option but to rely on themselves. They quickly learnt that they were able to impact their own destiny and were all high achievers in school. Having little parental guidance, Jeannette Walls and her siblings were quite autonomous. They got into a few scrapes because of this, but also knew they had to act independently of their parents.

All obstacles, especially those encountered as a child, are opportunities to develop flexibility and resilience. The Walls children learnt from a very young age to depend on each other for their most basic needs because both their parents were self-absorbed and distracted by their own interest. Jeanette's father, Rex, was a chronic alcoholic and her mother, Rose-Mary, was obstinately over-focused on her own hobbies; painting, reading and writing. Walls' parents were educated people and taught the children how to solve problems, both through logic and through experience.



Unfortunately, the experience portion was often neglectful and abusive, which it need not be in order for children to learn to reason. Both parent although they severely neglected their children, genuinely loved them, and the children were happy despite their day to day struggles with poverty, neglect and hardships. The Walls' children adapted to their environment and circumstances of having dysfunctional adults as parents by reversing roles with them. The children joined together to help their parents to function outside the home. This reversal of roles is evident when the children forced their mother to take on a teaching position. When the principal threatened to fire her, because she was consistently unreliable, the children took charge of making sure that their mother could manage to stay employed. "Miss Beatty threatened to fire mom, so Lori, Brian and I, started helping mom with school work" (74). The children took on the role to wake, feed, clothe and organize a ride to and from school for their mother and also went as far as, cleaning her classroom, marking her assignments and creating lesson plans. Ironically, by being inept, Rose Mary provided her children with the hands on experience of what was needed to be an employable adult.

Rex and Rose Mary's persistent laissez faire attitude towards the children's basic needs for safety and age appropriate expectations is evident in stories of Jeanette's early childhood. At the age of three, Jeanette is severely burnt while cooking hotdogs and when asked by the nurse why she was cooking hotdogs by herself, Jeanette states that "Mom says I'm mature and lets me cook for myself a lot (18).

Clearly at the young age of three, Jeanette knew she had better be independent and had already learned to look after herself if she wanted to eat. Growing up, the Walls children learned to thrive off of their neglect, and became

tough and resilient. While Jeanette was young, Rex taught Jeanette how to swim by literally letting her struggle until she was close to drowning then stated "If you don't want to sink you better figure out how to swim." (66). This quotation further proves that Rex and Rose Mary's reckless approach to parenting inadvertently taught their children to sustain themselves because they truly had no other choice but to survive.

In spite of Rex and Rose Mary's inability to be reliable enough to hold on to a job and apply their own academic knowledge, they did manage to teach their children the importance of education and instill a growth mind-set. The joy of learning is what unified the Walls family and is the source of the children's most endearing memories. They would read together and bond over learning. Jeanette recounts her happier moments "after dinner, the whole family was stretched out on the benches and the floor of the depot and read with the dictionary in the middle of the room so we could look up words we didn't know" (56-57). The Walls' not only believed in a growth mind-set; sharing knowledge was in fact how Rex and Rose Mary best expressed their genuine love and affection towards their children. Rex when sober taught his children geometry, physics, astronomy and how to convert their math homework into binary numbers. Rose, a teacher herself taught her children to value literature. In third grade, Jeanette and her siblings were recognized for their love of literature and were all placed in a gifted reading class.

Rex and Rose Mary loved their children and expressed their love by sharing with them the joy of learning. Because this expression of love was pure, they succeeded, to instill in their children the drive and ambitions to be successful and live accomplished lives. The next quote also connects with resilience, "What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger" (179). Just because the kids withstood so many problems does not mean they are perfectly resilient. Sometimes the family isn't



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resilient because if anyone talk's about dad's mom he's not resilient about it. And also Jeanette isn't resilient about her father's drinking because he acts violent and it affects the family. But also she is resilient because she has dealt with it for so long. So basically someone who has good resilience as Jeanette or her father has their soft spots when it comes to a major issue. One day Jeanette and her brother found an expensive ring and for once they were happy because they thought they were going to have money for once so they brought it home and the mother said "were not selling it, it could improve my self-esteem" (186). So building self-esteem is the key to building resilience. Amazingly, Jeannette Walls was able to keep her good intentions toward others and this always helped her in the long run. In one instance, she was able to befriend a bully by showing kindness toward a child in the bully's neighbourhood. She also had a special teacher at her high school that held high expectations for her and saw past the poverty to Jeannette's amazing potential.

Walls started lived in New York City, in the late 1970s when she was 17. Determined to escape the squalor and instability of their early years, she and her siblings headed north at various times, sharing a tiny apartment and cobbling together a living by working odd jobs. Walls found work at a small newspaper in Brooklyn, where the editor eventually convinced her to earn a college degree. She scrapped together enough cash and loans to attend Barnard, majoring in political science then launching a career in journalism that took her from various news desks to the niche of gossip columnist for news outlets like Esquire and MSNBC. By the time she was 30, she was donning the latest fashions and living in a luxury apartment on Park Avenue, all while hiding the secret of her "white trash" upbringing from everyone she knew.

In the midst of her trajectory, Walls fought to conceal not just the bygone days of a bedraggled childhood but the shameful elements of her current life: mainly the



fact that her parents, who had followed their children to New York, were now living alternately on the city's streets and as squatters in abandoned buildings. After finally deciding to make her story known the promptings of which she is now likewise pleased to disclose, Walls spent five years hammering out the book, a process punctuated by frequent tearful meltdowns. Ultimately the anguish paid off. *The Glass Castle* became an instant sensation when it hit bookstores in 2005, remaining on the New York Times best-seller list for seven years and making a big splash abroad as well. The autobiography has been translated into 30 languages, and has been taken as a movie.

In recent years, the author has produced two more books, very different from *The Glass Castle* but clearly sprung from the same sensibilities. *Half Broke Horses*, dubbed a true-life novel, follows the life of Walls' maternal grandmother, a tough-as-nails Westerner reminiscent of the legendary, Calamity Jane. Walls pieced together the biography from stories recounted by her mother, filling in the missing pieces with her imagination. Last year she published *The Silver Star*, a rich tale set in a small Virginia town during the early 1970s against a backdrop of desegregation and the Vietnam War, struggles that defined the era. The plot centres on two young sisters who are neglected by a narcissistic mother and face grinding challenges, including a sexual assault.

That Jeannette was drawn to writing survival stories comes as no surprise. Her own saga is riveting because it is both harrowing and suffused with wonder. The more one thinks about the journey she has travelled, the more Walls becomes a compelling enigma. The story's parental exploits are at times downright infuriating. There's the scene in which Rose Mary hoards a chocolate bar from her hungry children and another in which she laments the successful art career she might have enjoyed had she

not wasted herself on motherhood. There's also the scene in which Jeannette and her sister Lori, teenagers who had been saving their earnings from babysitting and a host of other jobs, discover that their father has plundered their piggy bank and spent their hard-earned wages on booze.

Then there are the story's minor figures, the uncouth relatives on Rex's side, whom the children meet when the family migrates to Welch, his detested hometown in West Virginia. They include his mother, Erma, a drunken, profane hag who abused the children and tried to molest Jeannette's younger brother, Brian, in what is perhaps the story's most shocking episode. But there is far more to this saga than shameless negligence and soul-crushing squalor. What makes it astonishing is the juxtaposition of the sordid and sublime. Currently, Walls is hammering out her next novel in the breezy shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains. She is not at liberty to disclose its contents. But one imagines it will convey some not-so-simple truths while debunking a few stereotypes and trumpeting the human spirit's astonishing resilience.

In the poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling also deals about the resilience taught by the father to his son about what qualities he had to nurture in his life to become a man. The result is standing up even after being knocked down. Everyone has their own tough times. Recovering from hard times may take time but it results in success when it is faced with courage, confidence and never gives up attitude when failures loom large before our eyes. Hope is something required in life, especially, in those hard times. Hope is the one which keeps the head above the water. Jeannette's ability to continuously believe in her father, her steadiness and fight back against the failures moulds her personality which revolves around hope. Throughout the entire book, Jeannette always has hope in her father, even though she knows in the back of her mind that his promises were unrealistic. Hope and Resilience are very close by related



and it is necessary to have one over another. "Things usually work out in the end. What if they don't? That just means you haven't come to the end" (259).

In conclusion, Jeanette's parents may have had a ton of flaws and shortcomings, but when it boiled down to how the Walls children were brought up, they learned to be tough, resilient, independent and educated. It was their parents' genuine love combined with absurd neglect, which empowered the Walls children with the psychological strength to overcome the obstacle of their upbringing. It is because they knew they were loved, that the Walls children, together, strove hard, transformed their stumbling blocks, formed by their parent's dysfunctionality into stepping stones, and succeeded in their lives.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

Literature is important to us because it is universal. Literature creates a bond between the author's mind and action, which is communicated through words to others. It makes us to think about ourselves and our society. If one knows how to handle literature, he can feel the taste of goodness, the grammatical use, phrase, words that enrich literature, etc. It feels both the author and the reader with its delight and fruitfulness. Thus literature is the creation of another world. American Literature is based on the cultural and political discussions. It is dealt with the current situation of the society and the changes happened from other periods to present.

Jeannette Walls *The Glass Castle*, offers a look into author's life and that of her highly charismatic yet frequently dysfunctional family. Walls' first memoir and second non-fiction work, *The Glass Castle* was received well by critics and the public. *The Glass Castle* remained on the New York Times Bestseller's List for 100 weeks and received The Christopher Award, the American Library Association's Alex Award and the Books for Better Living Award. In only two years the book had sold over 1.5 million copies and had been translated into six other languages. Paramount Pictures purchased the rights to produce a film based on the memoir but the project has yet to conclude.

In an article for *Publisher's Weekly* Walls wrote of her surprise that many thought her memoir was largely fictionalized and exaggerated. She contested the claims of some reviewers and readers, claiming that her work was based entirely on her memory. Truth, Walls says is "the most important goal of a memoir writer". But she also writes that truth varies based on the person telling it, memories of her growing up years are recounted by her other family members, her brother, sisters and her mother in a different way that while they

unanimously felt Jeannette Walls' book was substantially true, any memoir they would have written would have been entirely different. As the title of the memoir, this symbol could easily sum up most of the tensions and interesting incidents recorded in the book.

*The Glass Castle* symbolizes the illusions that Jeannette must release in order to fully mature. For years, Dad has, with the kids, made blueprints and floor plans for a magnificent transparent palace built in the desert and relying on solar panels for electricity. *The Glass Castle* epitomizes how Dad would like to live, self-sufficiently and sustainably, without submitting to a system or authority. In Welch, Brian and Jeannette even dig a foundation pit for the palace. The illusion is, for Jeannette, definitively burst once Dad tells her to fill up the pit with garbage: the very idea, the dream itself, has become no more than a receptacle for trash. Dad's flimsy attempts to revive the dream, by showing Jeannette new floor plans when she's about to leave for New York, only confirm for her that she must definitively let go of the idea of the Glass Castle. But as sobering as this symbol is, by choosing it as the book's title Walls pays homage to Dad's magnificent dreams and illusions, as unrealistic and broken as they might be.

Following this, the novel is considered as Non-fiction. The creator of non-fiction, in good faith, assumes responsibility for the truth or accuracy of the events, people, or information presented. In contrast, a story whose creator explicitly leaves open if and how the work refers to reality is usually classified as fiction. Nonfiction, which may be presented either objectively or subjectively, is traditionally one of the two main divisions of narratives the other traditional division being fiction, which contrasts with nonfiction by dealing in information, events, and characters expected to be partly or largely imaginary.

Freelance writer Walls doesn't pull her punches. She opens her memoir by describing the scene where she looks out the window of her taxi, wondering if she's "overdressed for the



...and spotting her mother on the sidewalk, "rooting through a Dumpster." Walls's parents just two of the unforgettable characters in this excellent, unusual book were a matched pair of eccentrics, and raising four children didn't conventionalize either of them. Her father was a self-taught man, a would-be inventor who could stay longer at a poker table than at most jobs and had "a little bit of a drinking situation," as her mother put it. With a natural storytelling knack, Walls describes her artist mom's great gift for rationalizing. Apartment walls so thin they heard all their neighbours? What a bonus they'd "pick up a little Spanish without even studying. Why feed their pets? They'd be helping them by not allowing them to become dependent." (15) While Walls's father's version of Christmas presents walking each child into the Arizona desert at night and letting each one claim a star delightful, he wasn't so dear when he stole the kids' hard-earned savings to go on a bender. The Walls children learned to support themselves, eating out of trashcans at school or painting their skin so the holes in their pants didn't show. Buck-toothed Jeannette even tried making her own braces when she heard what orthodontia cost. One by one, each child escaped to New York City. Still, it wasn't long before their parents appeared on their doorsteps. "Why not?" Mom said. "Being homeless is an adventure." (255) Agent, Jennifer Rudolph Walsh.

The second chapter has dealt with the litany of gothic misfortune undergone by Walls. It features the horrific scalding of a child. The reader becomes aware of those mysterious but instantly recognizable qualities the sensibility, the tonal range, the lyrical intensity and imaginative vision that distinguish the artist from the memoirist, qualities that suggest the events themselves aren't quite as interesting as the voice in which they're recounted.

*The Glass Castle* falls short of being art, but it's a very good memoir. At one point, describing her early literary tastes, in *New York Times* Walls mentions that, 'my favourite



books all involved people dealing with hardships." (168) and she has succeeded in doing what most writers set out to do to write the kind of book they themselves most want to read.

"*The Glass Castle*" is a compelling character drama about family. The story of a very unusual family plays on two time frames, with the emphasis on the past for quite a while. As newspaper columnist Jeannette Walls prepares to start a new life with her fiancé she struggles to break free from her homeless parents whose bohemian lifestyle constantly kept them on the move and in poverty throughout her childhood. There are slow moments, but overall the story remains fascinating, never entirely judging the unconventional parents, always on the fence between failure and deep love.

Despite her difficult childhood, Walls grew up to become a successful gossip columnist and author. Yet not everything turned out rosy; *The Glass Castle* leaves off with the family reunited at Thanksgiving several years after Walls' father's fatal heart attack. And ABC News reports that in a 2005 Q&A promoting the book, Walls mentioned that while two of her siblings are also living their dreams, her youngest sibling "hit a rough patch."

The third chapter records the Juvenile Trauma undergone by Walls. Walls' story is riveting in and of itself, but the author finds a greater emotional resonance by exploring the complexity of the human condition. Rex and Rose Mary neither evil nor ideal, but rather complicated personalities, at once whimsical and reckless, adoring and damaged, lovable and loathable. And Walls comes to realize that she wouldn't be the woman she is today without all of it.

Families often stick together, for better or for worse, but the Walls family falls into the worse category. Together, these family members hurt themselves more than they help themselves. Maybe some families are better off apart.

Eventually, Jeannette realizes Rex is never going to build the glass castle he's always promised even drawn detailed blueprints for and hatches a plot for each of them, one by one, to escape. Eventually, the kids all end up in New York, and Rex and Rose Mary follow, living on the streets and then as squatters on the Lower East Side.

Forgiveness, unconditional love and hunger floats through this memoir, sometimes so desperately those readers begin to feel as if they too were starving. The children seldom have enough food to eat. But it is not just the hunger of the body that is expressed in this memoir. There is also the hunger for affection; the hunger for friends and acceptance; and the hunger for warmth and clean clothes. The parenting technique helped the children to make their own decisions and be all the more self-sufficient. The positive effects of parenting on Walls children will make them take decisions on their own correctly as well as they can move independently. Though they may be rude to their children but the skills of parenting made their children live on their own self.

The Walls' family had changed a lot after coming to New York, and over the course of time all their lives had transformed in different ways. Jeannette was living a very comfortable life and she has more freedom after escaping to New York. When she lands in a job as a journalist, she is extremely happy and now she has enough money to support herself.

After the long years of constant disputes and arguing, it is the first time they were celebrating together as a family, and Jeannette along with her brother and sister have grown and adapted to their new lives. All in all, Jeannette and her siblings have become independent, and the lifestyle in New York became the sole reason for their behavioural change and progress in adulthood.



In conclusion, the setting in Arizona, Nevada, West Virginia, and New York contributed to the actions that Jeannette and her sibling took, while living in dysfunctional societies.

The fourth chapter is about the Spectrum of Resilience present in the Walls' family. Jeannette's parents may have had a ton of flaws and shortcomings, but when it boiled down to how the Walls children were brought up, they learned to be tough, resilient, independent and educated. All obstacles, especially those encountered as a child, are opportunities to develop flexibility and resilience. The Walls children learned from a very young age to depend on each other for their most basic needs because both their parents were self-absorbed and distracted by their own interest. It was their parents' genuine love combined with absurd neglect, which empowered the Walls children with the tools to overcome the obstacle of their upbringing. It is because they knew they were loved, that the Walls children, together, strove hard, transformed their stumbling blocks, and formed by their parent's dysfunctionality into stepping stones, to succeed in their lives.

That's just selfish parents who are selfish have a big effect on children. The way children are raised all depends on the parents. If they aren't a good parent to their children and let selfishness get in the way of raising their children the right way it can have a large impact on the children's lives in the future. When becoming a parent one's job then becomes being a parent first over everything. Having a family means one do everything one can for the family even if it involves putting other things before your personal wants and desires. *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls is a perfect example of how the selfishness of the parents has a large effect on their children in the long run. *The Glass Castle* isn't just a story but it is someone's actual life that was affected by selfish parents. The story as revealed by Jeannette Walls is the story of her life and the ups and downs that she went through as a child with troubled parents and how it affected her life.



Back in 2005, Jeannette Walls' best-selling memoir *The Glass Castle* wowed critics and readers with its unbelievable rags-to-riches story. It's no surprise Hollywood wanted to adapt it, as writing about her difficult, nomadic childhood, Walls simultaneously conveyed her younger self's point of view that it was all a grand adventure with her adult ability to see it for the insane bedlam it was and the fact that *The Glass Castle* is a true story still feels baffling.

Jeannette Walls is one of a long line of impoverished children who by inner strength and hard work make it to adulthood; she is an easily recognizable American character, who "pulls herself up by her bootstraps." Homelessness affects Walls on an individual level as it allows her to develop personal resilience that ends in success. Walls becomes a real-life success story proving ambition and optimism can and will help anyone achieve goals and dreams, no matter what background he or she comes from. Because the students find Walls's humble beginnings and eventual success inspiring, *The Glass Castle* is a wonderful introduction to what the American Dream is all about.

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**Socio-political Dilemma in Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

by

**VIJI S.**

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **Socio-political Dilemma in Nayantara Saghal's *Rich Like Us*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

**OCTOBER 2018**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Socio-political Dilemma in Nayantara Saghal's *Rich Like Us*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Viji S. during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

The project entitled **Socio-political Dilemma in Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*** examines how Sahgal placed women in the socio-political topsy-turvy state, especially before and after emergency in India.

The first chapter deals with a short biography of Nayantara Sahgal discussing the general characteristics of his works and her predominant place in the realm of Post-Colonial literature.

The second chapter **Political Allegory** deals with the political dilemmas and personal problems, fulfilment and frustrations of female protagonists.

The third chapter **Hybridity in Women** deals with Post-Colonial features like feminism and its impact on society.

The fourth chapter **Historical Consciousness** deals with the historicity, which firmly holds the parallel reading in the novel. The examination of the historicity of her fiction through the 'counter narrative' methodology of New Historicism brings forth the events of the past, strengthening her role as an involved intellectual in society.

The fifth chapter postulates the style and the technique in this novel. It sums up the fate of women in the socio-political milieu and depicts different types of women who accept transformations and get maturity. Women's role in the cultural transformation and the national emergency with the notion of historical consciousness are also analysed.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Literature, records life and society's response to it, is embodied in the author's image portrayed in his creation. Literature expresses and communicates thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards life. Indian writing in English began with the contribution of Indian writers writing in English language with Indianness in their style of writing. British rule in India encouraged the growth of the English language to stabilize their power in India. With the spread of English education, Indians began to write in English and giving form to Indian literature. Thus, Indian writing in English created a space for themselves dealing with their own themes. Indian writing in English that became a discipline of study in the twentieth century focused more on social issues connected to the freedom movement and other malignant social issues like casteism and communal rivalry. The origin of Indian English literature can be traced to the Eighteenth Century. Indian English literature can be defined as the literature that is written by writers who are Indians by birth and ancestry. Indian writing is the product of multi-lingual, multi-cultural and socio-historical and now it reaches the apex of consideration though the arrivals of more regional and national writers."Indo-Anglican literature is an off shoot as well as recordation of the modern renaissance. Indian writing in English, besides being a genre in English, is a distinctive literature in its own right." (Iyengar 10).

Indian writing in English was greatly influenced by writing in English by Victorians, Romantics, Georgians and Modernists. But in its own way, the Indian writing in English literature has contributed to English literature. Indian writing in English has attracted a widespread interest recently, both in India and abroad. It is now realized Indian English Literature and Commonwealth Literature are in no way inferior to English Literature. The earliest contributors of Indian English Literature were mostly

British educated Indian social activists like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Krishna Mohan Bannerji, Ram Gopal Ghose, Rajendra Lal Mitra and Harish Chander Mukerjee. All these Bengali writers had their education in Britain and Europe. They were staunch social activists who worked to abolish social evils like Sati, untouchability and religious superstitions.

Indian fiction has become a cogent tool for generating thought and bringing about a much desired reformation and transformation. The first Indian English novel, titled *Rajmohan's Wife* was published in the year 1864 by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and it marked a significant epoch in the history of Indian Writing in English. It was Tagore who laid the foundation for the emergence of English novel translated from Bengali novels thus extending his literary capabilities as an English translator of his Bengali works in English language. Indian writing in English which has grown over the years in variety and maturity has aroused considerable interest both in India and abroad.

The writers like Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai, etc., have not only enjoyed a large and international reading public, but have also provided various matters for analysis and evaluation. Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan took forward the fiction further in its growth. R. K. Narayan displayed compassionate humanism in his writing and focused on the private lives of the characters, and Mulk Raj Anand dealt with realistic themes and made bold depiction of the misery of the downtrodden and the lower-class people. His works record the picture of urban working class, the low class and peasantry before and after the First World War. The most important of them is *Untouchable*. R. K. Narayan is held in high esteem both in India and England. His novels are eminently readable. Malgudi is his setting as Wessex was to Hardy. They were followed by a new crop of irreverence marked with sceptical vigour. Those who gave new tones, tenor and context to Indian fiction in English in the



last decades include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy, who among others have earned considerable fame for their fictional contribution.

Indian Writing in English has made a great contribution to the upliftment of women by bringing out the oppression and hardships. Among the horde of such literature, women writers also have made tremendous contributions to empower and inspire women in such distressing situations in real life. After independence, Indian women novelists have carved a niche for themselves, their works are peerless and the in-depth study of women, by women, provides great insight for understanding and serves as reservoirs for gaining knowledge to solve the various crisis in life. There is a big list of writers whose names are worth mentioning like Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Shoba De, Bharati Mukherjee, Nayantara Sahgal, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rama Mehta, Manju Kapur, Geeta Mehta and Kiran Desai. Fiction by women writers have made significant contribution to this genre and their works usually serve as a reservoir of information giving insights and a wealth of understanding on subjects which are often thought but never taken up for discussion. In all these women writers, readers find a sympathetic analysis of the female psyche, giving clear insights and perceptions to readers. Several writers raise their voices against various atrocities. In this manner, one could find that feminist concerns are raised through these novels. Though there are several types of feminism like liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and French feminism, these writings come under the genre of Indian feminism.

As literature is a reflection of life, many real characters and their trauma are being narrated from various angles by the women writers. Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. Nayantara Sahgal has also published both fiction and non-fiction. Sahgal's feeling for politics and



her command over English are rather more impressive than her art as a novelist. In the novel of Anita Desai and Sahgal, a woman is no more a goddess or automation, while these two women novelists deal with the urban upper-class women, Shashi Deshpande delineates the middle-class educated women to show what man has made of woman. Her women are anti-patriarchal protagonists. Comparing Anita Desai and Sahgal, Agarwal writes "Anita Desai's women either succumb or survive the existential problems within the family fold whereas Nayantara Sahgal's women come out of the bond, if need be, to live as free individuals" (162).

Women writers have travelled deep and wide in unravelling the psyche of the Indian women. It is with great authenticity that these novelists portray the female protagonists, because a few of them have autobiographical elements in the character sketches, whereas a few others are stories told by someone who has undergone such a trauma. Each writer specialises in the study of women from a particular stratum of society. For example, Anita Desai and Sahgal portray women of the elite urban women. They are not self-effacing goddesses but human beings in flesh and blood, move from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion and from weakness to strength.

Shashi Deshpande's oeuvre of women characters are drawn from the middle-class, who are well educated and raise cudgels against the patriarchal establishments in the society. Kamala Markandaya's canvas consists of women of all age groups belonging to different strata of the society. The spirit of calm and silent submission is seen in the central characters Nathan and Rukmani of the novel the *Nectar in a Sieve*. They do not grumble or complain but accept everything silently. Most of her characters are victims of social and economic disparities of life. Her works visualise the awakened feminine sensibility and the changes in the tradition. Her characters are well developed, and the construction of the novel is done in a complex manner. She presents a realistic

picture of the Indian rural life. The innate goodness of these people and their heroic endurance to problems are all sketched with impeccable perfection. But finally, these characters emerge successfully by breaking all humiliating shackles.

Shashi Deshpande is a renowned writer who specialises in analytical and explorative studies of the female psyche. Her writings throw great light on the traumatic experiences of the characters and the societal causes which draw them into such a state of trauma. Shobha De, a freelance writer, columnist and novelist who belongs to the modern age writes on a variety of issues, current as well as political. Her milieu is the upper-class women. She is celebrated for her realistic portrayal of the world of glamour without any inhibitions. She discusses sensitive issues very delicately. She possesses a frank and open heart style of narrating incidents. The women in most of her novels are well educated, bold and brave, but their craving for name and fame force them to make compromises which ultimately ruins their self-esteem.

Bharati Mukherjee's name is synonymous with progressive study of women who migrate to foreign territories. Her versatile living experiences like living in a land under colonial rule, then as a post-colonial subject in Canada, and finally as an immigrant and later as a citizen in the United States find expression in her novels. The study of her works also reflects the transitional changes in the author's life. The central themes in her writings are the phenomenon of migration, the feeling of alienation and the struggle for identity. This struggle for identity and conflict of cultures is well depicted in her novel *Wife*. Her canvas is very vast, and it includes characters from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural pre-occupations. The protagonists of her novels are victims of social oppression in the form of racism and sexism. They also struggle to trace their roots and establish their identity. Arundhati Roy is a writer with a very modern outlook towards both life and literature. Her very first novel *The God of Small*



*Things* fetched her international fame in the form of Booker Prize. Her work is critical of the traditional Indian woman. But she has skilfully used the literary figures like imagery, irony, symbols and overtones in bringing about the brutal realities to the society. Attention to detail has helped her in bringing out a complex mosaic of life with great aesthetic beauty.

Sahgal is undoubtedly an outstanding Indian English novelist and an established political columnist. Born into a family of a prominent political family in Allahabad on May 10, 1927, she is the second of three daughters of Ranjit Sitaram Pandit and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Nayantara spent her childhood in Anand Bhavan at Allahabad with her parents, her maternal uncle Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and her cousin Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Her mother, Vijayalakshmi Pandit was India's first Ambassador to the U.N. Politics, entered her life at an unusually early age. The themes of her novels linger around major political developments in India, because, her circle had great proximity to India's first and third Prime Ministers. In spite of her parent's long imprisonment she was lucky to have a normal and healthy childhood and undisturbed education. Being a part of the Gandhi family and not being crammed by her own cousin's autocratic ways, she earned the repute of being a courageous and independent writer. She also had to face the consequences for being a critic. Indira Gandhi cancelled Sahgal's appointment as India's Ambassador to Italy within a few days after returning to power. She was not intimidated by this; she proceeded by writing a scathing account of Indira Gandhi's return to power in 1982.

After her schooling at Mussorie, she, along with her sister, went to America and did her B.A. in History from Wellesley College, Massachusetts in 1947. She married Gautam Sahgal in 1949, a young man working in a British company, and had three children. It was a love marriage, but it failed and she divorced Gautam in 1967. In 1979



she married an I.C.S. Officer, Mangatt Rai. After her divorce, she adopted writing fiction and journalism. She established herself as both a creative writer and a political columnist. She served as an Advisor to the Sahitya Academy's Board from the year 1972 to 1975. In the year 1978, she was deputed as a member of the Indian Delegation to the U.N. General Assembly. She also held the post of Vice-President of People's Union for Civil Liberties. She received the Sinclair Prize for Fiction in 1985, followed by the Sahitya Academy Award (Britain) in 1986, and Commonwealth Writers Award (Eurasia) in 1987. She served as a Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington from 1981 to 1982. In 1990, she was elected as the Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1997 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate for Literature by the University of Leeds. The Library of Congress currently holds twenty-four of her works. Sahgal has established herself as a remarkable writer in India. She served as India's Ambassador to Italy.

Suffering and loneliness in her childhood mellowed Sahgal and she has been able to transform these into understanding and compassion. Of the eight novels that she has published she has deeply explored the female psyche. In every novel she explores the nature and scope of the trauma of womenfolk. Her first literary work was in fact her autobiography *Prison and Chocolate Cake* published in 1954. Subsequently, her first novel, *A Time to be Happy*, appeared in 1957. The second autobiographical book is *From Fear Set Free* which is about her marriage and consequent entry into an unfamiliar part of India. *This Time of Morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow* are novels of social portrayal with elements of personal experience. *A Situation in New Delhi* is a novel of ideas. Her other works are *A Time to Be Happy*, *The Freedom Movement in India* (1970), *A Voice for Freedom* (1977), *Indira Gandhi's Emergence and Style* (1978), *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1982), *Plans for*

*Departure* (1985), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989), *Lesser Breeds* (2003), *Relationship* is the collection of letters exchanged between Nayantara Sahgal and E. N. Mangat Rai which is published in 1994, *Before Freedom: Nehru's Letters to His Sister 1909-1947* is edited by Nayantara Sahgal.

In all her novels, political development remains a common factor. *Rich Like Us* and *Mistaken Identity* also have social and political themes. The novel *Sunlight Surrounds You* published in the year 1970 was a combined effort of the three sisters namely Nayantara Sahgal, Chandrlekha Mehta and Rita Da offering a tribute to their mother. Sahgal's literary canon consists of nine novels, two autobiographies some non-fictional works and several articles and short stories published in leading newspapers and magazines. Her novels *Rich Like Us* and *Plans for Departure* have reinforced her position as one of the foremost Indian novelists on the contemporary scene. Sahgal's novels study the deeper complexities of human existence. She is a socio-feminist with a tremendous realization of prevailing social and political conditions.

Sahgal's writing about contemporary India reflects the changing social conditions through her characters and through their aspirations and conflicts. Personal relationships reflect both the changing social condition, and the conflicts of the individual mind. In the portrayal of these relationships, Sahgal does not display any contempt or superiority. Her use of irony is also gentle and kind. She reveals a great deal of understanding and tolerance of different views. Sahgal's novelistic world is dominated by the selected upper crust of our society, which includes bureaucrat politicians, businessmen, big officials, and women, mostly from higher classes. This distinguishes her from a novelist like Mulk Raj Anand, whose novels deal mainly with the lower strata of our society. Since her novels also investigate the cultural consequences of the Indo British connection, English people also figure in them. Like



several other novelists who wrote before and after her, she mixes private and public histories in her work in a pleasing form because she makes use of psychological realism in her presentation of characters. She is unique in her artistic sensibility as well as the particular manner of projecting national consciousness. For Sahgal, one of the main aspects of fiction is her traditional faith. Tradition in India is mainly a religious one and it is a way of life. Religion interferes in almost all the facets of an individual's life and in every juncture of human life. This novelist is greatly concerned with the need for freedom for women which society has normally denied them.

*Rich Like Us* is a daunting novel revealing the havoc that the period of Emergency wrecked upon the masses of the country. It presents a cross-sectional view of the Indian society. Sahgal provides a multi layered social and political history in *Rich Like Us*. It documents the diversity in people's responses to the changes that took place in the country around the time the British rule was about to end. It also demonstrates how the British shaped a class of people, totally out of tune with the needs of the country, who created new islands of power and values in Indian society. These, Sahgal labours to point out, continue to flourish even in free India. *Rich Like Us* is all about literature as an anti-historical record, but it is not the self-reflexive, logo centric, post-modernist novel being produced in Europe, America and parts of Canada today. Although the novelist shares the modernist/postmodernist's sense of the uncertainty of all truths and mixes a variety of narrative modes, the writing of this book is a deeply political act rooted in recent Indian history. In this novel one could find an intermingling of the individual and contemporary politics and how the suffocating political environment bears down upon the lives of a few sensitive people. Sahgal introduces three main female characters, coming from different backgrounds and social set up. The one dominant factor that pulls them together is their ability to retaliate, refusing to give



in to problems. Sahgal offers resolutions springing from a true humanitarian discourse resulting in positive action. The novel works for the expression of self. The Indian woman suffers in different ways at the hands of men. The novel focuses on Sahgal's feminist vision and emancipation of women.

The feminist movements of this century led to a widespread awakening, and the claims for equal rights and opposition against the exploitation of women. A reflection of this feminism can be visualised in the writings of various women writers. Sahgal is also regarded as a feminist writer but she has a very restrained tone and never assumes the role of radical feminism. Instead Sahgal has begun to re-examine, and where necessary re-write the political and cultural history. She is concerned in an especially important task, because it is through novel, that the dominant images of women and their experience in our culture have been most easily and, until recently, most widely elaborated.

In Sahgal, the struggle is for abolishing gender discrimination and seeking reciprocity, mutuality and harmony in life. She asserts women's strength and values and she does not want to propagate a separate 'female world' but envisions an organized whole world blending female virtues, morality and values with male culture so as to save it from catastrophe and doom. Her attitude and ideas come closer to Simon de Beauvoir's. However, she is not a strident feminist. She believes in the potentialities of women. She strives towards the goal of women's emancipation. Through her exemplary works on post-colonial developments, she upholds a new humanism which will eradicate the inherent evils of society. Sahgal's attitude towards the upliftment of women through her novel *Rich Like Us* is a totally novel experience. She urges women to give up their sacrificial roles and take courage as a weapon to face the world and its

challenges. Hence the researcher aims to bring Sahgal's view on feminism and Indian women in this project.

The Chapter Two deals with the political allegory and the themes of suffering in the novel *Rich Like Us*. Various themes like personal dilemmas and problems, fulfilment and frustrations of female protagonists to the political upheavals, cultural transformation and cultural trajectory. The influence of the Indian past, with its entire multicultural aspects make an indelible impact on every India's psyche, thereby, they could never give up their cross-cultural vision. The chapter discusses the difference between the western women's problems and the oppression faced by the third world women. Her closeness to political power has helped her to project the political changes in India. *Rich Like Us* portrays a nation which once embraced the hallowed Gandhian ideals and which in modern times has repudiated with a vengeance.

## Chapter Two

### Political Allegory

Allegory means a story in which the characters and the events are portrayed as Symbols. Nayantara Sahgal depicted social and political elements with the help of allegory as a tool. Nayantara Sahgal's novels mainly deal the theme of sufferings in post-independence era and maladjustment of an English lady in the Indian social setup. Sahgal also depicts how women grow in strength in spite of many hurdles and how women make many sacrifices and compromises, and how they boldly face the challenges of life with forbearance. Her themes are ranging from personal dilemmas and problems, fulfilment and frustrations of female protagonists to the political upheavals that India has experienced since Independence. Her closeness to political power has helped her to project the political changes in India. *Rich Like Us* portrays a nation which once embraced the hallowed Gandhian ideals and which in modern times has repudiated with a vengeance.

*Rich Like Us* basically belongs to Sahgal's tradition, but there is a marked improvement over the earlier works because the human dimensions of the story predominate the political interest in the novel. The novel offers fairly authentic pictures of India under emergency in 1975. Sahgal traces the impact of the Emergency on a large number of characters and simultaneously the social tension created by the Emergency. Using the past as a point of reference, particularly the Gandhian age, when love of freedom truly flourished, she contrasts the troubled Indian in the seventies and demonstrates how the emergency jeopardized democracy in the country. It is a complex novel with a plurality of narrative voices and an enigmatic ending and does not lend itself to simple, straightforward interpretations. Judged from this norm, *Rich Like Us* can be considered an artistically successful novel. The story of the novel is outlined



against the backdrop of the Indian socio-political ethos, its economic disparities, rampant corruption, the hoary past with the cruel tradition of Sati and the political upheavals of 1975. Sonali Ranade, an upright civil servant in the Ministry of Industry is pitted against the bureaucratic regime. Sonali heroically fights the malice in the bureaucratic hierarchy which has corroded the Indian society and its long-cherished values. While most of the Indian novels in English portray the stereotyped versions of Indian womanhood, Sonali in *Rich Like Us* is quite different. A top score in the IAS competitive examinations, she has the intellectual strength to rebel against outdated customs and anachronistic rituals. After completing her studies in India, she goes to Oxford for higher studies. Her rebellion against society is not merely a passive ideological resistance instead it is a concrete manifestation of carving a new image in new purpose to Indian womanhood. She has inherited her values and idealism from her conscientious father who was an ICS officer in colonial India.

With the different perspective and rare courage Sonali refuses to grant permission to open the fizzy drink Hapyola factory to Dev, the spoilt son of Mona and Ram. She rebels overtly and fearlessly against the bureaucratic set up. As a result, Sonali suffers a rude jolt when she gets her transfer order. Instead of receiving appreciation for having done her duty with a sense of patriotism, she is victimised by the bureaucratic system.

Ravi Kachru, an Oxford educated officer, is an ardent supporter of the clannish dynastic succession. He replaces Sonali as a joint secretary and thus Sonali's destiny comes to a dead end. After the death of her father there is none among his survivors who can measure and understand her deep sense of agony and isolation:

The alienness of what had just happened, the midnight knocks at mid-day, for no reason could understand, paralysed me, until I realised that

nothing new or shattering had happened after all. No malign fathead singled me out for punishment. The logic of June 26<sup>th</sup> had simply caught up with me. (28)

Sonali realises the bitter truth that people in higher power are more important than honest and upright officers in the society. She feels completely alienated and her sense of rejection reacts with a determination not to "grovel and beg favours and act like a worm instead of a person" (34).

The allegorized strength of Sahgal's novel is in her honest upholding of human values. Sonali feels more human and less bureaucratic when she talks to Rose. Later in the story, Sonali's sympathetic and understanding friend Rose loses her life at the hands of her stepson Dev's hired goons. The tragedy reflects the bitter truth that women in India are mercilessly murdered by their own relatives when it suits them for whatever reasons. Sonali's great grandmother met with a similar fate in 1905. Rose's untimely death leaves Sonali deprived and lonely. Sonali and Rose share certain ideas and basic approach to love and its problems. Rose lends meaning to other people's lives even after her death. A beggar, for instance, whom she used to feed, finds meaning and purpose in life because she lends a wooden leg to him as a support.

The theme of her novels shapes the form with real life situations. Sahgal invests reality as a springboard to realize her vision of fulfilment in the life of her characters. Thus, the content, form and life become inseparable in her fiction. She explores the spirit of freedom through the consciousness of the heroine, and its significance in the lives of other less important characters like Kishori Lal. The novel is admired for its creative innovation and optimistic view of life. Her story is told in the third person by the authorial narrative voice and in the first person in the voice of the heroine. The novelist projects a socio-political reality at two levels, the level of the masses and the



level of the individual. This symbolises two classes in which the characters in the novel seem to fall naturally. The technique of twofold vision enables Sahgal to portray vividly the two India. The first one is the India of the rich, western educated, ruling elite, and next is the India of the poor toiling masses who have been denied the fruits of India's independence. These two types of India do not complement each other; rather they are in sharp contrast with each other with an unbridgeable gulf between them.

The historical evidence is registered in this novel by making use of some editorials and letters written to the editors of newspapers. One of them is an editorial of the Calcutta Gazette of the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1829 which expresses supreme pleasure and celebrates the Act of Abolition of the cruel rite of sati passed by Lord William Bentinck. The English administrator is applauded for his reform which has ended "a system demoralizing in its effect on the living, a revolting system of suicide and murder" (150). Sonali discovers yet another instance of sati which dated back to the 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1929 as recorded in the Bombay Courier. By quoting these documents the novelist juxtaposes the dead past with the living present bringing both into a sharp focus of contrast. Sonali, instead of commenting on the observations of these news items just shifts the focus of narration to her father's heroic efforts to avenge his mother's murder. It reflects her insight into the human spirit and its usage for justice and freedom in her present context. She juxtaposes the acts of injustice and cruelty of the past with those in the emergency regime of contemporary times.

As an administrator, Sonali may be passive, but this technique of fusing the past with the grim present provides a ray of hope. She comments, "Not all of us are passive before cruelty and depravity. He (her father) had not been the boy in the Cannought place" (171). Thus, Sahgal in *Rich Like Us* uses the historical facts to enrich the form and content of her narrative. Sonali feels relieved at the end when Ram's old flame



Marcella offers unstinted help and hope to Sonali's clouded future. She and Brian, her husband, encourage Sonali to take up a research project on the seventeenth and eighteenth century India. Politics and the way in which historical forces and the individual interact and how major historical events shape individual lives have always been of interest to the creative imagination since ancient times.

*Rich Like Us* is set in the seventies where the sacrifices and visions of freedom fighters had been all but forgotten. It is a complex novel with plurality of narrative voices and enigmatic endings and does not lend itself to simple, straightforward interpretations. As Jasbir Jain observes, "*Rich Like Us* offers no easy solutions to mankind's problems; on the contrary, it challenges all known solutions. . . . Finally *Rich Like Us* is about the complex nature of reality" (34). The implicit suggestion of the novel is that personal feeling for others on a human and humane level can lead to redemption of a kind. There is certainly no conventional poetic justice in the novel. It is not a story where virtue is rewarded and vice punished but one of glorification of the courageous and the good, attributing to them a kind of redemptive power even in death. The politically committed character in the novel finds himself unable to sustain his Marxist ideals when faced with the real world. Ravi Kachru, when at Oxford, was a committed communist. Sonali, the western educated part narrator says:

Even when we did not agree with him he was the inspiration of all us radicals and we never did understand why instead of throwing in his lot with the commitments after Oxford changed his mind and joined the civil service as I, in search of another kind of involvement had decided to do. Within a few years Ravi is making his way up the hierarchy, and when the Emergency comes, he is one of Mrs. Gandhi's favourites. The "higher up" (125).

Ravi Kachru, by the end of the novel, falls from political grace but finally attains maturity to be honest on a personal level. After Ravi's plea to her of his continuing love, Sonali finds:

... this admission of waste, of years gone and opportunity lost, filled me with a sweet relief. Isolated from all that had happened outside our private creation it had the wonder for me of broken ends mending, of Kachru becoming Ravi again, of friendship resuming, of love having been really love and not a mistake he had been trying to forget. (295)

Thus, the strong political commitment of a young man is projected as merely a phase on the path of maturity. Sonali herself has a set of ideals which are rudely shaken by the events of 1976. Her Marxist commitment had been different from that of Ravi's, "Our hearts beat quite differently over our discovery of it, his for humanity, mine for small actual conscience pricking images giving me a scratchy inner lining of anxiety" (110). Already Sonali's commitment is closer to reality, and she refuses to be carried away by ideology. Later she says, "Only the cloudless commitment, like the perfect relationship, could be knocked sideways with a feather. It was doubts and uncertainties that kept things alive and kicking" (295).

Sonali's strong sense of service receives a blow when she is reverted from her responsible position in the civil service because she refuses permission for a "preposterous proposal, requiring the import of more or less an entire factory" (24). The unknown proposal to her had the blessings of her superiors. Despite her feeling that she was pretending, it is implied that she would have acted in the same way even if she had known that the proposal had high political backing. It was impossible for her to continue working in such a corrupt environment, in any case. She says, "The emergency has finished my career, but suddenly I didn't want a career in the crumbling



unprofessionalism that bowed and scraped to a bogus emergency" (32). Her father's stern decision not to compromise with the emergency is regarded by Sonali as, "his strong and positive best" (175). Though grief stricken at his death, she condemns 'sati' for its cruelty and says, "I saw a world revealed but strangely enough it was not the evil in it I saw. . . . Not all of us are passive before cruelty and depravity. . . . And I fell asleep to dream of heroisms whose company I was scarcely fit to keep" (152). The obvious message is, individual acts of bravery committed to save one's loved ones or, even oneself from death or degradation are always worth doing, no matter whether one succeeds in achieving one's ends.

This novel depicts the life of a white girl in India. Rose, the London born second wife of a rich businessman Ram, could be seen as epitomising this ideal of redemption through personal courage. She risks marrying Ram despite knowing that he is already married and comes to India with him. She saves Mona, Ram's first wife from suicide and in spite of their initial antagonism, soon develops friendly terms with her. The crippled beggar, completely neglected by the family, is also helped by her. Her outspokenness and cockney bluntness make her unacceptable to her step-son Dev. Though Rose is a brave woman she is doomed by her honesty and by her uncertain position in Dev's household after her husband is incapacitated by illness. Her position as a virtual widow leads to her death, arranged as 'sati' usually is, by her husband's relatives and is partly motivated by the same economic reasons. Sonali following Rose, whom she had always seen as a friend and mentor, takes the beggar to safety place after he has witnessed Rose's murder. And Kishori Lal who is at first prepared to renounce his political allegiance to obtain his release from prison, finally refuses to be released and leaves his young cell-mate behind. The brave, the honest, the outspoken in the face of evil are admirable and inspiring, although they may not be rewarded. It is certain that



there is no religious propounded in *Rich Like Us*. Mona observes the Hindu rites as dramatic and somewhat ridiculous. Hinduism is not capable of explaining evil and hence is rejected by Sonali's grandfather. In an interview Sahgal says that morality is ingrained in every one in this world, though it may vary in details. The idea of individual morality seems to underpin her writing in *Rich Like Us*.

Another important theme in this novel is Colonialism or colonial. In *Orientalism* Edward Said highlights the limitation imposed on a nation by colonial consciousness. One perceives oneself through the eyes of others and judged one by their standards by measuring oneself against their yardsticks. It is suggested that colonial consciousness consists of three stages, that one of acceptance of the imperial model and the other turning away from it. These two stages have a mutually dependent and an unbalanced relationship. The third and final stage is a moving away from these secondary positions to a position of critical identification of one's own culture, of being in a position to sift and criticise, a stance which is marked by an adult maturity. This transition to a post-colonial awareness is characterized by an ability to step outside the given definition and to reject the simplistic division of the 'good' and the 'bad' to forge an independent identity.

This novel is remarkable for its non-emotional treatment of matters which had earlier forced the writer into a position of political partnership. This is attained by gentle irony, humour and detachment. A peculiar depiction is made of Dev's treatment of his wife Nishi and his step-mother Rose. Women, like the colonial people, are treated with indifference or with ruthlessness. Similar to the colonial world, their culture is limited to practical problems of existence, and their decisions are governed by the need to survive. Very often, they are a long succession of compromises and sacrifices in the whole life. As opposed to this, men ride roughshod over a woman's emotional

requirements and reject long term solutions if short term gains are in sight. Though it seems to be an overgeneralization, mostly men are found to be exploiters.

Divorce may be a way for women, but bigamy is the rule for men; for instance, Ram has two wives in *Rich Like Us*. This was a part of the second relationship and as much colonial as the political relationship was with Britain especially during the world wars when order had to be obeyed and decisions were not to be independently arrived at. In a colonial situation any act of defiance is viewed as treason and the punishment for it or any act of questioning is death. Moral principles, concepts of right or wrong are waived aside in view of political expediency or goals. Such a situation is brought into being during the Emergency as described in *Rich Like Us*. Sonali is demoted and removed from her position in the ministry, and Ravi Kachru angles his way into the corridors of power. Rose is murdered and Dev gets away with the act of forgery. No longer is it a question of right and wrong but increasingly one of power versus powerlessness. It is a repeat act and an eye-opener.

*Rich Like Us* sets out to analyse the Indian heritage which is not all bliss. The bits of evil which surface now and then are not all the result of the colonial aftermath but they are bits of Indian heritage with its sati, class-systems and caste-division, with the religious feeling having gone away, and with India's inability to generate and persist in a native morality. The Gandian episode begins to appear not as a continuation of a tradition but as a flash in the pan. *Rich Like Us* is important as it has more themes and reasons. It comments on the political situation which has colonial overtones. It analyses the flow in the native tradition and it justifies the moral struggle so important and significant for the survival of humanity. All these themes indicate the need for intellectual and practical approaches to bring out efficacious changes in the



contemporary society in all the fields. It also has a deep focus on feminism which is discussed in the forthcoming chapter.

In the Third Chapter certain post-colonial features like feminism, cultural transformation and its impact on society will be analysed. There was a social transformation in India and its impact was on women, that impact transformed women. This is going to be analysed in the next chapter. The researcher also focuses on the feminism and how Sahgal reflects the contemporary women's predicaments in Indian society. Feminism perceives that women suffer from social injustice because of gender inequality. The mindset of the women who are made into subordinate and subalterns are recorded in this novel. Cultural Hegemony is also the major issue in feminism which is also going to be clearly analysed by the researcher. Post-colonial novels, in general, have specific structural strategies as well as thematics, which render engagement with colonial experience, deal with women as colonial subjects, with feministic issues, and sometimes with subalterns. The culture of metropolitan centre, *Rich Like Us* also deals with such strategies and it has been more obsessed with cultural interaction between the east and west which can be called as 'transcultural dynamics'. The hybrid identity and ambivalence experienced by the protagonist is going to be discussed in the next chapter.



## Chapter Three

### Hybridity in Women

There was a social transformation in India and its impact was on women that impact transformed women and made them a high breed and hybrid. Feminism focuses on role of women in the society. By reading the text feministically, one could better understand the condition of women in the public life. As a historian Linda Gordon says, feminism is, "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it" (Kumar 128). The term 'feminism' was first used by the French dramatist Alexander Dumas, in 1872 to denote the emerging movement of women's rights. Contemporary feminist thought has branched out and spread into variety of approaches and attitudes pertaining to the question of women. In general, feminists are people who try to acknowledge social inequality based on gender and stop it from continuing. Feminists point out that in most cultures throughout history men have received more opportunities than women. The term 'feminism' was derived from the Latin word 'Femina' meaning 'woman' and was first used with regard to the issues of equality and Women's Rights Movement. The current concern of feminists is to help the educated and financially backward and conventionally religious women. Even the educated and so-called civilized working women are colonized and repressed in the work place. Feminism has spread worldwide as a cultural movement in fighting for women's rights and equality. Since the dawn of feminist movements in the 1960 a lot has been written on women.

Feminism perceives that women suffer from social injustice because of their gender. It attempts to eliminate their sufferings and enable them to achieve the freedom and to order their own lives and to be recognized as individuals. Freedom for the Indian woman meant freedom from centuries of male-domination and male-ordained social

and cultural norms. Though the Indian woman did not have to struggle like her American counterpart for universal suffrage, she has to strive to attain recognition for her individuality and acceptance by society, of an existence even beyond her gender-based roles. Patriarchy has compelled the Indian woman to be totally subservient to the male in both the social and economic spheres. She takes no pains to change all these. Instead she attempts to effect a slow but sure change within her own house.

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the most prolific women writers who maintain her relevance today as a humanist with oblivious feminist concerns. Sahgal is also a successful figure of Feminist Writing. Immensely influenced by feminism, Sahgal questions the roles hitherto accorded to woman and stress the discrepancy between the reality of woman's existence and the image to which she has to conform. She realizes that the status of Woman Power is far removed from Indian society. Sahgal is concerned with the need for freedom for women to become aware of themselves as individual. She remembers her childhood as a time of freedom when, "I was conscious of being continually stretched in mind and spirit, of being encouraged to be venturesome, of doing the daring rather than the timid things, of taking risks rather than playing safe, and I was keenly aware of the Joy of being myself, like every other person-a unique human being" (qtd. in Mishra 39). Sahgal is of the view that a woman is not to be taken as mere toy, object of lust and momentary pleasure but as man's equal and recognized as individual, not as possession. So as a writer she used her own experience as a spring board in order to explain this discrepancy. In other words, she reflects the contemporary women's predicaments in Indian society. She beautifully probes the psyche of her women characters to reveal the trauma, insecurity and agony that lies beneath the gloss and glitter of modern life. She reveals her feminine sensibility more overtly in her choice of characters and concerns than in her style and language. She has tried to depict



women suffering due to sexist bias in patriarchal society and she envisions a world which should be based on equality and harmony between the two sexes. Sahgal shows women suffering in marriage-life and then deciding to come out of the suffocating bondage by preferring for divorce. She depicts her women deciding to prefer divorce rather than live a stifling life of injustice and agony. Her women characters leave their husbands or break the marriage which does not allow them to be free and to live life in their own way. Sahgal's heroines represent the emergence of 'New Woman' in India. Quest for female identity and emotional fulfilment are the major motifs of her novels.

Sahgal presents in her *Rich Like Us* the problems that the contemporary women face in society and in their struggle towards self-realization. She not only deals with the questions of marriage, sexuality and women's equality with man but also raises the question of love, hatred, jealousy and certain other human emotions and values. Moreover, she also presents an antithesis between idealism and pragmatism, illusion and reality. Sahgal has a humanitarian approach towards womanhood. She reflects the tension between the predicament of the contemporary Indian woman and the traditional Hindu culture. She studies the social forces working on the psychology of the Indian women. She renders a living picture of the oppressed, depressed and suppressed life of women in India. In this novel, there is also a juxtaposition of two worlds, the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics. In this novel, she reflects the tension between the predicament of the contemporary Indian woman and the traditional Hindu culture. She studies the social forces working on the psychology of the Indian woman. In *Rich Like Us*, Sahgal tries to make the narrative look more than merely a story of a woman by referring to Hinduism and Christianity and contemporary political scene. There are three women characters who dominate the plot of the novel. They are Rose, Mona and Sonali. These three women are of different



nature and upbringing. However, they are similar in one aspect, that is, *their courage to face things*. Sahgal presents man-woman relationship between Sonali and Ravi, Ram and Mona, Ram and Rose, Mona and Rose, Ram and Marcella, and Dev and Rose. Actually, love-hate relationship proposes human beings towards the doors of shameless compromise with the vigilant consciousness and severe compulsion.

Sahgal concentrates mainly on the single and married women and their sufferings and problems in the married life where women feel profusely entrapped, depressed and oppressed to the care of her husband. Mona in *Rich Like Us* is a typical Indian wife and first wife of Ram who always serves for her husband and never raises a voice against her husband. She is loyal to her husband Ram. She comes from a conservative, traditional Punjabi family. As a traditional wife, she keeps on fasting and praying for her husband's long life in spite of injustice done to her. She leads quite a cloistered life. When Ram brings his second wife Rose to his house she neither raises her voice nor does fight with him instead weep in silence. In spite of raising her voice, she keeps a fast and holds prayers to thank God for his safe return. Sahgal clearly depicts that marriage for women means a life of total dedication to one person in her life whereas for men it is mode of getting comfort at every level in his life.

In the case of Rose, from the independent world she enters the dependent life like Mona when she falls in love with Ram. Ram, an Indian businessman visits London and meets a British woman named Rose. "The accidental meeting had lengthened his trip" (38). When Ram first meets Rose, she is a twenty-year old lower, cockney English girl, with very little formal education. She is a daughter of a factory and is all set to marry Freddie. Attracted towards the charm of Rose, Ram deliberately starts building an "emotional labyrinth" around her, "erecting a world around her, drawing her deep into it, the door shutting, Rose inside" (40). But once he finds that Rose can't leave

him, he opens the truth that he was already a married man and having a son. As a result, her relationship with him makes a turn in her life. It is for love she left her home land, defied her family, her parents and came to India as Ram's wife. Though as a wife she is quite submissive, basically she was not a passive girl. Boldness of Rose is clear when she chooses Ram as her life partner. But Rose's over affection with Ram caught her in the whirl that would not set her free. Sahgal in one of her interviews says about Rose's character as:

Rose keeps thinking that it is her destiny that Ram walked in one day and captivated her and she had no option but to follow him wherever . . . across the seas or over the mountains or wherever he would have taken her. It is the destiny of anyone who is struck like that but lightning to behave in this way. (Varalakshmi 33)

However, it is clear that both women have become slave to a man, named Ram, in the same house. Mona, a dutiful wife and lovable mother, acts as the manager of the household, while Rose, by showering love and attention to Ram, is a good mistress. Rose and Mona never met each other. Rose never interfered with Mona, though she ascertained her rights over Ram, as his wife. Rose could understand the feelings of Mona and felt pity for her and sometimes even guilty, for which she was not wholly responsible. She realized that, Ram had done a great mistake by marrying her, when Mona was already his wife and his son's mother. The only thing that she could not bear with was, Ram living with her as well as Mona. However, these two ladies kept going on a critical balance.

Though Mona was a legal wife, she was badly humiliated by her husband. The mind set of Mona turns. She views Rose as her opponent. Here woman becomes the villain for another woman by a man to satisfy his needs. Rose was an intruder, a usurper



in Mona's home. She feels that Rose has taken her husband away from her. And the cold war goes between Rose and Mona. Rose could understand the rage of Mona instead she grows hatred towards Mona. In one extreme she wishes to kill Mona. Rose develops a fancy that if Mona dies everything would be all right. She says, "If only she'd be dead, dead, dead, she had hammered out the thought night after night. It is wicked to think such thoughts. Rose, she has done you no harm, it isn't her fault" (106). The mental agony and pain of Rose is not understood by Ram who talks to her in a jestful manner. When Rose says Ram that he should not live with two wives and it would create problems but Ram answers complacently that, "Lord Krishna had three wives" (63). To another resort, he answers, "Muslims can have only four at a time. We are more adventurous, even polyandrous" (63). He does not have any care for the family.

When the conflict between Rose and Mona was at a high degree, there comes Marcella like sprinkle of cold water on a hot glass. Ram develops ardent love with Marcella and spent more time with her. He returns home late at nights. There is no communication between Ram and Rose for weeks, leave alone Mona. Earlier Ram shows consideration to Mona though he had a second wife Rose, living upstairs. But now he was not even aware of Mona's existence. This type of treatment by a man was too much for a soft natured submissive wife like Mona. Mona, a victim of bigamy feels wretched and could not bear the sight of Rose in her home. Later her hatred goes towards Ram because of his affair with Marcella. In the case of Ram, he considers polygamy is his right. Therefore, all these women are oppressed by tradition.

Although initially Rose and Mona could not accept each other and Rose in her heart of hearts wished Mona dead, later one could find that they accept each other as sisters and Rose saved her life when she tried to commit suicide. After this incident Rose does not hate Mona, rather she sits "in front of her long delayed breakfast telling



herself she was carrying fancy too far, only there was no denying that houses breathe in and out, sighs sink into the walls and walls exhale them" (173). This incident also changes Mona's attitude towards Rose. She starts appreciating her and welcomes her with her heart saying: "We are sisters" (203). They become good friends and mutually run the house and are living examples of two women being exploited by one man. Rose considers Dev, Mona's son, as her own and Dev too calls Mona Mama, and Rose Mummy.

The women in this novel are certainly more aware of the injustice done to them by man, but habit makes them a willing prisoner in this world of exploitation and injustice. Knowing completely about Ram, Rose loves him and she could not move away from him. Despite her sufferings she can't get the idea of divorce and continues her life with Ram. This shows that women accept the order of life carried for them by men without any protest. Pankaj Singh says that:

In this male world where men pass orders and women carry them out, where men create situations and women live them, the only hope for women is another woman. Their experiences being identical, women alone can understand each other . . . in Sahgal's world, which is essentially the urban upper-class, "sisterhood" is surely one way to cope with male aggression. (143)

The feeling of sisterhood where women develop solidarity and a deep social relationship amongst themselves is clearly pronounced in this novel. Sonali, the central character, reveals the true position of women in this modern world. She is a soft and kind hearted girl. She extends her help to Rose when Rose's stepson Dev intends to usurp her wealth. She not only arranges a lawyer but also entertains Rose in the best possible manner in order to relieve her of her loneliness and misery. Sonali is a positive

achievement of Sahgal. She is born of inter caste marriage, her mother being a Kashmiri and her father a Maharashtrian I.C.S officer. She escapes the net of marriage spread out by her parents by asserting her individuality. She tells her father: "I am going abroad after my B.A. I don't care if you didn't send Kiran, I'm not Kiran" (58). She goes to Lucknow, works hard at her studies, sits for the I.A.S exam and tops the list of successful candidates. On this occasion, she remembers her father's words: "Sonali, people like you, especially women like you, are going to Indianize India" (22). Having come to maturity in post-independence India, Sonali is offered as the type of the new Indian woman, an educated, professional, single female dedicated to the progress of her country, an ostensible product of the new constitutional equality accorded to all Indian citizens.

Life for her is not easy in this male dominated world, even though she is Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Industry. She refuses to make any compromises and finally is demoted and sent back to her home state and finally resigns her job. Sonali, in spite of being unsuccessful in her personal and professional life, is not at all pessimistic. The remark, with which the novel closes, reveal the mettle of which she is made, "I went to work in most in the past; I was preparing all the while for the future beyond Brain's country and his exhibition. Marcella has reminded me of it, made a gift of it to me . . . reminding me I was young and alive, with my country stretched out before me, waiting to be lived" (301). Sonali is the only woman who is free to live life in her own way. But she has to pay a heavy price to maintain her freedom. To live a life free from subjugation and subordination, she has to remain single all her life. Entering into a partnership with a man means submitting to him completely. Sonali has realised it early in her life. So, she decides to live her life freely. And her father's remarks "you are going to Indianize India," (22), further suggest an integral link between national and feminist politics.



Through Sonali, Sahgal says that the modern women must emerge out of oppressive culture. In her interview to Varalakshmi, Sahgal defines:

... there is no such thing as a modern Indian. . . . We have invented that person every time, we are so much a mixture of past and present, we are so swept by different tides. The modern Indian has yet to arrive, yet to emerge as a fully developed human being. . . . Sonali is a complete invention. She is my dream of what somebody should have done at that time. (13)

And, despite Sahgal's extra textual praise of Sonali as an idealist, a woman who has a conscience, the textual evidence plainly suggests that her sole heroic act is a compromised one. She resigns from the civil service not as a resister protesting the overthrow of the Indian constitution but as an escapist who cannot face her demotion and transfer from New Delhi, "I was a civil servant until I was thrown out, soon after the emergency began," she admits (298). From the life of these three women it is clear that, women folk in Indian society is oppressed by tradition and marriage. Not only, then, is Sonali's role as a committed feminist reputable, but Sahgal's paradoxical treatment of Rose as the suffering but stoic Hindu wife contests even more insistently any claims regarding the author's feminist politics, as it controverts all authorial asides about Rose's rebellion and fundamental freedom. Declaring Rose to be Sonali's intimate soul, despite the differences in their nationalities and ages, Sahgal enumerates her many freedoms from British conceit, self-importance, a high-class accent, and the urge to look young and lose weight. What she disregards, however, is Rose's utter lack of freedom as a woman. A British woman knowingly married to a polygamous Indian, she passively enacts her role as the Hindu co-wife after some initial, feeble resistance. And just as she adjusts to Ram's legal and emotional ties to Mona, Rose reconciles herself



to his continued philandering. She lives resignedly through her five-year separation from him as he mends his broken heart; takes him back without any outward protest; and nurses him through his final illness, all because she too comes to think of marriage as a "sacrament" as established by Hindu patriarchal belief.

Even the religion encourages men to dominate women. The patriarchal version of Hinduism tolerates the oppression of women by men. The version of Hinduism makes even the upper-class, educated family to commit 'sati'. The irony is, Sonali's grandfather is the one who opposed 'sati' and raised his voice against it but after her death his wife is subjected to the practice 'sati'. In the case of lower-class women the condition is still worse. They are raped and killed by cops and culprits. In this novel, finally, Rose herself is murdered by her step-son Dev. All the actions show the oppression of women in the society by tradition. And Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* voices against this patriarchal tradition and talks about the longing liberty of women. To M. L. Malhotra, "If *Nayantara*'s women characters have any passion, it is the longing to be free, freedom from all restraints in word and deed, being their monomania. One and all they want to be fully alive and themselves. . . . No taboos or inhibitions!" (Agarwal 35).

Thus, in Sahgal's novels, as the women's quest for identity and social conventions are at cross-roads, they have to face many problems, conflicts, frustrations and inner stress in their married lives through which the individuals mature and eventually find a stable identity of their own. Mona and Rose both are exploited by Ram who is a firm believer in male supremacy over the female. Mona is a symbol of docile woman who remains suppressed till the end of her life. She never has the attitude to question if anything happens against her. She accepts whatever life has offered her. She never protests against her oppressor. Instead she maintains a sisterhood with Rose.

Both Mona and Rose share their life and childhood memories. No wonder Mona on her deathbed looks constantly at Rose for comfort, for peace, for assurance about her son and daughter-in-law rather than the husband who is also at her bedside. And Rose in her hour of grief and loneliness banks upon Sonali for solace and help. Each woman is supportive to other. Towards the end of the novel, when Rose has been got murdered by her step-son Dev, who in greed shows his dominance in the form of murder.

Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like us* portrays the "doubly marginalized women" Rose and Mona as co-wives and Sonali, an unmarried woman. The novel sums up, "Sahgal's conventional and feminist view-that the entire social structure in India supports male domination. It promulgates that women are exploited and victimized on all occasions: in marriage, in sexual relationships, in child birth, even in adultery. She further points out that no human problems will be understood or solved unless human beings regard one another as equals. In India, marriage has been regarded more as an institution and less as a partnership of two equals, and has proverbially meant, the domination of men over women, in matters of sexual relationship, childbirth, adultery and divorce. Nayantara Sahgal believes that it is the power oriented approach to marriage that has reduced the Indian women to passivity. Female characters in this novel bear testimony to the fact that a woman should encounter resistance whenever she tries to assert herself.

The Chapter four will deal with the historical consciousness in the novel *Rich Like Us* and analyse the parallel relations between characters and actions. It deals with the historicity used by Sahgal, which firmly holds the parallel dimensions in the novel. The examination of the historicity of her fiction through the 'counter narrative' methodology of new historicism, in addition to validating the position of writer on the selectivity of the material, also brings forth valuable deliberations on the events of the

past, strengthening her role as an involved intellectual in society. The signs of cultural materialism rampant in all dimensions of art seemed to have evoked Sahgal's lament on the ephemerality, shallowness and greed that had beset the world of aesthetics. The application of brute force to stifle the democratic freedom of the print media, and to simultaneously manufacture opinion to support authoritarianism during the Emergency is a classic case of cross-cultural materialism crystalized in Sahgal's fiction.



## Chapter Four

### Historical Consciousness

The historicity of the colonial and anti-colonial representations in Sahgal's novels stands vindicated because the fact of the subjugation of the colonized people through brute force and cultural coercion is now a universally accepted truth. Bokovoy defines the term historicity as "The act of producing a work that attempts to depict an accurate representation of the real past" (n.p). The degree of the historical relevance of events has also been appropriately gauged by Sahgal, being a well-schooled witness to much that happened around her. It was Sahgal's intuitive sense of history that helped her envision the harmful effects of temperamental politics on the tentative institutions of governance and the budding federal polity. In the course of the parallel readings undertaken in the study, it became clear that the findings of most historians hold Indira Gandhi responsible in a predominant way for the drastic turn taken by Indian politics towards the promotion of dynasty, corruption, weakening of institutions, dispute rule and genuflection. While the baton of the political legacy of Nehru was abandoned mid-way for lack of insight by progeny, his intellectual vision has been interrogated and enshrined for posterity in literary writing by Sahgal with deep reverence.

Sahgal is quite understandably a reliable novelist to be trusted with the portrayal of the hope, disillusion and realities of contemporary India. The novel *Rich Like Us* has been set in the period when the Emergency was just one month old. The novel has many voices in one vibrant and compelling embroidery of India's past and present. Vasanthajothi says that

*Rich Like Us* is a boldly presented account of the persecution caused to all sections of people during the period of National Emergency. It deals with the impingement of politics on the personal lives of people and

studies the impact of Emergency on huge scenery of characters. Here is a successful attempt to record history through the totality of its instant effect on those who participate in it. (11)

The scrutiny of the reflections of history, politics and change in the writings of Sahgal, by releasing them from the moorings of her providential genealogy and the narrow confines of intensive gynocriticism, brings to focus the consummate artistry and the well-schooled political rationale of a uniquely placed major post-colonial writer. While writing about the emergency as a dictatorial regime concealed as democracy, Sahgal is criticizing the beginning of the capitalist turn in Mrs. Gandhi's policies, and beyond that, her violent behaviour in 1957-1977, concerning the censorship, the imprisonment of the political dissidents, and the huge sterilization campaigns.

Unlike the other political writers, she never professes any specific political ideology or favouring any political creed or political movement. All her major characters of the novel are centripetally drawn towards the vortex of politics. She herself comments:

Politics was, of course, my background, and my environment, and it became my natural material. I grew up at a time when literature and politics went hand in hand and helped to illumine and interpret each other. It was a time when songs, poems and stories were the focus for the struggle against foreign rule. Who can forget the songs: *Sar faroshi ki tamanna aaj hamare dil mein hai*; and there was a song in the streets of Allahabad when I was a child, *Bharat ka dankaa alam mein bajwaya veer Jawahar ne*. But I am not a political animal myself, and my political philosophy is very simple. I do not believe in kings, queens, or political dynasties. I have no ideology. I've never belonged to a political party.



But in this country, politics-if by that we mean the use and misuse of power - invades our lives every day, both at the private, domestic level, and at the national level. (244)

*Rich Like Us* is the story of two main women characters. The novel runs on the strangely parallel life tracks of two very different women and shows how the emergency changes their lives. The novel moves frequently between the past and the present through two consciousness, one of Rose and the other of Sonali. Rose is one of the most memorable characters in Indian-English fiction. She is a British woman from working class background, speaking cockney English, but bold enough to cross all racial and class barriers. Her working-class origins distinguish her from her imperialistic brethren. The name 'Rose' itself suggests the mystic core of goodness within the west. Rose's candour, self-awareness, compassion, charity, empiricism, common sense, and sense of fair play are what Indian culture might benefit from. She is quite different from the usual English characters portrayed in Indian fiction, for she gives herself to her Indian experience.

The life of Rose in India is a long process of partial assimilation, mystification and indecision, while Rose tries to manage a functional fusion between being British and Indian, western and eastern. By the end of her life, Rose realizes that even in her small everyday as gestures a part of her learned to be a Hindu wife. "The last resistance of Rose's English legs eased and she found herself as relaxed as a yogi in her cross-legged posture, her thoughts beautifully clear" (281). Rose risk in marrying Ram despite knowing that he is already married and comes with him to India. He is confident that Rose is too deep in love to ever leave him; he candidly announces that he already has a wife and a son in India. She saves Mona, Ram's first wife from suicide and in spite of their initial aggression. Soon develops friendly terms with her. The



important evidence of Rose integration in India, is her friendship with Mona. After years of rivalry but Dev, step son doesn't accept her outspokenness and cockney bluntness. Though Rose is a brave woman yet is doomed by her honesty and her invidious position in Dev's household after her husband is incapacitated by illness. Her position as virtual widow leads to her death arranged, as 'Sati' usually is, by her husband's relatives and partly motivated by the same economic reasons. The evolution in the process of Rose's adaptation and integration in her Hindu family is an example of possible negotiations between hybrids. This subject is quite important in postcolonial literature and has emerged more clearly after the independence struggle.

Sonali is the most important character in the novel. She represents the 'good' India and also modern Indian womanhood. She combines the best of Indian tradition and modernity. She is quite different from the stereotypes of women found in Indian English fiction. Sonali is contrasted with Rose. She is an intellectual, educated at Oxford is an upright civil servant in the ministry of industry and is pitted against the bureaucratic system. She tops the list in the Civil Service Examinations; she has the intellectual strength to rebel against hackneyed thoughts, outdated customs and anachronistic rituals.

Sonali is aware of the evil in traditional Hinduisim because of the sati of her great-grandmother; she is the new virtuous woman for whom virtue is courage, not self-sacrifice. She is aligned with Rose and with the anti-emergency forces. Through her, the novelist shows the many restraints faced by women however rich, beautiful, educated or powerful she is. After completing her studies in India she goes to Oxford for higher studies. Her rebellion against society is not merely a passive ideological resistance; it is a concrete manifestation of carving a new image in a new purpose to Indian womanhood. She has inherited her values and idealism from her conscientious

father who is an ICS officer in colonial India. As a conscientious bureaucrat, Sonali denies a licence to Mr. Neuman, the representative of an American soft drink company. She feels that the India can do without a soft drink factory. Actually, Mr. Neuman is not interested in the problems faced by this country, instead he focused only on the profit. With rare courage Sonali refuses to grant permission to open the fizzy drink Happyola factory to Dev. She rebels overtly and fearlessly against the bureaucratic set up. Patriotic, committed and honest that she is, Sonali suffers a rude shock when she gets her transfer order. Instead of receiving appreciation for having done her duty with a sense of patriotism, she is victimized by the bureaucratic system.

Sonali is the joint secretary in the union ministry of industry, gets demoted because she refuses to grant permission to open the fizzy drink Happyola factory. So she is replaced by her former classmate and present colleague Ravi Kachru and thus Sonali's destiny comes to a dead end. Sonali, feels bitter and frustrated that the society she lives in rates those in power higher and more important than honest and upright officers. After the death of her father there is one among his survivors who can measure and understand her deep senses of agony and isolation. Her decision to remain single points to the deficiency in modern Indian manhood. Ravi's failure to measure up to her is the failure of Indian men in general. Therefore, she is forced to remain single. Yet, she is neither helpless nor unhappy. She is marginalized, treated unfairly by the system, but she does not lose heart. Her survival in the end is a sign of hope for modern India.

The alienness of what had just happened, the midnights knock at mid day, for no reason, I could understand, paralysed me, until I realized that nothing g new or shattering had happened after all. No malign fare had singled me out for punishment. The logic of June 26th had simply caught up with me. (28)



Ravi has been Sonali's lover at Oxford, but has somehow turned back on his essence. Ravi Kachru, when at Oxford, was a committed communist and Sonali, the western educated part, as narrator says:

Even when we did not agree with him he was the inspiration; of all us radicals and we never did understand why instead of throwing in his lots with commitments after changed his mind and joined the civil-service as, I, in search of another kind of involvement had already decided to do. Within a few years Ravi is making his way up hierarchy, and when the Emergency comes, he is one of Mrs. Gandhi's favourites. The 'higher-up' (125).

He exemplifies compromise; the pliant bureaucrat, he actually plays a key role in the success of the Emergency. He lacks both courage and convictions. Allows himself to be used but the politicians think he is in control when he is actually a puppet shows a superficial assimilation of the west and an inadequate understanding of India. He belongs to a very old type in Indian politics, the courtier. Ultimately a case of self-delusion and self-betrayal meant to contrast the bureaucrat of the old school, Sonali.

Sahgal's idea of nationalism is also defined by the domain of organically spread out cultural influences rather than political boundaries. There is a clear sense of aversion to the confining monolithic cultural constructs in favour of diffusive multiculturalism. The cultural gap between father and son is vital in this novel to analyse the historicity. Ram is Hinduism or India trapped between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, India and the west. He is aligned both to traditional India that is his first wife Mona and western modernity with his second wife Rose. But he is devoid of life-sustaining values. Ram is perhaps Hinduism or Indian tradition at its worst. In a sense, he is the real villain of the novel, not Dev. It is he who gives birth



to Dev and does nothing to check the latter's misdemeanours. Dev's forging cheques in Ram's name refers to the misuse of tradition by modern politicians. Ram also represents patriarchal values; he is selfish, two-timing, and naive, but oppressive and insensitive none the less. Ram also shows the helplessness, the spineless confusion, and inertia of the Indian elite. Whereas, Dev is the child of the worst aspects of Indian tradition. He represents violence, greed, selfishness, cruelty-in a word, Indian politics gone bad. His stupidity and amnesia indicate that the new breed of politicians have no knowledge of their past. They have learned nothing from the Indian freedom movement. His means are fascistic and violent. The killing of Rose suggests not only that he is utterly immoral, but that he has no use for the lessons of liberalism, democracy or modernity.

The real strength of Sahgal's novel is in her honest upholding of human values. Sonali feels more human and less bureaucratic when she talks from Rose to her desk before she bids farewell to her office. Later in the story Sonali's sympathetic and an understanding friend Rose loses her life in the hands of her stepson Dev's hired goon. The tragedy reflects the bitter truth that women in India are cruelly murdered by her own relatives. Sonali's great grandmother met with a similar fate in 1905. Rose's untimely death leaves Sonali bitter and lonely. Sonali and Rose share convinced ideas and basic human approach to love its problem. Rose lends meaning to other people's life even after death. In the case of Beggar, she used to feed and who finds meaning and purpose in life. But Sonali and Rose come together in the battles they fight in post-independent India, with the area of their freedom becoming smaller and smaller as the clash gets fiercer.

The crippled beggar is perhaps the most important symbol in the book. His arms and legs have been broken by the landlord whom he was trying to oppose. This shows

the suppression of the Indian masses by the brute force of the ruling classes. Rose is the only one who befriends him, who treats him like a human being. It is only a western sense of the autonomy of the individual and the respect for the dignity of each human being which will enable us to see the downtrodden people of India as our equals. Everyone else only thinks of him as an eyesore, the typical attitude of the elite to the suffering masses. The elites have failed in their obligations to the underprivileged. Only Rose's attempts to give him a pair of artificial arms might help restore his dignity and usefulness as a human being. He sees Rose's murder but is helpless. The masses, likewise, witness the atrocities, oppressions, and injustices that surround them, but they are powerless to resist.

The historical framework, far from appearing burdensome or constraining to the imaginative flights of the writer, lends them a substance that gives her aesthetics a purpose beyond mere craftsmanship. The fictional canvas unrolls a panorama of about a century of Indian history, fore grounded against the backdrop of the game-changing events from world history. The literary device of narration makes us view the emergency as it operates in the lives of women like Rose and Sonali, bringing out the difference between their rich personalities and the bleak ugliness of the world. The strength and spirit of an individual like Sonali is established by the fact that the oppressive environment can only repel but not change her. The combination of the past and the present highlights the relative insignificance and paradox of the Emergency against the vast backdrop of time and the glorious struggle for independence. Business in the past was quite different from what is now. "What you call entrepreneurship now, or however you pronounce it, is one minute you are nothing and the next minute you're a bloom in' millionaire; where's all the money come from all of money come from all of a sudden I'd like to know" (5).



In another perspective, the novel is a sustained allegory of modern India, especially of its relationship with Britain. The murder of Rose is the nadir of Sahgal's pessimism. Never before or after has a main character been murdered so tragically and helplessly. There is also a real sati in this book, not just reports of rape, burning, and torture. One could witness the brutality of the police, the politicians, and the landlords. Peasant women are raped and fed into brick kilns; their husbands are beaten or maimed when they try to resist oppression. The chaos in Indian politics and the abuse of power on an unprecedented scale is obvious. But while the book is very self-critical, it is soft on the west. Everything about the west is seen favourably. Even imperialism, so obviously the enemy during the freedom movement, doesn't have strong critics in the book. This novel, thus, lacks a strong anti-western centre. While India is viewed critically throughout, the west is seen as if with tinted glasses.

Rose, Marcella, and even Freddie or Minnie are positive characters. While blaming ourselves and our traditions, Sahgal would appear to condone the violence of colonialism and capitalism. She sees the west as the repository of not just liberal values, but of human rights, decency, democracy, and civil liberties. India, by contrast, becomes a dark continent, dominated by disease, poverty, injustice, oppression, religious superstition, communalism, casteism, bigamy, sati, rape, torture, violation of civil rights, corrupt politicians and bureaucrats, greedy and callous socialites, exploitative ruling classes, crushed and defeated masses, and so on.

The British came to India for profit; later they colonized us for profit. Moreover, in the novel, Ram isn't even complex in any attractive or superior way. His polish is merely superficial, a gloss or veneer which peels off on closer observation. Rose's motivations then are too vague to be convincing. The only way to solve the mystery that is Rose is to consider herself as someone who has learned from India, not one who



comes to teach us. Likewise, it would be hard to make a case for Rose's representing the best of Indian traditions because she never quite loses her Englishness. She not only retains her cockney accent till the end, but her room, a small English preserve in an otherwise Indian household, is a marker of her identity, her attempt to preserve continuity with her English past.

Ram is a form of negative impression. Ram's charm is superficial; actually, he is a self-centred and wilful liar. He lacks both integrity and character. He is a shallow person, with little knowledge of either India or Europe. And Dev, his idiotic, frighteningly amoral, and murderous son, a pathological case of a diseased Indian mind, is an even worse example of an Indian. On the other hand, British characters are, invariably, portrayed at their best. Even Marcella, superficial, upper class, predatory, redeems herself in the end by extending a helping hand to Sonali. This shows that Sonali, a modern Indian woman lives on the handouts of west towards the end of the novel.

The confluence of fiction, history and autobiography in Sahgal's imagination makes her writing an irreplaceable strand in the country's artistic narrative. Although a colonial or post-colonial setting dominates in each of her works, yet they do not operate within a clear-cut time frame, underscoring the vast vista of her intimate historical reflections and cultural scrutiny. In the kaleidoscopic range of her fiction, the characters cross the threshold of historical eras, political boundaries and ideological structures, back and forth, with contemplative ease. The euphoric snapshots of new India and heartfelt reverence for Nehruvian idealism set the optimistic note of her writing without slackening her moral intelligence into political amnesia as the politics of the country continued to change drastically. As a positive aspect of the represented social world, Sahgal writes a plot around bonds of friendship between women, Sonali and Rose,

which is the first site of support, advice and encouragement. Sati becomes a political weapon in the hands of men to subjugate women. Thus, this novel deals with the power distribution between the male and the female, as well as between the rich and poor. The application of brute force to stifle the democratic freedom of the print media, and to simultaneously manufacture opinion to support authoritarianism during the Emergency is a classic case of cross cultural materialism crystallized in Sahgal's fiction and helps to find the historicity in *Rich Like Us*. The next chapter is conclusion where every chapter is summarized, and the scope, style and technique of the novel are discussed in the coming chapter.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

*Rich Like Us* is considered one of the most ambitious and complex novels of Nayantara Sahgal. The novel's political and artistic importance was recognized when it was awarded two prestigious awards, the Sinclair Prize for fiction in 1985 and the Indian Sahitya Akademi Award for the best book in English for the year 1986. Jasbir Jain states that *Rich Like Us* ". . . reflects not only her personal values but also the changing values of a country exposed for the first time to both freedom and power" (126).

A noticeable feature of her works is the striking of balance between concepts that are habitually posited in all contrariness and are also understood as stark oppositions. For instance, being a front-runner woman political writer came so naturally to Sahgal, for the gynocentric and androcentric inclinations achieve a perfect confluence in her works – the subliminal feminism merges with an astute understanding of the traditionally patriarchal disciplines of politics and history, to create a distinct oeuvre. The re-reading reveals that throughout her corpus, intended change rides on the wave of continuity, aggression is backed by temperance, modernity is rooted in the richness of tradition, and imagination seeks manifestation through reality. The Eurocentric and the Oriental civilizations come across as unique strands of achievements in the history of mankind that could work wonders in the path of human progress through a two-way flow of cultural traffic, rather than the more prevalent confrontational posture. The fictional leitmotifs embody the appreciable achievements of the Western cultures, besides working out the assimilative nature of her own Indian roots. On the economic front, Sahgal's endorsement of the semi-socialist Nehruvian



policy, and her critiques of crass materialism and sacrosanct communism, show the way forward only through a pragmatic turn in Marxism and an ethical twist to Capitalism.

Sahgal's writing stands out as an exemplar of eclectic human thought; it enforces the fact that fluidity, open mindedness, amalgamation enrich rather than dilute cultures. The novelist evokes a very impressive picture of an oppressed and corrupt regime. She exposes the corrupt hypocritical bureaucracy which created terror in the innocent people and snatched away their freedom of expression. The innocent people were imprisoned and the guilty went unpunished though their crimes were detected because they knew people at the top.

*Rich Like Us* is also a story of an older India, of a generation who remember the British Raj and Partition, of the continuities and the ties of family, caste and religion. *Rich Like Us* deals with the political events of the mid seventies, the authoritarian pattern which was followed, and the isolation it imposed. It is also about the causes which led to it. The novel opens in the post-Emergency period but travels back to more than a hundred and fifty years analyzing and questioning the political relationship and value systems of the past.

The novel brings to light the deterioration in public life during the Emergency of 1975-77. It demonstrates, how in a single sweep, the whole value system is totally erased. Jasbir Jain writes, "*Rich Like Us* offers no easy solutions to mankind's problems, on the contrary it challenges all known solutions . . . finally *Rich Like Us* is about the complex nature of reality" (73) and he comments that Sahgal analyses and interprets variegated aspects of political life in depth and through her active involvement in politics she emphasizes the humanistic values she upholds, and the novel becomes a concern for the quality of life. Her concern with politics is just a part

of her humanistic concern because each of her explorations into political life reveals her newer and deeper insight into the human psyche.

In this novel *Rich Like Us*, the action of the novel revolves around "... many little victims the snapping jaws of the Emergency were claiming in the course of an ordinary working day" (252). Small and big tyrants were produced by the Emergency like Dev, who proposed to launch a fizzy drink factory called 'Happyola'. Dev, who was modelled on Sanjay Gandhi, represents the abuse of power and the corruption of Indian politics. The story centres round Sonali, the IAS topper who is the joint secretary in the Ministry of Industry. Dev, Ram's son by his Indian wife Mona, and Ravi Kachru, IAS Officer are the principal characters while the others like Prime Minister and her staff look large in the background since the declaration of Emergency. These characters represent the common predicament shared by the majority in the period of National Emergency.

There are other characters and other points of view which show the helplessness of the bewilderment of the past in the face of the new uncertain future like Dev's father-in-law, Kishori Lal and Sonali's father, Keshav Renede. Kishori Lal, who is a researcher turned shopkeeper, tries to get over the pain of the torture of being severely whipped for nothing in his own way, "Thank heavens whips were not what one calls torture. Ordinary village school masters used whips and he was grateful now he had plenty used on him" (234). Rose's part of the story is narrated in the third person, with Sonali's first-person narration moving to and fro between the past and present. There is also the middle ground inhabited by Dev, Rose's stepson, and Ravi Kachru, Sonali's childhood friend, colleague and one-time suitor. The meeting point is provided by the foreign collaborator, Neuman. The chief characters are both individuals and representatives of their respective classes.



Style of the novel depends on the innate quality of the author. The novelist wants to evolve a seemingly natural technique for, ultimately, art lies in concealing art. Indian novelists writing in English have to face two problems. Firstly, the type of English the author is going to use for expression of emotions, feelings and sentiments and secondly the articulation of the native sensibility in an alien tongue. In the use of language, Sahgal's English is marked by lucidity, precision and perspicuity. In Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*, both omniscient narrative method and first-person narrative method are used in simultaneous chapters. Sonali, a young I.A.S officer, is the first-person observer-participant-narrator, who describes the degenerating socio-political milieu of India during the nineteen seventies in the name of Emergency. This narrative is interwoven with the story of Rose and her husband Ram, which is narrated from the omniscient point of view. This split narrative which pictures two different realms of the story, beautifully comes together in the last chapter where Rose dies and Sonali manages to pull herself together in a heroic way. In "Historical Consciousness in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal" A. V. Krishna Rao rightly observes that Sahgal adopts a shifting point of view in *Rich* so as to invest the story with a dimension of history; and her knowledge of European and Indian history helps her in elucidating and illustrating the current events in the light of historical wisdom.

She uses technique as a means to express the experience and at the same time makes the pattern emerge effectively and automatically. She is highly sensitive to the moral rhythms of existence. She lets her characters come out with formative decisions. She orders the non-order of experience in all her novels. It is the distinctive quality of her art. Sahgal's realistic style and themes contribute towards coherence and productivity of the historical material in a life-preserving and thought-enhancing manner. The fiction sprouts from the fertile grounds of history, part of which actually,



is an imaginatively interpreted, lived experience. Being in the know of the significant backstage happenings and as an involved spectator of the front-stage historical drama, her witty fictional critiques bear the poise of an old-time crusader and thought provoking expertise of a contemporary artist.

She has constant themes like politics, history, women issues and so on. So, she has to shift her themes from novel to novel. Commenting on the thematic shifts in Sahgal's novels, Makarand Paranjape in "Cultural and Political Allegory in Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*" summarises:

As to the thematic shifts, I see them in two places in Sahgal's career. There is a shift after the first novel from the description of the social milieu in a small town to the problems of the beleaguered wife in *This Time of Morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh*, *The Day in Shadow*, *A Situation in New Delhi* and *Rich Like Us*—all of which have the women's question at their centre. With *Rich Like Us*, this problem seems to have been fully worked out . . . (73)

Sahgal's very considerable linguistic competence and stylistic devices are present in her novels. It heightens the sensibility of the reader. She is particularly effective when she uses metaphor and simile. The technique in *Rich Like Us* offers a fair objectification of the materials of art. It enables its evaluation. It contains a vast political setting with its intellectual and moral implications. It proceeds in the direction of the pattern and its implications which is difficult to incorporate in the craft for a writer like Sahgal. Sahgal's involvement with the civil liberties movement launched during the Emergency is perhaps too deep to enable her to achieve a transmutation of the new materials into art. The narrative is mingled with irony as well as with humour. It dissolves the anger.

The Emergency is viewed with a 'double' vision – the objective narration of the novelist and the filter of Sonali's consciousness. The moral and political stances of both are the same and so one perspective reinforces the other. Sonali and Rose are typical Sahgal's women, though they belong to two different generations, class and race. They are independent, assertive, self-respecting, conscientious and compassionate. Each of them tells us how the private world simultaneously affects and changes her life permanently. Their experiences often run parallel, especially during the Emergency. On a few occasions, the two women seem to function as the writer's mouthpiece, especially on matters of social significance. Sahgal almost seems to use Rose as her mouth-piece in relation to the ridiculous and unnecessary exercise, during the Emergency, of capturing people and taking them to vasectomy camps. Vijaya Sree remarks that "Nayantara Sahgal chooses a very effective narrative device for the authentic portrayal of the contemporary socio-political chaos – the double perspective – the omniscient author's stance is alternated by the participant-narrator view point" (26).

*Rich Like Us* is evidently a sample of her perfection in technique. Sahgal arranges the novel against the backdrop of Emergency in India in 1975 and the oppression emerging thereby. In it, the political situation is relegated to the background and human concerns are placed foremost. Sonali forms the main plot of the novel and Rose, an English woman, married to an Indian, and finally is murdered under the guise of suicide forms the sub-plot of the novel. The narrative is arranged in third person which turns into first person, when Sonali and Rose take up the link of the story running into twenty-one chapters. Sonali's dilemma and introspection is alternated with that of Rose. As usual in Sahgal's novels, the plot operates like a pendulum between the past and the present. Commenting on the title of the novel *Rich Like Us*, Jasbir Jain in "The Novel as Political Biography: Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* and Plans for Departure" says:



*Rich Like Us* is a double-edged title, ambiguous and divided even in its double meaning. Who is 'rich' and who is 'us'? . . . Beginning with an ironic title with multiple meanings, the novel moves constantly between the past and the present through two consciousnesses, one of Rose and the other of Sonali. (127)

Further, Jain writes:

From a narrative point of view though the two strands adopt contrastive techniques, both move backward in time. Sonali's memories of the past and her father's records allow us to see the idealism nourished by idealism. Rose has her own memories of England, of her English friends, and her husband's business. The cleanness which invested these relationships contrasts sharply with Dev's collaboration with Newman. Rose and Sonali are two of a kind and their affinity goes to prove the value of individual strength. (132)

The period covered in the novel is less than a year but in terms of history, it stretches back to the part. Jain further writes: "Ravi's shamefaced confession of failure gives Sonali her freedom, the possibility of a continuity of the hope and idealism of the past makes her look forward to the future" (132). All the chapters begin with a comment on the present and instantly telescope into a distant past. She also says that the reader can try and establish the bridge at the political-ideological level. In *Rich Like Us*, Gandhi's morality and Nehru's humanism moulded Sahgal's thinking. She also makes references to Indian cultural traditions. Hers is no romantic idealism. She displays mature understanding that power is power but it is arbitrary. She makes recurring use of myths and symbols to place her ideas on power and freedom.



Sahgal's art of characterization is appealing. She portrays her characters as emotional beings. The human concern is paramount in her characters. Her men are painted as normal beings pulsating with life and women as struggling to achieve a respectable place for them. Sahgal does not lose sight of feminine virtues which constitute femininity to woman-loving, caring, dedicated, inspired, motherly and educated. She does not portray them as mute and unsusceptible to their needs. Sahgal's women too suffer from the gnawing fear of loneliness. She is deeply concerned about the problems of the new woman, intelligent, educated and a careerist, trying to etch a dignified image for her in a patriarchal and male-dominated society.

Freedom of expression, communication, and understanding are the pre-requisites to all relationships. Man and woman, both constitute a healthy society and are complementary to each other. One cannot negate the other, but both require recognition of their identities. Sahgal implicitly states, they themselves should discover first, only then can they expect the world around them to recognize.

Sahgal describes not only what happens in the outside world but also what happens on the landscape of the minds of different characters. This kind of probing necessitates the telling of the story from the point of view of at least few important characters. Thus, one can find the multidimensional view point in some of her novels. She has an extraordinary skill in shifting the point of view in a subtle way.

Sahgal manages to bring together happily her gifts as journalist and novelist reporting the contemporary socio-political situation as it exists while changing the same into the imaginatively rich stuff of novelistic reality. In *Rich Like Us* one finds an intermingling of the individual and contemporary politics and how the suffocating political environment bears down upon the lives of a few sensitive people. Sahgal effectively portrays the ills of the contemporary society with the delineation of the

moral dilemmas as well as with the aesthetic difficulties of conveying a positive message of action in the fictional format. She also highlights the need for intellectual and practical action to bring about efficacious changes in the contemporary society. Each of her novels represents the political atmosphere of the period in which she was writing. Thus her involvement in Indian politics is embedded in her mind and actions. She finally points out that there is a need to study the history of pre-Independence India to look for a solution to the present situation. Sahgal seems:

. . . to suggest that in situations of oppression and tyranny, history can provide a means of hope, not just for surviving, but for getting enthused to fight, for the worst of tyrants had ultimately to yield to popular will. . . because it affirms that the forces of resistance ultimately triumphed. (Dhar 156)

Sahgal, herself points out that the political situation of India is the background of her novels. So one could find many themes related to polity. In *Rich Like Us* the political theme is presented mainly through the consciousness of Sonali Ranade, a middle-aged single woman, who is an IAS officer in the Ministry of Industries. She believes that for the woman's liberation movement to take place in India, their education should be about rational civilized changes. She has grown up in a world which had fostered idealism. Earlier the civil servants act as the steel framework of the government, now it has been made to crack so as to support the façade of the Emergency. Chapter two has dealt with this political theme and emergency. The objectives and the functioning of the Emergency and its effects on the lives of the people have been glaringly exposed and the nexus between politics, business and crime has been clearly revealed through this novel and it is analysed by the researcher. Sahgal plunges direct into the objectives of the Emergency which consists of the totalitarian



ruler's ambition of a dictatorship being considered 'natural' and ensuring of hereditary succession which is also considered 'natural'. This novel is outlined against the backdrop of the Indian socio-political ethos, its economic disparities, rampant corruption, the hoary past with the cruel tradition of Sati and the political upheavals of 1975. These events are analysed in the second chapter.

In *Rich Like Us*, one may find the excruciating descriptions of the exploitation of women for the thankless and unpaid service of domesticity and the ordeals of pregnancy and abortions. So in the third chapter Sahgal's view on female characters and feminism is analysed. She uses many characters to highlight the role of women in the novel. Sahgal uses Rose's personal problems successfully to highlight the frustrations of those who lived in the reign of terror during the Emergency. The subversive laws release men like Dev of any crime, from the forging of Ram's cheques to the murder of Rose. Rose, the London-born second wife of a rich businessman, could be seen as epitomizing this ideal of redemption through personal courage.

Sahgal shows the erosion of values of the politicians and bureaucrats during the emergency of India. She knows that India is ruled by politicians and bureaucrats and has given an example of the old ICS officers like Keshav Renede, an honest civil servant, as opposed to this new type of bureaucrats like Ravi Kachru, an opportunist and Sonali, a committed officer. But during the emergency, there is no place for sincere and honest officers like Sonali in the new regime. Thus, she depicts the vast difference between men and women, rich and poor in India during Independence and after Independence.

Chapter four has been dealt with the historicity that dwells in the novel *Rich Like Us*. An analysis of the historical and political aspects of the writings of Nayantara Sahgal, leads to some significant insights, not only into the story of a nation in flux, but



also of an artist in the making. While the nation has oscillated between strangulation and revival, anaesthesia and recovery, paralysis and reform, Sahgal has steadily evolved into one of the few creative forces of rationality in Twenty First century India. Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* deals with the story of India of Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency, when power becomes arbitrary once more, when the corrupt and the opportunists flourish. It deals with the impingement of politics on the personal lives of people and studies the impact of Emergency on huge scenery of characters. Thus, the parallel reading of the novel helps to examine the relation between the historic events and the historical representation of the events in the novel.

Chapter five is the summation where overall chapters are concluded by the researcher. Style and technique viewed throughout this novel has been analysed and suitable citations have been given. The main scope of this project is to analyse the themes and historic relevance of the novel *Rich Like Us*.

There is more scope for studies and research in this domain in the near future. Estrangement of relationships, the impact of discord on the children, post colonialism and stylistic devices used by the novelist can be taken for studies. Post-Colonial novels, in general, have specific structural strategies as well as thematics, which render engagement with colonial experience, deal with women as colonial subjects, with feminist issues, and sometimes with subalterns. The culture of metropolitan centre, *Rich Like Us* also deals with such strategies and it has been more obsessed with cultural interaction between the east and west which can be called as 'transcultural dynamics'. Comparative studies can be made with other contemporary women writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Bharathi Mukerjee and Shashi Deshpande. The socio-political dilemma in *Rich Like Us*, taken up for the study, has aided on the exploration of the emotional intelligence. To precisely state the emotional intelligence of the

characters are assessed by perceiving their emotions with a view to substantiate the prevalence of emotional intelligence in the novel taken up for the further study.

Female psyche and the challenges faced by the modern women are dealt with the hybrid identity and ambivalence experienced by the protagonist. The influence of the Indian past, with its multicultural aspects create an impact on every Indian psyche. This project explores cross-cultural vision, cultural transformation and cultural trajectory which are analysed. It reveals the plight of the womanhood and their survival. It also analyses gender issues, marginalisation and victimization in this patriarchal society.

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**Dispossessions and Dynamics: A Study of Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance***

A project submitted to

**St. Mary's College (Autonomous),**

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

**VINNARASI D ALMEIDA. J**

**(REG. NO. 17APEN33)**



**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Autonomous)**

**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled, **Dispossessions and Dynamics: A Study of Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

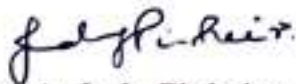
OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **Dispossessions and Dynamics: A Study of Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*** submitted to St. Mary's college (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Vinnarasi D Almeida, J during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

Rohinton Mistry undoubtedly occupies an indisputable position among the writers of Indian literature. This project entitled **Dispossessions and Dynamics: A Study of Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*** gives a deeper expression to Indian life and its estranged values during a turbulent period in its Politico-Social history. He also reveals cultural differences that exist between the land of the past and the present.

The first chapter **Introduction** gives an outline, growth and development of Indian Writing in English and traces the biographical details related to the writer's life and his works.

The second chapter **Caste and Communal Violence** conveys a closer study of cultural politics and their assessment of the alliance between national and state politics.

The third chapter **The Quest for Social Imbalance** discusses in detail, the contemporary society by exposing various problems of society.

The fourth chapter **Politics and Parsi Marginalization** has its focus on the major political events which isolated the marginalized groups into the special kind of cultural ghettos.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up the discussions of the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the thesis.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Indian English Literature refers to the body of works by authors in India who write in English and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of the members of the Indian diaspora. The very definition of the adjective "Indian" here is obscure. Many of these writers neither live in India, nor are Indian citizens. As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of postcolonial literature, the production from previously colonized countries such as India. Though one can trace such writers in India to a century back, Indian writing in English has come into force only in the last couple of decades or so, as far as literature goes. Literature is a term used to describe written or spoken material. Broadly speaking, the term "Literature" is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works. But the term is mostly used to refer to works of the creative imagination, including works of poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction.

Indian Writing in English was for a long time relegated to a position of marginality on the world literary stage. Indian Writing in English as a distinctive literature that has sprung up on hospitable soil from a seed that a random breeze had brought from in the distance. A critical study of this literature needs much more than the mere acknowledgement of its existence for yielding satisfactory results. Literature and authorship in India has on the whole been a precarious affair, and this applies with specific force to the Indo-Anglican literature. Indian English Literature, in both its matter and manner, incorporates an unquestioned commitment blended to explore the new, a shifting of the focus to the individual and the personal but without severing of links with the society. Indian English Literature has come to have a throbbing,

distinctive presence of its own, having graduated from the imitation, realities and psychological to the experimental. The poets, short story writers and novelists have reflected the Indian reality imaginatively, imbuing it with universal import. The writers have evolved a new idiom and experimental with bold technical innovations.

Indian Writing in English has a very recent history, which is one and half a century old. India and England had dealt with each other in trade, military and political affairs. During this period, England acquired wealth and empire of India. Indian English Literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who writes in the English Language. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora, such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie and so on, who are of the Indian descent. Indian English Literature amazingly attained new heights both inside and outside India. Indian English writers occupy a significant place in the field of fiction. It has gathered a tempo especially in the last three decades of the twentieth century because of the awakening of creative writers in India and abroad, rightly encouraged by many National and International awards. Indian writing in the present age has the richest harvest in fiction. It could be in the form of Poetry, Prose, Fiction or Drama. It is now recognized that Indian English Literature is not only part of Common Wealth Literature, but also occupies a great importance in the world literature. The first book written by an Indian in English was by Sake Dean Mahomet titled *Travels of Dean Mahomet* which was published in 1793.

The Prose fiction in English written by the Indian is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English speaking worlds. Pioneers like Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, and K. S. Venkataramani depict the socio-economics and political realities of life in their



novels. At the earlier stage, the fictional works of the Indian writers like MulkrajAnand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao were mainly concerned with the down-trodden of the society, the Indian middle class life and the expression of traditional cultural ethos of India. At the later stage the fictional works of the Indian writers like Venkataramani, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh and others mainly concentrated on the depiction of social reality of the times. Their works are based on sociological perspectives.

Indian English Fictional sense has become complex and thematically rich. The writers settled abroad are the ones who divide their time between Indian and abroad and have contributed much for developing the sub-genre of English Literature. The diasporic writers in particular, interweaves the Indian and the global that marks the emergence of cultural mix, at a mass level in the times impacted by globalization and unprecedented growth in the fields of Indian English Fictional scene has become complex and thematically riche. The writings of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, V. S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry and others provide an inside view of the problem faced by the displaced people in their adopted homes. The fictional works become more significant for giving expression to cross-cultured encounter from a different perspective.

The partition of India into two separate countries Post-Indian Independence and its bloody aftermath had arrested the attention of a major cluster of Indian writers, directing the history of novel writing in India towards glorious light and global accolade. There has since emerged a host of writers concentrating on history and history alone. Among the writers of the Post-Independence, 'Stream of Consciousness' and 'Post-Colonialism' genre, a great numbers of crucial names figure as having pre-dominantly surveyed the decision outcomes in the history of

India. Three novelists are Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar and Chaman Nahal in particular have established a place for themselves through their realistic portrayals of the times. The idyllic mixture of fantasy, mastery, non-fiction fairy tale, science fiction under these 'Bangla' men, truly had elevated the status of Indian novels in India in Indian history forever. Standards of book production are low, publishers tend to concentrate on school texts or examination guides, reviewing is casual or partisan. The author presents numerous copies to his friends, well-wishers and "patrons".

The Indian literatures are a product of a multilingual, multicultural and socio-historical cannot be overlooked. Today Indian Literature reached at the apex of creation with the contribution of regional and national writers. It is difficult for a writer to escape major historical events of his times. Historical events and momentous happenings are one domain, which have first been mirrored in literature, mostly through treatises, essays and of course, novels. The Substantial rise of Indian Writing in English and the novelistic tradition in the English language is a subject matter that had arrived much later, precisely just after the British Raj and consequence of Indian Independence. However, history of Indian novels owes a lot to Bengali literature and the brilliant and dazzling writers had come up during pre-independent India, in the middle nineteenth century to late twentieth centuries. The likes of Rabindranath Tagore, Ishvar Chandra, Tava Shankar Bandopandhaya, Bimal Mitra and a little later, Satyajit Ray, have been included in the elite list of Bengali novel writers, superlatively bringing to surface the political, economic and cultural ethos of the India.

The emergence of the three writers like Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan brought new hopes about the creative activity in the form of fiction. The earliest novels were not of much artistic worth. They struggle to carve out their



identity. After World War I, Indian English novel became more realistic and less idealized. The novels written between the two world wars were primarily concerned with the contemporary social-culture. The excellent novels during that period was Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938).

On eighteenth January 1982, The American Academy and Institute of arts and letters conferred an honorary membership on R. K. Narayan. He is the first Indian to receive this rare distinction. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* received a wide acclaim and won the coveted Booker Award for the year 1981 as well as the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Amitav Ghosh's *Fires of Bengal* has fetched him the Mecidis Prize of France. The contributions of Kamala Markandhaya, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie and others have already been recognized in and outside India. During 1980's the growth and development of the Indian English novelists occupy the most significant position.

The earlier awarded and recognized novels were R. K. Narayan's *A Tiger of Malgudi* (1988) and *Talkative Man* (1986), Raja Rao's *The Chess Master and his moves* (1988), Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth* (1986), Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* (1982) and *In custody* (1984), Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like us* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1989), Shashi Deshpande's *Come up and be Dead* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1989), Kamala Markandaya's *Pleasure City* (1982), Shobha De's *Starry Night* (1991) and *Sisters* (1992), Rohinton Mistry's *Such A Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), *Family Matters* (2002) and so on. All these novelists have made significant contributions to enrich Indian English novel in respect of both theme and technique.



Rohinton Mistry also belongs to the twentieth century writers, he is an Indian born Canadian who writes in English. He was born in 1952 in Mumbai, India to Behram Mistry and Freny. His brother Cyrus Mistry is the playwright and an author. He earned a B.A. in Mathematics and Economics from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. He immigrates to Canada following with his wife to be Frency Elavia in 1975 and they married there shortly after his arrival. In 1975, settling in Toronto where he studied at the University of Toronto and received a B.A. in English and Philosophy. He worked in a bank for a while, before returning to studies, leading up to a degree in English and Philosophy. He currently resides in Brampton, Ontario, Canada. He practices Zoroastrianism and belongs to the Parsi community. He won the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2012. He has become one of the pre-eminent writers of the post-colonialist writing movement. In Canada, he initially worked as a clerk in the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. During his university days in Canada that he showed a growing interest towards writing and even started to pen several short stories, which were published in several literary magazines.

Mistry's novels abound various themes like theme of nationalism, alteration, oppression, human relationship, fear and temptation which are interconnected. Mistry breaks down social boundaries between minority and majority cultures, the particulars concerns of the Parsi community to the national concerns of the majority and emphasizing same what idealistically that the solution to problems in both communities can be found in an acceptance of difference and an appreciation of basic humanity.

Rohinton Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* (1995), won the second Annual Giller Prize in 1995 and in 1996, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for fiction. It was selected for Oprah's Book Club in November 2001 and sold hundreds

of additional copies throughout North America as a result. It won the 1996 Commonwealth Writers Prize and was shortlisted for the 1996 Booker Prize. As far as *A Fine Balance* is concerned, it develops the relationship between Parsi and Hindu communities further linking the disenfranchised of both communities in a cycle of pain and suffering caused by social, political and economic strife.

*A Fine Balance* revolves around the State of Emergency declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Congress party in 1975 as in the first novel, the problems of the nation as a whole trickle down to overwhelm those least able to deal with them. The novel focuses on four disenfranchised characters, Dina, a Parsi woman who tries to maintain her financial independence from her family, Maneck, a Parsi student sent to the city by his parents to study engineering against his own indications and Ishvar, Omprakash, two untouchable Hindu leather worker cum-tailors who try to escape the caste system by moving to the city. Hardship brings this unlikely group together under Dina's roof, and the same hardship eventually tears and them apart.

In *A Fine Balance*, the homelessness of Ishvar and Omprakash in the city makes them victim of the central government's plans for a city beautification project endorsed by people of the middle class such as Nusswan Shroff and Mrs. Gupta, the manager of Au Revoir Exports people who have absolutely no idea of the misery of the absolute poor, the dispossessed and the disempowered. Unlike these two, Dina Dalal (who fortunes begin to change with the death of her father) becomes martyrs and servant to her brother's family, and is left to find for herself. Dina's relationship with the two tailors is at first one of distrust and tyranny as she forces them to work long hours without knowing that they go without food. She forbids Maneck, a nice Parsi boy from socializing with them. But the barriers gradually disappear as they all get to know each other. The bond between the four becomes stronger after their



horrific experiences at the construction plant. Dina Dalal allows the tailors to sleep on the terrace of her tiny flat. But this promise of happiness is soon to be destroyed.

In the novel *A Fine Balance*, Ishvar, who believes in the tradition of marrying young, persuades his nephew Omprakash, despite their difficult material circumstances, he ought to marry a girl from their village a marks the onset of their sorrows. Omprakash's youthful challenge of the supremacy of the oppressive thoughts, who had murdered his whole family leads to his castration by the politicians. Ishvar, who had earlier been sterilized along with his nephew under the central government's family planning programmer, loses his legs. Both Omprakash and Ishvar make their way back, where Dina has lost the battle against the landlord and finally allowed herself to be enriched from her flat. Dina's resignation is the effect of a misapprehension on her part. She believes that the tailors, who are actually caught up in the caste turmoil in their village have deserted her. She also believes that Maneck, who files away to Dulki, having failed his exams, has also deserted her. She allows Nusswan's family to take over her destiny and convert her into an unpaid family servant when Maneck returns to Bombay eight years later, the city in the throes of a new form of madness the killing of Sikhs in the wake of the Prime Ministers assassination. Even though this proof of human madness sadness him, it does not startle him as much as discovering the fate of Dina and the tailors dies.

Mistry's novels have ideological concerns, which makes him one of the foremost Indian English political novelists. His writing concerns people who try to find self-worth while dealing with painful family dynamics and difficult social and political constraints. He also addresses a consciousness of political, social and historical events of a particular time of India and its event; he is not a political or social propagandist like Shaw, he emerges as a progressive writer. The narrative



presence of Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance* shows the Dynamics and Disposessions of various sect of violence, threads, imbalance of culture. The second chapter deals with the caste and communal violence.

The Second Chapter titled "Caste and Communal Violence" is an attempt to move towards the structures of oppression and the phenomenon of Untouchability. In relation to the secularism of independent India, *A Fine Balance* deals with the separate electorates for religious communities. Mistry suggests that the destruction of caste depends upon the rejection of the Hindu scriptures. The religion may describe the rules, the socio and economic order.

## Chapter Two

### Caste and Communal Violence

Postcolonial discourse of recent years has circulated in its wake such themes as diaspora, hybridity, and orientalism. These theme are necessarily implicated in the promotion of knowledge about the relationship between subaltern subjectivities and cultures, on the one hand, and empire and trusts of empire, on the other. The focus of the discourse of the Western construction of Knowledge deals with the orient or with the colonized and the colonizer. Two assumptions are implicit in this orientation. Firstly, the cultural domination emanates primarily from the Euro-American axis, and secondly, that the postcolonial subaltern position is homogeneous in character. The elements that are ignored in the process are those indigenous structures of domination and oppression that predate European colonization. Rohinton Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance*, examines how two forms of social and cultural hierarchy, one relating to caste, and the other relating to gender, operate in this Indian text. Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* aimsto dispossess individuals of human, democratic, reproductive, and libidinal rights.

Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance*, published in 1995, covers the years between 1975 and 1977 when India was placed under a state of Emergency by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in order to avoid the political consequences of being found guilty of electoral fraud. The present is punctuated by flashbacks of scenes taken from incidents that happened before Independence, from during Partition, and from the period after Independence. It deals with a period when political rhetoric and government action on promised social reforms have failed to coincide. The Emergency functions as a massive instance of Post-Independence disillusionment with governmental processes. The novel culminates in a

shift forward to 1984, to the days after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards. Mistry's novel works through a series of loosely strung episodes, relying for continuity on a stable set of characters. The episodes portray the personal histories of an Untouchable family, of the young Parsi student Maneck Kohlah, and of the central female protagonist, Dina Dalal, against the canvas provided by the political history of India's shift to independent nationhood and beyond.

Mistry's novel begins with the convergence of three sets of characters in Dina Dalal's flat in 1975. Dina is a Parsi widow in her forties desperate about maintaining her independence, which is symbolized by her possession of the flat. In order to keep herself financially afloat, she accepts tailoring contracts from an export firm, and advertises for two tailors who would work in her flat, making clothes to order. Ishvar and his nephew Omprakash are two tailors from one of the Untouchable castes, who have come to the city in search of work, and they answer Dina's advertisement.

In the novel, Maneck Kohlah, a student and the son of an old school friend. With quite substantial flashbacks to their past, the novel plays out the relationships among the three sets of characters, leading to a temporary suspension of the disabilities of femininity and of untouchability in the domestic arena. Leaving of the hierarchies of gender and caste is made possible by the gradual release of sympathy and respect between Dina and the tailors, aided by Maneck acting as a moral catalyst. In the end personal kindness and sympathy fail as solutions, not because they are shown to be inadequate, but because the political chaos of the Emergency intervenes like an uncontrollable and irrational force to frustrate the personal quests. Mistry views about untouchables:



The untouchables lose their identities as human beings because of mistaken beliefs for them. Lot of duplication in our country's laws... For politicians, passing laws is like passing water.... It all ends down the drain. (143)

The novel *A Fine Balance*, justifies a closer study of the cultural politics and their assessment of the alliances between national and state politics. Mistry comes from minority communities in the Indian subcontinent, who is a member of the Parsi community. As members of marginal religious groups, they may have a lesser investment in the caste system, which is tied to Hinduism. However, minority religious groups are not necessarily immune to caste stratification. Mistry's Parsi characters reject in principle social hierarchy based upon caste. They subscribe to the reiteration of similar hierarchies under different auspices. Mistry had explored conjunctions between caste oppression and sexism, through the portrayal of complex and intricate relationships between oppressed femininity, in which women cross the barrier of pollution motivated by compassion or desire. In social hierarchy is signified through a series of tropes, which identify the subjection of women in the novel. The novel shows appointment with History as a deterministic and unassailable force that confirms received patterns of ascendancy. The historical events reiterate the same power structure in Mistry's works. To understand how the cultural politics that History has enshrined reproduces itself in the specific performances of history and fiction in this novel.

Hinduism may be perceived as not only permitting the social and economic exploitation of untouchables as well as women, but also of mandating it, thus giving cruelty and heartlessness the aura of virtue. Mistry shows a world where the liabilities of

untouchability prevail because, despite the constitution, and the proclaimed class warfare of Marxist parties and other sorts of political rhetoric, established power entrenches itself by neutering the democratic process.

Mistry shows that the mutating discourse of power simply redefine the meaning of Untouchability. If the untouchables of the village are the Chamaars or leather workers, in the city, where caste affiliation dissolves in urban anonymity, the new "Untouchables" are the beggars or the pavement dwellers, who dramatize through their situation the evolving dynamics of social ostracism. As Mistry's untouchable characters turn into beggars at the end of the novel. It becomes clear that the Untouchable and the beggar are different manifestations of the same condition. In each case through the appeal to some ideal principle, which creates also its antithesis, the abject of society is identified and exiled. The principle itself may change according to political exigencies and prevailing interests, but the fundamental structure of exclusion is the same. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, in one of his scholarly essay 'Untouchability and the Caste System' comments:

Unfortunately, the sanction behind the caste system is the religious sanction. I say unfortunately because anything which has a religious sanction becomes by virtue of it sacred and eternal. (Ambedkar 41)

During the Emergency, "Beautification" of public amenities displaces "purity" as the desired ideal, which operates much as caste purity does in order to identify an expendable class. Mistry accounts on Dina the protagonist about their lives in this society. Dina retrieved:



Compared to theirs, my life is nothing but comfort and happiness. And now they are in more trouble. I hope they come back all right. People keep saying God is great, God is just, but I'm not sure. (340)

Mistry installs in his fiction the State of Emergency as huge auspices all kinds of state and bureaucratic power spin into excess. The Emergency also provides the visible mantle under which traditional forms of power reiterate their hold upon village societies, for instance using its population policies to take away the reproductive capacities of untouchables. In the city, under the Emergency, the stigma of violation gets a new interpretation, as its urban "Beautification" programs attempt to eliminate from view beggars and pavement-dwellers. These are the new visual equivalents of the untouchables, and many of them may indeed, like Mistry's characters, Ishvar and Omprakash, come from the untouchable castes. In this mutation of the terms of oppression, the only thing that changes is the languages of discrimination, not the fact of discrimination, its logic, or its targets.

In a powerful retrospective sequence that culminates in 1969, Mistry traces the processes leading up to the eventual displacement of Ishvar and Omprakash from their native village by the river. Narayan, Ishvar's brother and Omprakash's father, had challenged the corrupt electoral practices that effectively excluded the untouchable caste. For this, he and his friends were tortured to death by the local leader Thakur Dharamsi. Thakur ordered the torching of Narayan's home and the murder of his family in a bid to root out the aspiration of untouchables for democratic equality. This event, as well as the decline of the tailoring business in their provincial town, precipitate the migration of the



two surviving members of the family, Ishvar and Omprakash, to the city by the sea, which is not identified but which one may assume to be Bombay.

Mistry's Thakur Dharamsi wished to send to the untouchable Chamaar families who had sought democratic equality in disobedience of caste hierarchy. There is a conflict between the terms of nationhood and those of caste stratification, which have their roots in Hinduism. The casualty in the conflict is the principle of democracy upon which equality of citizenship depends. Mistry's fiction accounts of caste violence may be usefully situated within the broader context of "caste wars". Most of the violence against the Dalit comes from landowning caste Hindus, who are armed with militants and private armies that have been recruited and trained with government assistance and cooperation. In actual fact, caste affinities and ties with the land became the unifying theme; to which the armed groups fascinated in order to unite landowners as well as peasants of superior birth against the government's agricultural reforms, which were intended to favour Dalit's.

Mistry explains how the random use of power by the government during the Emergency manages to undermine its stated aim of "introducing programs of benefit for the common and woman" (327). Mistry goes so far as to use the Emergency as a symbolic vehicle to demonstrate government conspiracy and participation in the outright that confirms the continued alienation and dislocation of depressed groups. The retrospective flashback of Narayan's murder by Thakur Dharamsi locates the extremes of the Emergency within a history in which the actual political process has continually battered the constitutional and legal safeguards through which genuine democracy has to work. Whether it is power at the village level or at the national level, in each case the

holders of power seek to preserve, and succeed in preserving, authoritarian forms of governance under the appearance of democracy. But under the Emergency, even the pretense of democracy declines to expose the authoritarian at the heart of Indian politics. In the unmistakable ruin of the government's moderating role is also contained the ruin.

*A Fine Balance* of Mistry's novel advertises, and which mentions to the balance between hope and despair, and presumably also between power and resistance. The huge drag exerted by established hierarchies, bent upon reproducing themselves no matter. The circumstances of their living stimulate them to thing for revenge. It is only the mental aggression which leads to the physical aggression. Here, Omprakash makes plans to punish his communal enemy, Thakur, who killed all the members of his family. Not only the untouchables but also Parsis become mentally aggressive. It is vividly pictured in *A Fine Balance*. Omprakash said:

I will gather a small army of Chamaars, provide them with weapons, then march to the landlord's houses, his sewing machine racing. 'It will be easy to find enough men. We'll do it like the "Naxalites". At the end of it we will cut off their heads and put them on spikes in the market place. Their kind will never dare to oppress our community again'. We'll slaughter the Thakurs and their goondas. And those police devils. (149)

Mistry's narrative is interspersed with the personal hope of his Untouchable characters that the quest for individual freedom may triumph. One of these occasions of hope emerges in the rebellion against the mandates of caste by Dukhi, Ishvar and Narayan's father, when he decides to apprentice his sons to be tailors. That Dukhi gets away with it may be a result of contemporary caste politics. By using the name "Dukhi",



it is quite possible that Mistry is invoking a literary genealogy for his depiction of untouchability, besides situating the aspirations and efforts of his Untouchable characters within a history in which their defeat is pre-determined. Mistry's Dukhi is made of a more robust constitution. He survives the privations of his position and turns his disillusionment towards a constructive purpose. But a generation or two later, Dukhi's efforts culminate in the extermination of all of his descendants, except for a son and a grandson, who eventually slide into beggary as a result of the government-sponsored mutilation of their bodies during the Emergency. Through the possible references, Mistry demonstrates that nothing has changed despite the rhetoric and the occasional examples of upward mobility.

The more subtle methods when Ishvar and Omprakash are forced to undergo botched vasectomies that leave one crippled and the other castrated. The holocaust of the Untouchables is managed under masquerades that disguise its deadly intent. Given the cynical appropriation of the democratic process and the blatant disregard for doctrines of equality, Mistry's fiction retreats the sphere of public struggle and looks for solutions that operate through domestic and familial metaphors. In diametric contrast to the final solution proposed by his character Nusswan, Mistry puts forward a symbolic project for the accommodation of the displaced.

In Mistry's novel, the politics of caste and the politics of gender converge in the precarious entitlement of both the Untouchable tailors and Dina Dalal to a dwelling place of their own. On their arrival in the city, the tailors are permitted grudgingly to sleep on the back pavement of someone's shop. After finding employment with Dina, they are encouraged by their host to rent a hut in the slums, only to be evicted by the Emergency's



slum clearance program. On buying their liberty, aware of the danger of sleeping in public places, they gladly accept the sanctuary that Dina offers reluctantly in her cramped flat.

Like most religious system, Hinduism has its specific answer for the anxieties that spring from the encounter with the uncontrollable processes of the body. Whereas Christian solutions are found in the doctrines of divine incarnation and the resurrection of the body, which contrive to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the material. Hinduism has recourse to the fantasy of hereditary purity, which justifies the erection of notional barriers to protect the self from the body's defilements. This problematic and paradoxical relationship with the body is reiterated in the social sphere through the projective mechanisms whereby the body's uncleanness is transferred to the alienated and despised 'Other', who is thereby classified as 'Untouchable'. Insofar as biology makes some of its most spectacular and fundamental intrusions upon the social sphere through the female body, it too must be hedged with caution and contained. The fantasy of disembodiment that drives the subjection of Untouchables and women also confers on them the opposite condition of being the bearers of a demeaning embodiment. Hence, their abject status is signaled through a variety of codes written upon. In demonstrating this, Mistry confirms the paranoid rejection of the body that lies at the base of both caste and gender hierarchies. Mistry predicted the vulnerabilities and the ecstasies of the body that we are able to intuit the human condition upon which all ethical action.

Like the Untouchable who carries with him the liability of the contaminating touch, Dina carries with her the reminder of the pollution that is linked to her fertilizable body through the stock of sanitary pads that she has devised from the remnants of fabric.

As Dina gradually crosses the pollution barrier between herself and the tailors, Ishvar and Omprakash, by dispensing with segregated cups, by dining together, and by massaging Omprakash's strained back, a reciprocal levelling of the gender hierarchy occurs. It is signified through Maneck and Omprakash turning Dina's sanitary pads into phallic symbols, which they attach to themselves, as they cavort around her room in an exuberant burst of masculine bonding during her absence. Yet this inclination towards symbolic equality between male and female bodies runs the risk of being torpedoed when Omprakash proposes to Maneck that they should satisfy their sexual voyeurism by peeping on Dina in the bathroom. This attempt to install the male gaze disintegrates as Maneck rises to the defense of Dina's honor. Since Maneck does not refrain from indulging his voyeuristic instincts with Omprakash on another occasion in another location where their object is an unknown woman, it must be assumed that the gender hierarchy is in abeyance only provisionally. Yet it is levelled sufficiently for Dina to contemplate accommodating the tailors on a permanent basis, and receiving into her household Omprakash's prospective wife.

What motivates Dina is the surge of sympathy that she feels on being confronted with the visible suffering of Ishvar and Omprakash. They, in turn, are moved by her recognition of their humanity. Mistry suggests that ultimately this human bond needs to be acknowledged through the practical accommodation of the other, which is to be distinguished from the dues that pity and guilt yield to beggars. Beggarmaster public mourning for his unacknowledged, belatedly discovered half-brother, the beggar Shankar, privileges the perception of human fraternity, which facilitates the accommodation of the other, over the random, and sometimes impersonal, philanthropy extended to beggars.



Mistry's vision terminates in a practical ethics that is ultimately incompatible with the values and politics that support hierarchies. Given the invincibility of these hierarchies, the trajectory of his fiction recognizes the divide between his vision and its effective realization. Perhaps this pessimism is reiterated and compounded in the suicide of Maneck in 1984 after he discovers about the circumstances leading to the beggary of Ishvar and Omprakash. But Mistry balances this despair with the practical assistance that Dina continues to render to Ishvar and Omprakash, despite her reduced circumstances at the end of the novel. Of all sense of balance in the public arena, *A Fine Balance* still survives in the sorts of personal responses that suffering may elicit.

Like Mistry's finely calibrated balance, which neutralizes despair upon *A Fine Balance* terminates. And indeed the metaphor of incest is not inappropriate since what is proposed is the healing of the estrangement of the most intimate of relationships, that of the self and the body. In the end, Mistry subscribe to an inclusive ethics, one describing it through the metaphor of the developing of familial links and the other through the healing of fundamental cleavages.

The Third Chapter titled "The Quest for Social Imbalance" strives the atrocities continues the downtrodden and suffered people. Mistry implies at various levels of existence and struggle of a common man. In this chapter reflects the scale and degree of the painful struggle of the outcaste in an aggressive society. They lose their identity as individuals and join the banished section of humanity.



## Chapter Three

### The Quest for Social Imbalance

Rohinton Mistry is provoked by the atrocities continued against the downtrodden and suffered people. There, is no doubt that he strives hard to reform the society by exposing various problems of society. He desires peace to prevail in the society by understanding the various problems of individuals. The clear difference between Mistry's living location and his fiction with Parsi community that makes it difficult to bracket him either as a Parsi, an Indian, or a Canadian writer. The novelists cannot be discussed in terms of one nationality alone. He has interests in many cross cultural issues. It is probably best to study him as a writer free of all labels of an objective inquiry, as a representative of a global culture. He made out himself as a writer of his own choice and treatment of the themes. An unchallengeable features of Mistry's humanism is the theme of condemnation of struggle for peace. Ambition and dreams of are tied with hope and despair about the life of the modern world. Mistry shows the basic ambivalence of common men, as a realist and humanist through his works.

Mistry reveals the social problems as a social novelist. His humanistic convictions and concept of arts show his thoughts of revolutionary. There are two types of revolutions against the feudal system with caste structure and socialist revolution led by the working class against the capitalist system. Revolution's main characteristic elements are its determination to put an end to imperialist rule. All forms of feudal exploitation, oppression, especially evil social practices of casteism and untouchability lifted to downtrodden and suffered people. Therefore, Mistry has become a spokesman of this

revolution. Socialism and Humanism co-mingle to form a manifesto for the welfare of the Indian masses through his novels.

Mistry's characters in his novel *A Fine Balance*, grow in self-knowledge and fight against an aggressive social environment to create a new world and freedom. His protagonists are young and middle age people. His novels deal with major Indian social problems and imbalance of Indian society where the protagonists themselves are the downtrodden. He narrates his stories through the eyes and the voices of the dispossessed at the lower rung. The middle classes in particular are affected by emergency and society. His interest lies with the average people of India struggling to gain a basic life that is brutal against the poor and the downtrodden. He usually speaks of his characters as though they have life of their own. His characters' actions are very clear but their motives are always disputable. In one of his interviews, he replied and remarked that one has to believe that characters have a life of their own in order to give them 'free rein'. In his explanation to 'free rein', Mistry opines, "I mean, you are in control but you must let them suggest things. The more they develop the more complex they become, the more they will reveal their possibilities" (Wilson 11).

Mistry's characters like beggarmaster mutilated wretches and panhandlers in *A Fine Balance* are almost too grotesque. He avoids the bitterness of satire since he projects a sympathetic view of the predicament of his characters. Still, his writings perceive in a strange land and society. The novel routes through a series of political events on various issues such as corruption in high places, minority complexes and fragmentation of the social order. However, this novel is not merely a political novel. The main action of the novel is set in a city by the sea, apparently Bombay and it takes place during the



emergency of 1975. *A Fine Balance* reflects the reality of India's the greedy politics of corruption, oppression, exploitation and violence.

The novel *A Fine Balance* is also offers an insight into rural India focusing on injustice, cruelty and horror of deprivation. Mistry's strong opposition to social and class differences have extended the spectrum of contemporary reality through this novel. The narratives centre within urban setting, that is, the tiny cramped house of Dina Dalal in Bombay. He uses four main characters, a woman and three men, and a handful of extraordinary minor ones. Each of the four protagonists has their own story and the characters begin to live together under one roof in the city. The novel is about sufferings and pains of the poor people and individuals. The novel is a wonderful presentation of three major themes. The novel blends political history with the personal life of the individuals. The first is the life of the middle class and urban world, Dina Dalal. She is a pretty widow in her forties who is struggling hard to lead an independent life. Second, there is another world symbolized by Maneck Kohlah and a sensitive Parsi boy. He feels a great burden to lead life. At last the novel focuses another sight into rural India provided by Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash who struggle to exist in this world.

Mistry writes about conflict at an individual level as well as at a larger level. He is committed towards his cultural roots that provide him infinite inspirational material for his fiction and with great sensitivity and truthfulness, he rend the tales of protagonists from Parsi community caught in their beliefs, lifestyles and peculiar situations. *A Fine Balance* revolves around a widow Dina Dalal living alone in the city of Bombay. Maneck Kohlah is a student from a hill side town of the Himalayas and a paying guest of Dina. Then, the two untouchables named Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash are the



tailors of Dina. They are the four innocents crabbed in the breaking gears of history in *A Fine Balance*.

The novel, *A Fine Balance* sets in the period of mid 1970s when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declares a "State of Internal Emergency" and suspends India's constitution to save her political power. Mistry portrays the fragments of political history and its cruelty and corruption during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's time. *A Fine Balance* starts with the story through the voice of the student Maneck Kohlah. He is sent to study in Bombay and stays as a boarder at Dina's house at Bombay. The tailors Ishvar and Omprakash are also at the same house in Bombay due to caste violence in their village. In this way, the life of Maneck, Dina and the tailors Ishvar and Omprakash get interconnected under one roof. The four main characters of the novel suffer from a sense of rootlessness.

Caste violence has driven in Ishvar and Omprakash into a life that forces them from a rural background to overcrowded Bombay for better life. Similarly, Maneck also moves from his home in the hills to Bombay for his higher education. His family lost its wealth and trade during the partition of India. Dina has grown up in Bombay but her sense of independence after her husband's accidental death keeps her away on her family. So in a sense, all the four main characters are lonely and struggling for their identity and individuality. Social circumstances and loneliness bring them together to understand as they struggle to survive.

Ultimately, in *A Fine Balance*, the four main characters struggle to maintain their life. Maneck and the two tailors are sitting in the same compartment of a local train and travelling to Dina's house. At first, both Ishvar and Omprakash are worried that Maneck

is a rival for the job. However, they become friendly once they realize that Maneck is a student and boarder of Dina.

Initially, Ishvar has some anxious with Maneck because of his class background. But Omprakash is more independent and soon he becomes close to Maneck. The author implies at various levels of existence and struggle of common man. As a political and historical novel, Mistry sets the life of four main protagonists with the historical moment of modern India. In fact, he observes India as a country with unclear problems that are not helpful to an individual's ambitions. Therefore, their struggle for survival, poverty and exploitation are basic concerns of the novel. Mistry being a Diaspora writer reveals the conditions of those who do not belong to the marginalized people have to struggle. People belonging to minority community in India face discrimination not only in village but in the city also the metro. As Kallen says:

In those state in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minority shall not be denied right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, or to use their own knowledge. (Kallen 14)

The socio-cultural context of the situation in which they are placed, makes the people constantly experience fear, alienation, rejection and insecurity. Mistry makes deep insight on Indian reality that translates the urban, the rural and the political experiences through the novel.

The two untouchables of *A Fine Balance* forced to endure the atrocities of the high class people and political power and their future becomes miserable. Due to economic and social reasons are displaced from their world. Even after, they become fully qualified



tailors and return to their village and they are deeply conscious of their own roots in the society. The entire family is cruelly murdered by village lords and they decide to immigrate to Bombay for the survival facts like Rajaram who says, "Thousands are coming to the city because of bad times in their native place. I came for the same reason". (171)

Rohinton Mistry portrays, the upper class people life in Bombay is contrary to their expectations that symbolize the anguish, pain and anxiety of people cut off from their native villages. Like roamers, they move from their slum to the railway platform, then to the entrance of a chemist's shop where they are mistaken for beggars. The police compelled them to slog as labourers and finally released from that hell by the Beggarmaster. They throw out from their native because it holds no promise or hope to survive. In Bombay, they have failed again and struggled to survive and stay on as trivial men. The tailors were born into a family of untouchables who have risen in the world and became beggars in the end of their life. Dina too, chooses to separate from her home because she wants to maintain her individuality. She has grown up in Bombay but she keeps her away from her family after her husband's accidental death with a sense of independence. She resolves to restructure her life without being economically dependent on any one. But Dina's life is a series of economical upheavals and relocation of emotional bonds.

Maneck is a victim of displacement because he is displaced from his home in the hills to the college in the city where he is constantly humiliated by his seniors. He strives to adapt himself to the political atmosphere of the college but he feels alienated and commits suicide in the end. Emergency made both Dina and Maneck fail in their attempt.



Therefore, all the four major characters are displaced with loneliness and struggle for identity and survival in a cruel world. Social circumstances and sense of isolation bring them together and form a bond of understanding as they struggle to survive.

Mistry is a socio-political novelist who emerges as a significant literary figure during the recent years. He has more interest in the untouchables whose voices are inhumanly suppressed by the upper caste and politicians. Untouchability exists in the society even after the Independence and the constitution of India incorporated several laws to eliminate untouchability by imposing severe punishment. But all these efforts that have not achieved their success completely are reflected by Mistry in the novel, *A Fine Balance*. He reveals sensible and sensitive understanding of social exploitation in the class and structure of colonial India. It also reveals the scale and degree of the painful struggle of the outcaste in an aggressive society. Untouchables are economically exploited by others. They lose their identity as individuals and join the banished section of humanity. He highlights crucial events in the country's chronicle by the background of each protagonist. The tailors and their forefathers' life reflect the cruelty of the caste system in rural India. This illustration from the text is enough evidence. Thakur's wife was watching from the kitchen window.

'Oiee, my husband! Come quick!' she screamed. The Chamaar donkey has destroyed our mortar. What have you done, you witless animal! Is this what I hired you for? I swear on the heads of my children, begged Dukhi.

(104)

Poverty drives the untouchables to depend upon the higher caste people to feed their family. For example, Thakur obtains cheap labour from the lower caste villagers.

When the workers demand their due wages, they are threatened with violence. Dukhi Mochi accepts to pack the chilies alone for small wage. There is class and communal intolerance due to one's own birth and profession. Dukhi is treated slightly better than an animal but not certainly as a human being. So Dukhi Mochi decides to change his profession for these reasons of humiliations. Then he migrates to the nearby city and becomes a cobbler. Fortunately, he meets his Muslim friend named Ashraf, tailor of his family. In the city, a political leader speaks the Mahatma's message:

This disease, brothers and sisters, is the nation of untouchability, ravaging us for centuries, denying dignity to our fellow human beings. No one is untouchable, for we are all children of the same God. Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk. The lower castes and classes need radical changes and revolutions but there is no the compassion and the charity of the upper classes. (118-19)

Dukhi works hardly towards an individual revolution and breathing with lifelong traditions. He decides to send his sons with Ashraf to work as apprentice as tailors. He violates caste rules by making his sons as tailors. His decision shows surprising courage of a suffered one. It soon became known in Dukhi's village that his children were learning a trade other than leather-working. In the olden days, punishment for stepping outside one's caste would have been death. Dukhi was spared his life, but it became a very hard life. He was allowed no more carcasses, and had to travel long distances to find work. Sometimes he obtained to hide secretly from fellow Chamaars; it would have been difficult for them if they were found out. The items fashioned from this illicit leather had "to be sold in far-off places where they had not heard about him and his sons". (118)



Dukhi recalls his younger days in which Bhola, Dosu, Gambhir, Dayeram, Sita, Dhiraj, and Bhungiand others are suffered in the hands of Zamindars. It is used to know the stories of atrocities committed on the Chamaars by the upper class Zamindar. It is a feeling or a word of his father to be the truth of his existence. His wife Roopa is raped by the Zamindar's gardener and it does not get justice on her because they are only low-caste people. Another low caste character Bhola's left hand fingers are cut off because he is accused for stealing. The upper caste people punish the lower caste people severely which is inhuman for the minor crimes they commit either knowingly or unknowingly. He wants to stop this communal fault line of humiliation to survive in the village. Particularly, this is a moving section of the novel that brings the dirty life conditions of the lower caste in rural India.

In this novel, Dukhi decides to send Narayan and Ishvar as apprentices of Ashraf's tailor shop in a nearby town. They live and learn tailoring with Ashraf Chacha for years and they turn from cobblers to tailors. Dukhi utters, if someone asks your name, don't say Ishvar Mochi or Narayan Mochi. From now onwards the name mention as Ishvar Darji and Narayan Darji. Thereafter, Ishvar and Narayan return to their village to set up business and everything appears peaceful. The Chamaars come into conflict with the Landlords, Zamindars and the Thakurs during the general elections. Mistry gives graphic details of ruthless exploitation, tortures, booth rigging, and suffering of the poor and the downtrodden. Even after twenty years of independence nothing changes. Narayan says:

Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals.



More than twenty years have passed since independence. How much longer? I want to be able to drink from the village well, worship in the temple, walk where I like. Son, those are dangerous things to ask. You changed from Chamaar to tailor. He satisfied with that. Narayan shook his head. That was your victory. (142-43)

In Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the character, Narayan argues with officers that as a chamaar, he cannot still drink water at the village well, worship in the temples of the upper castes, or walk where he likes. The men seized Narayan. They forced their fingers to the ink pad and completed the registration. Thakur Dharamsi whispered to his assistant to take the three to his form. His desire for his rights to vote is taken away by the Thakur's men. Narayan and his two companions are cruelly tortured by Thakur and they are hanged in the village square. Other untouchables are beaten up at random, their women are raped and their huts are burnt down. Dukhi, Keesa, Kalia, and the daughters were bound and dragged into the main room. Narayan's dead bodies are burnt alive at the command of Thakur. To quote the incident from the novel, "I am missing", said Thakur Dharamsi. 'Son and grandson'. Only by the red birthmark on his chest could they recognize Narayan" (147). Shameful and horrible murders of Narayan and his companions are always the hapless victims at the hands of the heartless upper caste. Dukhi Mochi's friends also fear for his family. On the other hand, the untouchable children are very eager to learn like the upper caste children. But they are punished brutally beaten up by the teacher. This kind of bold insults show the oppressed and oppressed people's mental aggression towards the upper caste.

Rohinton Mistry cites the upper caste response of male children among its low caste neighbours as an example to the Brahmins. This is the result of disorder in the universe brought on by some misbehavior in this world of the natural social order. Then increased vigilance and a more rigorous adherence to the caste system which obviously means more floggings and beatings, which is the real disorder. Moreover, it is also a site of the recurrence of caste-based brutality. The lower castes are beaten, tortured and killed for a number of minor offences. Caste may suggest what is at stake in Dukhi's refusal to endure hereditary. The essence of caste, we may say, requires that the laboring to the need to maintain the bodies of the pure castes in their state of purity. "All injunctions of dharma must work to this end" (Chatterjee 194). Then, in India, caste divisions not only exist between the lower and the upper classes but also within the class itself. Among the untouchables, there is class hierarchy too. For instance, the sweeper community is inferior to the tanner community, there is caste within caste.

The Fourth Chapter titled 'Politics and the Parsi Marginalization' deals with how the Parsi community lose their rights, identity and sustainability which culminate in the symbolic reduction of their gendered balance. The political situation changes to the State of the Emergency under the rule of Mrs. Indira Gandhi which results in the imbalance imposed on the narratives of the nationhood. The Emergency influences the life of the nation to the extent that it degrades and reduces the nation to a mere plaything of the discourse of power. Hence, the Fourth Chapter serves to expend the symbolic castration to the life of the nation during the Emergency as it exposes the relation between power and gender in the state of lawlessness.



## Chapter Four

### Politics and Parsi Marginalization

The novel *A Fine Balance* is an attempt to show the spirit of struggle for survival. It is important to note that the politicians for some trivial gains are distorting the image of secular India. People can be different in various social ways while still sharing the same culture. The rhetoric of distinctiveness may change without the culture, the culture itself alter very much. In other words when an individual changes socially, the culture premises do not necessarily change. Mistry artistically suggests that cultural differences are deliberately raised to distort the harmonious environment of the society. He presents the idea of family by assimilation of the characters of two different castes and classes of society as the circumstances forced them to live as a family. It is described analytically how the reservation of caste and class melt and a new hybrid culture emerges.

The novelist makes a serious effort to attain balance between hybridity and exclusivity of culture. The metaphor of quilt powerfully suggests the assimilation and exclusiveness of different cultural background of the characters. Mistry strongly establishes the idea of a balanced approach in life-inwardly as well outwardly through the title of the novel. As Trikha says:

The diversity and plurality which has been noted as aspects of postmodern society have a particular value so far as they promote an attention to the radical themes of different cultures. There is thus a new, post-modern form of cross fertilization taking place. (Trikha 215)

*A Fine Balance* covers the period from independence to the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi the formerly Prime Minister and with a special focus on the State of



Emergency caused by some political manipulations. As a chronicle of post-colonial period of India. In 1975, the year of the Emergency, one of the important year, an important dates in Indian history. The novelist presents the intensive impact of political development on the lives of the common man in the country. The novel deliberately compares "the two literary works revealing the how emergency and political upheaval in India affected the life of layman". (Ball 238)

*A Fine Balance* may not be as innovative or daring, but in its quieter way it is just as skilled and no less politically charged. The novel presents the realistic picture of Indian society in the different fields of life seeking a typical balance between tradition and modernity; ethics and materialistic advancement. It presents the true account of cultural hybridization and cultural exclusivity in the lives of people. *A Fine Balance* in its careful exploration of diverse gender, class and religion in the subject position, is a much more inclusive work than its predecessor. The social spectrum of Muslim rent-collectors, tailors, Sikh cabbies, wily beggars, corrupt slumlords, racketeering police and radical students.

Mistry describes the politics of diaspora being interpreted analytically through the experiences of characters. The ending of the text highlights how difficult it is to attain a balance in life in post-modern conditions. Mistry himself has confessed, "Post-modernism is so terribly clever far too clever for me. Faithful to the story and characters is what concern me most" (Gokhale 6). The novelist highlights the situation of Parsis with their problems, prejudices and other concerns in radically changing conditions in the postmodern era of Indian history. In post-colonial India the Parsi have seen their prominence on the decline and their previously disproportionate influence shrink, as

Indian society has shaped itself through secular, and recently, Hindu paradigms. There is also a sense of narrowing opportunity for young Parsis' in India.

The condition of the Parsi is like "Trishanku", a mythical character hanging between Earth and Heaven. They were neither accepted by the British nor could cope with the Indians after independence. They distanced themselves from the Indian culture due to their sense of racial superiority and could never hope to be accepted by the British due to their sense of colonial mind set and racial discrimination. Thus, they have to face identity crisis and ambivalence as a result of temptation for the British due to their identity and estrangement from Indian culture and traditions. This ancient pre-Islamic religious group of Iran had to face a lot of sufferings and tribulations from their dispersion to present day. The diasporic experience of Parsis' may be understood as Stuart Hall asserts:

The Diaspora experience is defined not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of Identity. Diaspora identities are these, which are constantly and reproducing themselves a new through transformation and difference.

(Hall 224)

Being a Diasporic author himself Mistry distinctly projects the experiences of displacement of his characters within the country and outside the country. He shows the parallel situations of Diaspora within the country through the experience of Omprakash and Ishvar, who face atrocities and tortures in their own native village. He focuses upon their lives in the big city amidst their fellow men and their dissatisfaction with the city life and their desire to go back to their native place is highlighted in the words of one of



his major characters Ishvar: "Nothing is as fine as one's native place" (8). This situation displaced the people whether they more voluntarily or under pressure with the remark that either way displaced they have to face "Trishanku" like situation and they are used to transform into a very crucial "hybrid condition of non-belonging in both homeland" (Singh 35). Mistry points out the incidents of cultural clashes and displacements hybridity of culture in the post-modern era.

Mistry discussed the multiple sources of what and how the novel came into existence. The novel begins with a single impulse. He seems to be haunted by the image of a woman at a sewing machine. From there, he builds up the story of Dina, a widow who runs a small dress-making operation out of her flat on the edge of a sprawling urban Indian slum. To make ends meet, Dina takes in a student boarder, Maneck Kohlah and provides accommodation for two former "untouchables", Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash, who work as tailors. The central action of the novel takes place in 1975, the year Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared a State of Emergency to save her political life.

The novel *A Fine Balance* keeps in power for a few more years but it was a measure that brought unforeseen misery to millions of ordinary Indians, and of course one that touches the lives of Mistry's characters with brutal directness. Although, he did not experience it since Mistry left India in the same year yet, "wanted to tell the story through the eyes and the voices of the dispossessed, ones at the very bottom" (Wilson 4). It is a conscious effort to embrace more of the social reality of India. The narratives of the novel depict reality of the multi-ethnic group in the society and their misfortunes and hardships seem exaggerated to those who do not have sensitivity to feel their pain and agony. The novel is of Dina Dalal a Parsi a widow in her forties; Maneck Kohlah,



belonging to a North Indian hill town; and Ishvar and his nephew Omprakash, the Chamaars turned tailors from a remote rural area. Their inner voyage and external circumstances present a paradox. The contrast between internal and external reality is balanced through an alternate reality, despite all the odds and crisis.

The novel presents the period of 1975 to 1984 its socio-political incidents with the Mistry's personal experiences, his view point and analysis and in terms of his historical understand. *A Fine Balance* highlights the family background of the protagonist Dina, love and affection for Dina's father, Dr. Shroff, the hatred elder brother Nusswan and the mother, for imposing various restrictions. Dina's marital relations with Rustom, ends with the death of future. Mrs. Gupta the export manager of Au Revoir Exports is the only character from the elite class in the novel. Dina falls under the crisis right at the beginning as:

Dina Dalal seldom indulged in looking back at her life with regret or bitterness, or questioning why things had turned out the way they had cheating her of the bright future everyone had predicted for her when she was in school, when her name was still Dina Shroff. (15)

Mistry portrays, the death of Dina's father followed by the mother having the life. The relationship between Nusswan and Dina became coarse humiliated Dina. She wandered around in museums and markets. Dina is aware of modern libraries well equipped with music rooms and it makes Dina "forget the troubles of this world" (30). The novel is not just the depiction of Dina's love for music but of Mistry's fondness for music as well. Dina comes to know about several cultural groups that sponsors concerts a pharmaceutical chemist. Dina marries Rustom. The meeting is a recollection of his own

recitals in the city. Dina visits the concerts regularly and here she meets Rustom Dalal. After a couple of years of Dina's marriage, Rustom died in a road accident, causing a severe loss. The death of Shirin Aunty followed by Darab uncle breaks her internally. Dina feels alone "as though she had lost a second set of parents" (57). One loss after another comes on her way and it makes Dina firm and determined. Nusswan is shocked to see Dina as no wailing, no beating the chest or tearing the hair like you might expect from a woman who had suffered such a shock, such a loss. To compensate for marginalization Mistry praises Parsi community and feels proud. Among the unenlightened, widows are thrown away like garbage. If a Hindu, in the old days you would have had to be a good little sat and leap onto your husband's funeral pyre, be roasted with him.

Due to the early losses Dina is failed to fulfil teenage ambition to become a doctor. With the help of Dina's character, Mistry is successful in creating a 'New Woman', who is energetic and enthusiastic, seeking a path of self-realization through stitching. Bernard Shaw claims that he does not regard woman as an animal of another species and further insists that. "A woman had to do was not to repudiate their femininity, but to assert its social value; not to ape masculinity, but to demonstrate its insufficiency". (Shaw 463)

Mistry does follow the same way in his major descriptive work. However, he is successful in judging and analyzing the woman's capabilities and drawing. Dina out of the gamut of the conventionalities into a new individual. It is Mrs. Gupta, who suggests Dina to dominate the subordinates. Mrs. Gupta against big factories for its strikes and "leaves like that Jay Prakash Narayan encouraging civil disobedience simply at all



creating problems. Thinks he is Mahatma Gandhi the second" (65). Mrs. Gupta stressed on Dina by saying that, "you are the boss, you must make the rules, and never lose control" (66). Mrs. Gupta who believes in 'power politics'. The paradoxical situations are created by political events, and multicultural fabrics of the society. Due to the emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi the entire scenario for the lower class people was changed.

In the novel *A Fine Balance*, Omprakash is 'fighting' and 'struggling' and revolving against Dina's guidance. Omprakash makes an effort to bring a change. The main cause of poverty arises from the hegemony of the upper-class on the lower-class. Ibrahim, the rent-collector, is appointed as the landlord's spy, blackmailer, and delivers of threats and humiliates the tenants. Ibrahim being minority community of India is also marginalized and a superstitious person who goes to fortune-tellers, palmists and astrologers his traumas. The perspective shifts back and forth, occasionally without warning and produce a paradoxical situation where balance seems a distant reality. While the post-colonial foundation forces Mistry to raise the question of individuals as well as social identity, the post-structuralist framework dismantles either of the identities and precedes further to make possible the recognition of multiplicity. Dina is not afraid of Ibrahim who forced to vacate the flat. Dina is successful in compromising with tailors and tells Ibrahim that they came to do cooking and cleaning.

The journey of Dina from Dina Shroff to Dina Dalal and ending as widow overcomes every hurdle and finally strikes *A Fine Balance*. Mistry paints the rural India where casteism continues to flourish. In 1950 the Indian constitution declared that all Indians would be equal under the law and no discrimination shall be made in the name of



religion, caste, creed or gender. Mistry explores the marginalized condition of the lower-castes and the untouchables and rightly said that "marginal people know how they live" (Schulman 219). Dukhi Mochi, cobbler by profession, belongs to Chamaar caste, dared to change the vocation of sons Ishvar and Narayan by sending them to Ashraf tailor. Dukhi is happy to restore and preserve the profession which was followed by ancestors but does not want the children to suffer.

In *A Fine Balance*, Dukhi Mochi is successful in taking a stand against the upper class and this is one of the positive signs for the marginalized community in India. Mistry also focused on the humiliation of women giving birth to girl children. The birth of daughters often brought beatings from their husbands and their husband's families. Sometimes they were ordered to discreetly get rid of the newborn. Then they had no choice but to strangle "the infant with their swaddling clothes, poison her, or let her starve to death". (99-100)

Mistry portrays the trauma of the Chamaars and indicates that the only way they can escape the humiliation is by striving towards upward social mobility. Ashraf belonging to a Muslim minority community acts as a helping hand in changing the vocation of Dukhi's sons. In the village, leaders of Indian National Congress are spreading Mahatma Gandhi's message regarding the freedom struggle and the struggle for justice. They declared: "We have been slaves in our own country for too long. And the time has come to fight for liberty. What is this disease? You may ask". (107)

After independence the nation is passing through a terrible disease called untouchability. The upper-caste people are suppressive towards the lower-caste, if they crossed the limitations imposed upon them. Dukhi finds himself in a miserable condition.

Dukhi dares to break the laws implemented by the upper-class by changing the vocation of his sons Ishvar and Narayan from Chamaar to tailors. Dukhi is successful in realizing his 'self', and the quest for 'self-realization' is marked by the urge to be free. Freedom means "the individual coming to terms with past and with himself, accepting the limitations and going on from there, however terrified he may be". The fear and atrocities of upper class people are depicted in the narrative minutely and Dukhi and family become the symbol of downtrodden people who want to live a life of equality and self-respect but caste discrimination does not allow them. It is true that Mistry himself admits that has no direct experience of rural life but even then and portrays it realistically.

The Hindus were classified on the basis of profession. Though, Hindu social reformers claim that untouchability is not a code of Hindu society. But, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, a social thinker, does not believe in this interpretation of divisions and rejects this plea on the ground of the principle that. "Untouchability is the integrated part of caste system" (Ambedkar 12). A 'new identity' in a multicultural society is given to Ishvar and Narayan by Ashraf. It is a 'fusion' and 'assimilation'. The Chamaars-turned-tailors is the stepping stone for them. During the riots, Hindus-Muslims shed blood of each other. Dukhi and friends are against the speeches. They like Muslims. "The Muslims behaved more like our brothers than the bastard Brahmins". (123) The boys are successful in saving the lives of Ashraf Chacha, by changing of name of the shop from 'Muzaffar Tailoring' to 'Krishna Tailors'. The changing of name acts as tonic for Ashraf. They destroy the Urdu magazines and newspapers to acquire a 'new identity' for better prospects. Narayan insists upon his son, Omprakash to learn the tanner job. Narayan wants to preserve the identity. Narayan also planning to vote in the election. Thakur



Dharamsi is in charge of voting process. Narayan is hanged by the people of Thakur Dharamsi. Narayan blamed Dukhi as "Dukhi had dared to break as he turned cobblers into tailors, distorting society's timeless balance" (147). Dukhi, Roopa, Leela and Rekha are set ablaze by the men of Thakur. By portraying the hardships and crude realities of life, Mistry applies the realist theory of identity.

The novel, *A Fine Balance* is actually a depiction of large scale effort at somehow gaining or maintaining 'A Fine Balance' in order to service. The effort canvas extends from individuals to groups - minorities, social and political groups. Each individual and group seems to be a riding swing eternally being pushed by other individuals or groups - disturbing or obstructing the effort for balance. And this results in turmoil and commotion. Some swings seem to be above the pushing forces from a distance. This promotes the desire for vertical mobility the country or migration to other countries. The unknown, invisible 'future' fascinates and people regroup to work, even make sacrifices in the 'hope' or presumption of a future of their dreams. Effort and Result gets upset and they are caught up in the struggle of overcoming disappointments, frustrations and staying balanced. Mental, physical and spiritual journeys and geographical displacements are another integral constituent of the novels. As an individual or as member of a group each character undertakes a series of journeys sometimes even simultaneously and becomes a journey within a journey. These individual and collective journeys become the warp and woof and create the pattern of the novel. The novel is like the quilt all types of patches in different colours intersperse. They co-exist and have diminutive or no value except in isolation. Sense of security and identity in collective existence thus becomes a repetitive theme in Mistry's novels. This is the way to experience some balance for



sometimes at least, till a new set of social religious or political events shake it, or shatter it.

## Chapter Five

### Summation

Indian English Fictional sense has become complex and thematically rich. The writers settled abroad are the ones who divide their time between Indian and abroad have contributed much for developing the sub-genre of English literature. The diasporic writers in particular interweaves the Indian and the global that makes the emergence of cultural mix at a mass level in the times impacted by globalization and unprecedented growth in the fields of Indian English Fictional scene has become complex and thematically riches. The writers settled abroad who divide their time between India and abroad have contributed much for developments in one part of the world have immediate and wider impact in different parts of the world. The writings of Rohinton Mistry provide an inside view of the problem faced by the displaced people in their adopted homes. The fictional works become more significant for giving expression to cross-cultured encounter from a difference perspective.

Rohinton Mistry has been greatly influenced by his religious, social and cultural views. Though, he is settled in Canada, his upbringing in Mumbai is reflected in all his writings. The writings are about the distinct Mumbai culture, particularly the Parsi way of life. Mistry's work seeks to evolve a vision that involves both community centred existence of the Parsis and their involvement with the wider national frame work. Mistry's novels are concerned with the experience of the Parsi in India. Mistry re-narrates the history of his community and country as it has been in the Post-Independence era. Major themes such as the Parsi way of life, the city dwellers and even politics of India. His novels *Tales from Firozsha Bang* (1987), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance*

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(1995) and *Family Matters* (2002) deals with Caste and Communal Violence. His books portray diverse facts of Indian socio-economic life as well as Parsi customs and religion of Zoroastrian life. A history in a way depicts consciousness of anxieties and aspirations, perils and problems of existence of individual, communal and national issues. Many of his novels are markedly "Indo-nostalgic". Politics is an important vein to the main action of all the three novels of Rohinton Mistry. The preoccupation moves increasingly closer to contemporary times as Mistry talks first. *Such a Long Journey*, the Bangladeshi war with Pakistan, secondly Mrs. Indira Gandhi's declaration of a State of Emergency which affects the livelihood of the tailors in *A Fine Balance* and finally in *Family Matters*, the impact Hindu fundamentalist.

Rohinton Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* (1995), won the second Annual Giller Prize in 1995 and in 1996, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. The novel was selected for Oprah's Book Club in November 2001 and sold hundreds of additional copies throughout North America as a result. In 1996, the novel won the Commonwealth Writers Prize and *A Fine Balance* revolves around the State of Emergency declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Congress party in 1975 as in the first novel. The problems of the nation as a whole trickle down to overpower those least able to deal with them.

The novel focuses on four marginalized characters. Dina, a Parsi woman who tries to maintain her financial independence from her family. Maneck, a Parsi student sent to the city by his parents to study engineering against his own indications and Ishvar, Omprakash were the two untouchable Hindu leather worker cum-tailors who try to escape the caste system by moving to the city. Hardship brings this unlikely group together under Dina's roof, and the same hardship eventually tears them apart. The



homelessness of Ishvar and Omprakash in the city makes them victims of the central government's plans for a city beautification project recognized by people of the middle class such as Nusswan Shroff and Mrs. Gupta, the manager of *Au Revoir Exports*. People who have absolutely no idea of the misery of the absolute poor, the dispossessed and the disempowered. Unlike these two, Dina Dalal becomes martyr and servant to her brother's family, and is left find for herself.

Dina's relationship with the two tailors is at first one of distrust and tyranny as she forces them to work long hours without knowing that they go without food. Dina forbids Maneck, a nice Parsi boy from socializing with them. But the barriers gradually disappear as they all get to know each other. The bond between the four becomes stronger after their horrific experiences at the construction plant. Dina Dalal allows the tailors to sleep on the terrace of her tiny flat. But this promise of happiness is soon to be destroyed.

*A Fine Balance* aims to explore the narration of the nation from the perspective of gender and power relations in the Indian nation during a period known as the Emergency. The novel analyzes the political implications of the Emergency, and the consequences of Partition on the life of the Indian nation as narrated by Mistry in his novel, *A Fine Balance*. Mistry, by using historical facts, presents us with the events that happened in the postcolonial India in 1947 particularly the state of the Emergency under the reign of the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. After the colonial period, the Indian society undergoes changes which are highly significant in the nation-building process. The two major events in the Post-Independence period of Indian history are the partition of India in 1947 and the Emergency between the years 1975 and 1977.

Mistry explores the political implication on the lives of the Indian nation. His characters include the marginalized members of Indian society such as the lower castes, Parsis, Muslims, Sikhs and the poor who were often neglected by the leaders of the state. In Mistry's representation, the image of India is depicted in terms of the hardships caused by the sinister happenings of the Emergency which suspended the democratic rights of the nation.

The novel *A Fine Balance*, justifies a closer study of the cultural politics and their assessment of the alliances between national and state politics. Mistry comes from minority communities in the Indian subcontinent, who is a member of the Parsi community. As members of marginal religious groups, they may have a lesser investment in the caste system, which to the caste stratification. Mistry's Parsi characters reject in principle social hierarchy based upon caste. They subscribe to the reiteration of similar hierarchies under different auspices. He had explored conjunctions between oppressed femininity, in which women cross the barrier of pollution motivated by compassion or desire. Social hierarchy is signified through a series of tropes, which identify the subjection of women in the novel. The novel shows appointment with History as a deterministic and unassailable force that confirms received patterns of ascendancy. The historical events reiterate the same power structure in Mistry's works. To understand how the cultural politics that History has enshrined reproduces itself in the specific-performances of history and fiction in the novel.

Mistry as a writer of the Parsi diaspora in India, presents a wider canvas of the nation in his second novel, *A Fine Balance*, which interweaves the life of the subaltern, the marginalized and the poor into the narrative of the nation. There are four main



characters who come from different social backgrounds where they exemplify the marginalized voices of the Indian nation whose lives are disputed and shaped by the Emergency. Dina, a Parsi widow, lives in a small flat in Bombay and that the other characters merge into her life because of the economic forces. Ishvar and Omprakash came from their village to the city to find jobs as tailors. They belong to the Chamaar caste, who are untouchables, and as a result of their oppression by the upper-castes, they are sent to learn tailoring in the town to change their situation. In fact, what brings them to the town and then to the city is economic dynamism. Maneck Kohlah comes from a mountain village from Northern India to Bombay in order to get an education due to his father's failure in business. They all come to Dina's flat and a bond of friendship, a sense of family creates among them.

In this novel *A Fine Balance*, narratives of the four protagonists of the novel interconnect in Dina's flat from where the nation reconnects itself "as one soul" despite the discordance created by the Emergency. The economic, social and political situation of the nation brings them together into a family. Besides, their gender roles are burned and Dina is treated like an equal companion. Unfortunately, the misuses and abuses of the State of the Emergency distort their balance which is reflected as their life is ruined by a sequence of events. Under the sterilization program run by the government, Omprakash is castrated and Ishvar is amputated. As a result, Dina loses her business and flat, and she is forced depend on her brother, Nusswan. Maneck commits suicide at the end of the novel. D' Cruz observes: "The political chaos of the Emergency intervenes like an unconditional and irrational force to frustrate the personal quests". (D' Cruz 58)



The castration of Omprakash, however, is symbolic because the whole movement of the plot of the novel revolves around deprivation, and confiscation of the characters' existence by the hegemonic narrative and discourse of power. Hence, the situation grants him a decentred position of less than a human being and less than a normal citizen. In fact, it is not only Omprakash who is humiliated but the whole Indian nation is involved in this ambivalent positioning during the Emergency by the hegemonic discourse of power and nationalism.

Mistry never mentions Mrs. Gandhi's name in the novel, but he makes clear references to the period. The fact that a woman is a Prime Minister is highly significant for the gender politics of the nation. Under Dina's rule, the sterilization program by the Emergency mostly targeted men. The novel, focuses on the situation of women in the nation-building process and their gender role are ambition. They often symbolize the collective unity, honour of specific national and ethnic projects, like going to war. On the other hand, however, they are often excluded from the collective of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position. As Mistry depicts in the novel, women are the objects of manipulation and subordination by the patriarchal culture. In fact, their gender role reduces them in society but the Emergency adds insult to injury. In this context, the female characters in Mistry's novel contribute to one's understanding of gender politics in the nation.

The ambivalence of nation and gender relationship lies in the fact that the nation is property of men, a male-gendered identity but the discourse of power relates nation to the motherland which is a female gendered identity. The nationalistic discourse feminizes the nation as Motherland to show that it needs protection. This discourse testifies to the

fact that "women are figured as the biological and cultural reproduction of the nation and as "pure" and "modest", and men defend the national image and protect the nation's territory, women's "purity" and "modesty" and the "moral code" (*Ian* 10). On the other hand, the statement accentuates patriotism which is related to the state not to the nation. The roots of "nationalism was the politics of an urban elite that presumed itself entitled negotiate with the British and speak on behalf of the country's villages" (125). So, Nationalism as a policy to unite the country should speak on behalf of minority groups residing in villages where most of India's populations live.

Through the suspension of its democratic rights, the Indian nation was reduced by the infamous Emergency to being mere entertains. Mistry in his depiction of the Indian nation, disseminates the history of the nation under the disguise of the sterilization program which targeted to stand against justice, solidarity, individuality and democratic rights. He represents nation and gender from the perspective of the subaltern to show the influence of politics on the life of the nation. The State of Emergency in the process of feminization defenders the nation to assert its power.

Rohinton Mistry's novels point to the fact that further critical scope of his novels is quite enormous. Mistry is still an explorable author whose works can be researched on various avenues. To Sum, Rohinton Mistry has made a great contribution to Indian fiction in addressing the issues and experiences of the Indian Parsi. The subject of his writing is the Parsi enclave in India. Through its depiction of Parsi community and its culture, his fiction undergoes a process of redefining the liminalities of nationhood, and pushing the boundaries in the representation of nation. By placing his narrative perspective within the Parsi community, he has attempted to reimagine the whole nation

from a new perspective, that of the multi-faceted, multi-cultural subaltern within the nation state. In fact, he tries to represent the nation and his community. His works exhibit the changing roles of the Parsis in the multiple histories of the nation. In fact, he seeks to redefine the roles of the Parsis in the context of Indian nation.

Mistry seems to suggest that compassion and a sense of humanism are essential to reject a politics that seeks only to denigrate, corrupt and destroy the minority communities like the Parsis, treating them as the 'other' through its unchanging fundamentalism and intolerant religious hegemony over the minorities. Mistry has made a voice forth of his concerns for the Parsi community that remains harassed and isolated from the mainstream, remaining resilient, adaptable and unfailingly human.



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By

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**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**THOOTHUKUDI**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled **The Ultimate Totalitarian Nightmare in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts is my original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

OCTOBER 2018

THOOTHUKUDI

Vinobini Sampprasitta Abila B.  
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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **The Ultimate Totalitarian Nightmare in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*** submitted to St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature is a work done by Vinonbini Samprasitta Abila.B during the year 2018-2019, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.



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## PREFACE

English writer and composer Anthony Burgess is best known for his disturbing dystopian novels. *A Clockwork Orange* is a frightening fable about good and evil, and the meaning of human freedom. Its impact on literary, musical and visual culture has been extensive. The novel satirizes the extreme political systems that are based on opposing models of the perfectibility or incorrigibility of humanity. Set in a dismal dystopia, it is the first-person account of a juvenile delinquent who undergoes state-sponsored psychological rehabilitation for his aberrant behaviour. The book is partially written in a Russian-influenced Jargon called "Nadsat", which takes its name from the Russian suffix equivalent to '-teen' in English

The project entitled, **The Ultimate Totalitarian Nightmare in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*** examines the British youth culture of the 1950s and 1960s through a terrifying projection of them by means of one of the vicious fifteen-year-old droogs, Alex who takes over after dark in an ultimate totalitarian government and his subsequent capture, imprisonment and the application of "Technology of Social Behaviour" in the name of redemption.

The first chapter **Introduction** throws light on the biographical details of Anthony Burgess with reference to the general aspects of his works and his predominant place in British Literature.

The second chapter **Violence as a Gorgeous Symphony** highlights the consequences of youth culture tumbled down with pop music, milk bars, drugs and the Teddy Boy violence called, "The Great British Teddy Boy".

The third chapter **Dystopian Theme** deals with the operant conditioning of criminals with the exciting new idea, of "Technology of Social Behaviour" to solve the societal problems and the subsequent use of such technology.

The fourth chapter **Ethical Values** highlights the ethical implications of behaviorism in the world.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the important aspects dealt in the preceding chapters.

The researcher has followed the guidelines prescribed by MLA Handbook Seventh Edition for the preparation of the project.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Anthony Burgess, also called Joseph Kell, was an English novelist, critic, and man of letters. His fictional explorations of modern dilemmas combine wit, moral earnestness, and a note of the bizarre. Although Burgess was predominantly a comic writer, his dystopian satire *A Clockwork Orange* remains his best-known novel. The novel is written in a teenage jargon of Burgess's invention, combining elements from British and American slang, Russian, and other sources. It examines society's unsuccessful attempt to psychologically "rehabilitate" an incurably violent juvenile delinquent.

The anti-Romantic, anti-Victorian attitudes that provided an impetus to the modern movement in poetry had an equally energizing effect on fiction. The early decades of the century were years of experimental pioneering which led to a redefinition of the novel form. In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the novel has been a public instrument focusing on what was significant to society as whole. The early decades of the century were years of experimental pioneering which led to a redefinition of the novel form. The quest for ways of recreating the novel was also a response to the pressures of the times and arose out of a conviction that the old method of novel writing

The disappearance of all coherence in the early decades of the century due to social and political movements and upheavals was further compounded by the impact of the First World War. Twentieth century increased attachment to religion most immediately characterized literature after World War II. This was particularly perceptible in authors who had already established themselves before the war. W. H.

Auden turned from Marxist politics to Christian commitment, expressed in poems that attractively combine classical form with vernacular relaxedness. Christian belief suffused the verse plays of T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. While Graham Greene continued powerful merging of thriller plots with studies of moral and psychological ambiguity that he had developed through the 1930's, his roman Catholicism appeared especially large in novels such as *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951). Evelyn Waugh's *Brides head Revisited* (1945) and his *Sword of Honor* trilogy (1965); (published separately as *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961)) venerate roman Catholicism as the repository of values seen as under threat from the advance of democracy. Less-traditional spiritual solace was found in eastern mysticism by Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood and by Robert graves, who maintained and impressive output of extended, graceful lyric poetry behind which lay the creed he expressed in *The White Goddess* (1948), a matriarchal mythology revering the female principle.

What characteristically differentiates the twentieth century novel from its predecessors is the stress on the loneliness of the individual as a necessary condition of man. The demands f a new epoch and the fresh thinking on the condition of man caused writers to reject the old, deliberate way of telling a story. The exciting innovations following the direction of thought set by the new philosophy ensured that the modern novel in the first phase between 1910 and 1945 reached an unprecedented level of achievement. The new terms in which the old concepts of plot, character and narration were expressed shattered forever the conventional idea of the novel as just a story.

In contrast to the interest in the hidden realities of "the deep hearts heart's core" evinced by James and Conrad, a concern with the world of external reality,



distinguishes the writings of Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells. Wells justly remembered for his pioneering role in science fiction but his fictionalization of observed reality in novels like *Kipps*, *Tono Bungay* and *The History of Mr. Polly* provides the appropriate setting for heartwarming social comedies which combine humour with a mild criticism of social injustice.

The two most innovatory novelists to begin their careers soon after World War II were also religious believers - William Golding and Muriel Spark. In novels of poetic compactness, they frequently return to the notion of original sin-the idea that, in Golding's words, "man produces evil as a bee produces honey." Concentrating on small communities, Spark and Golding transfigure them into miniatures. Allegory and symbol set wide resonances quivering, so that short books make large statements. In Golding's first novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), schoolboys cast away on a Pacific island during a nuclear war re-enact humanity's fall from grace as their relationships degenerate from innocent friendship to totalitarian butchery. In Spark's satiric comedy, similar assumptions and techniques are obvious. Her best-known novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), for example, makes events in a 1930s Edinburgh classroom replicate in miniature the rise of fascism in Europe. In form and atmosphere, *Lord of the Flies* has affinities with George Orwell's examinations of totalitarian nightmare, the fable *Animal Farm* (1945) and the novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949).

The stylized novels of Henry Green, such as *Concluding* (1948) and *Nothing* (1950), also seem to be precursors of the terse, compressed fiction that Spark and Golding brought to such distinction. This kind of fiction, it was argued by Iris Murdoch, a philosopher as well as a novelist, ran antiliberal risks in its preference for allegory, pattern, and symbol over the social capaciousness and



*the Wolf Gang* (1991) mirrors the sound and rhythm of Mozartian composition, among other things attempting a fictional representation of Symphony No.40

Burgess seems to embody the opposition between nostalgia and nightmare in an exemplary form; he is also a passionate Joycean, and the one English novelist of his generation who has the verbal inventiveness, energy, and self-confidence that one takes for granted in American fiction. In one sense Burgess is a very derivative writer; his early novels, based on his experiences in Malaya, owe a good deal to the Forster of *A Passage to India*, and his anti-utopias are equally indebted to Huxley and Orwell, while the influence of Evelyn Waugh is apparent passim. Nevertheless, his imagination is entirely his own, and in his best work these influences are fused into an original entity; what, above all, characterises his fiction is a unique sense of humour combined with a desolate philosophical despair that makes Burgess one of the few novelists to whose work the much-abused label 'black comedy' can reasonably be applied.

His many other works include *Inside Mr Enderby*, *Enderby Outside*, *The Clockwork Testament*, *Enderby's Dark Lady*, *Tremor of Intent*, *Honey for the Bears*, *Urgent Copy*, *Nothing Like the Sun*, *Man of Nazareth*, the basis of his successful TV script *Jesus of Nazareth*, *Earthly Powers*, which was voted the best foreign novel of 1980 in France, *The End of the World News*, *The Kingdom of the Wicked*, winner of the Prix Europa in Geneva, *The Piano Players*, *Any Old Iron*, *A Mouthful of Air*, *Home to QWERTYUIOP*, an anthology of his reviews and journalism, and two volumes of autobiography, *Little Wilson and Big God*, which was awarded the J. R. Ackerley Prize for 1988, and *You've Had Your Time*. *A Clockwork Orange* was made into a film classic by Stanley Kubrick and it was dramatized by the RSC in 1990. His

novel, published in the spring of 1993, was *A Dead Man in Deptford*, based around the murder of Christopher Marlowe.

Burgess garnered the Commandeur des Arts et des Letters distinction of France and became a Monegasque Commandeur de Marti Culturel. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He took honorary degrees from St Andrews, Birmingham and Manchester universities. *Earthly Powers* was shortlisted for, but failed to win, the 1980 English Booker Prize for fiction.

*The Malayan Trilogy* also published as *The Long Day Wanes*. *A Malayan Trilogy* in the United States, is a comic 'triptych' of novels by Anthony Burgess on the decolonization of Malaya. It is a detailed fictional exploration of the effects of the Malayan Emergency and of Britain's final pull-out from its Southeast Asian territories. There are three volumes in *A Malayan Trilogy*. They are *Time for Tiger* (1956), *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) and *beds in the East* (1959). The trilogy tracks the fortunes of the history teacher Victor Crabbe, his professional difficulties, his marriage problems, and his attempt to do his duty in the war against the insurgents.

*The Right to an Answer* is a darkly comic 1960 novel by Burgess, the first of his repatriate years (1960-1969). One of its themes was the disillusionment of the returning exile. The critic William H. Pritchard described the novel in a 1966 publication as "surely Burgess's most engaging novel".

*Devil of a State* is a 1961 novel by Anthony Burgess based on his experience living and working in Bandar Seri Begawan in the Southeast Asian sultanate of Brunei, on the island of Borneo, in 1958-1959. It is the fourth of what has been called Burgess's "exotic novels".



*A Clockwork Orange* is a dystopian satirical black comedy novel published in 1962. It is set in a near future English Society featuring a subculture of extreme youth violence. The teenage protagonist, Alex, narrates his violent exploits and his experiences with state authority's intent on reforming him. The book is partially written in a Russian-influenced argot called "Nadsat", which takes its name from the Russian suffix that is equivalent to '-teen' in English. According to Burgess, it was a jeu d'esprit written in just three weeks.

*The Wanting Seed* is a dystopian novel by Anthony Burgess, written in 1962. Although the novel addresses many societal issues, the primary subject is overpopulation and its relation to culture. Religion, government, and history are also addressed. A significant portion of the book is a condemnation of war. Burgess once said, "I have spent the last 25 years thinking that *The Wanting Seed* could, in my leisurely old age, be expanded to a length worthy of the subject."

*Inside Mr Enderby* is the first volume of the Enderby series, a quartet of comic novels by Anthony Burgess. The book was first published in 1963 in London by William Heinemann under the pseudonym Joseph Kell. The series began with the publication in 1963 of *Inside Mr. Enderby*; continued in 1968 with *Enderby Outside* and 1974 with *The Clockwork Testament, or Enderby's End*, and concluded after a ten-year break in 1984 with *Enderby's Dark Lady, or No End to Enderby*.

*The Eve of Saint Venus* is a novella, or as author Anthony Burgess put it, "opusculum", on the theme of marriage. It was first published in 1964. A new edition of the book, which Burgess described as a "tribute to matrimony", was dedicated to the Prince and Princess of Wales, and published in 1981, the year of their marriage. The Prince and Princess separated in 1992, and were divorced in 1996.



*Nothing Like the Sun* is a fictional biography of William Shakespeare by Anthony Burgess first published in 1964. The novel concerns alleged relationships of Shakespeare from his perspective, including one with the notorious Elizabethan prostitute, Lucy Negro. Burgess recounted in his Foreword added to later editions that the novel was a project of his for many years, but the process of writing accelerated so that publishing would coincide with the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's birth, on April 23, 1964. Though often disregarded by reviewers, Burgess explained in the Foreword that the novel does have a frame story in which a professor of a Malaysian college named "Mr. Burgess" delivers his final lecture on the life of Shakespeare before returning to the United Kingdom while progressively becoming more drunk on rice wine and gradually less inhibited as the lecture progresses. The "lecture" begins with "Mr. Burgess" reading Sonnet 147, to which he will eventually reference as proof of Shakespeare contracting syphilis, proposing that his Dark Lady's name is spelled in acrostic in the poem, the letters F T M H being a Latinization of the Arabic name "Fatimah", meaning "destiny". The novel also includes a plot of Shakespeare becoming cuckolded by his younger brother Richard, who had stayed in Stratford, a thesis Burgess first encountered in literature in the Scylla and Charybdis episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The novel's title refers to the first line of Sonnet 130: "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." Burgess uses a style which owes something to both Elizabethan English and Joycean wordplay.

*Tremor of Intent: An Eschatological Spy Novel* by Anthony Burgess, is an English espionage novel was published in 1966. Burgess conceived it as a reaction both to the heavy-handed and humourless spy fiction of John le Carré, and to Ian Fleming's James Bond, a character Burgess thought an imperialist relic. The subtitle "An Eschatological Spy Novel" refers to Burgess's idea of the Cold War as a hostile

symbiosis, an "ultimate conflict" for which Good and Evil are inadequate terms. In Burgess's view the Soviet bloc and the West formed a yin and yang-type duoverse. In *You've Had Your Time*, the second volume of his autobiography, he confesses that the title of the novel occurred to him one hungover morning when his hand began shaking and his wife said, "That is tremor of intent." The novel has confused some readers and critics because it straddles the dichotomies between serious fiction and comic fiction, and between popular genre storytelling and metaphysical philosophy. The subtitle "An Eschatological Spy Novel" appears on the dust cover of the first American edition, but does not appear on the title page of the novel. The British first edition, published by William Heinemann, does not include the subtitle on the dust cover or the title page.

*Earthly Powers* is a panoramic saga of the 20th century by Anthony Burgess first published in 1980. It begins with the "outrageously provocative" first sentence: "It was the afternoon of my eighty-first birthday, and I was in bed with my catamite when Ali announced that the archbishop had come to see me. On one level it is a parody of a "blockbuster" novel, with the 81-year-old hero, Kenneth Toomey (allegedly loosely based on British author W. Somerset Maugham), telling the story of his life in 82 chapters. It summed up the literary, social and moral history of the century with comic richness as well as encyclopaedia knowingness, according to Malcolm Bradbury. The novel appeared on the shortlist for the Booker Prize in the year of its publication but lost out to William Golding's *Rites of Passage*. In an October 2006 poll in *The Observer*, it was named joint third for the best work of British.

*The End of the World News* is a 1982 novel by Anthony Burgess. Presented without chapter breaks, the plot weaves together three storylines. One follows Leon



Trotsky on a journey to New York City shortly before the Russian Revolution of 1917. This story is written as the libretto of an Off-Broadway musical. A second tale covers the life and career of Sigmund Freud and includes portrayals of Havelock Ellis and Krafft-Ebing. The third part is set in the future, shortly before the impact of a rogue, extrasolar planet with the Earth. Because of the latter story line, it is considered a work of fantastic fiction.

*Any Old Iron* is a fantasy novel by British writer Anthony Burgess, published in 1989. The novel revolves on a modern update of the Excalibur legend. Among the historical figures fictionalised in the novel are Chaim Weizmann, A. J. Cronin, Winston Churchill, Eamon de Valera, Anthony Eden and Joseph Stalin. The action centres on the progress of a Welsh-Jewish family through the tumultuous first half of the 20th century and culminates in the birth of Israel.

*Home to QWERTYUIOP* was published in 1986 in the United States as *But Do Blondes Prefer Gentlemen?* — is a collection of essays by Anthony Burgess. Book reviews form the bulk of the content, though there are various essays and an interview Burgess conducted with Graham Greene. Large tracts deal with the written word, especially a variety of linguistic reviews and papers, as well as a great many dictionaries, phrase books, books of quotations. Burgess was widely known as a polyglot, and frequently includes linguistic anecdotes etymology and so forth, from English, Russian, Greek, Latin and Malay. A section of the book deals with the movie business, including histories of a variety of film stars and early Hollywood producers, about many of whom Burgess had strong opinions.

Another section is devoted to reviews of biographies of authors, including Dickens, Beckett and Hemingway. The book finishes with reviews of literature by novelists including H. G. Wells and Kingsley Amis. The book displays the tremendous amount



of knowledge Burgess had accumulated by the age of 66, especially concerning geography, travel, cultures, languages and literature. The title of the collection is a reference to the urban legend of a Hungarian man named Qwerty Yuiop, who supposedly invented the modern English keyboard layout and left his name lightly hidden in it.

*A Clockwork Orange* is Anthony Burgess's most famous Dystopian novel and its impact on literary, musical and visual culture has been extensive. The novel is concerned with the conflict between the individual and the state, the punishment of young criminals, and the possibility or otherwise of redemption. It was the source of some unhappiness to Anthony Burgess that, of the fifty or more works which he published during his lifetime, *A Clockwork Orange* is the most famous.

The title of the novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, derived from, a memorable and richly suggestive one adapted from a piece of slang: 'as queer as a clockwork orange' is a cockney expression meaning very queer indeed and Burgess could see its potential even before he had a story to go with it. There is the fearful symmetry of the book's tripartite structure. There is the vision of a near-future society, as frighteningly persuasive, however small canvas, as the dystopias of George Orwell or Aldous Huxley: a youth culture in revolt, a corrupt police force, a government unable to govern.

The government's reform programme is called the Ludovico Method, a play on Beethoven's first name. *A Clockwork Orange* finds room for many literary jokes and allusions of this kind. The masks Alex and his gang wear to disguise themselves when committing crimes are those of Disraeli, Henry VIII, Elvis Presley and Shelley. A singer heard in the milk-bar stereo is Johnny Zhivago. There is a Kinsley Avenue and a Priestly place, roads which allow Burgess to pay tribute to British

contemporaries of his- as do Marghanitaboulevard, Wilson sway, and Boothby Avenue.

Burgess even works himself into the story in the form of F. Alexander, the man whose wife is raped. Alexander's name links him with Alex, whom he later meets again, by which time his wife has died, as a result, it seems, of the rape. He is also the author of a book called *A Clockwork Orange*. This book doesn't sound like Burgess's – it is, says Alex, 'written in a very bezoomy like style, full of Ah and Oh and that Cal', and bears more resemblance to Colin Wilson's existentialist polemic *The Outsider*- but when Alexander speaks up for individual choice and freedom it is in words very like his author's. the effect here is of an endlessly receding mirror. There is another image in the mirror, too. In 1944, while Burgess was serving in Gibraltar, his first wife, Lynne, was beaten, kicked and robbed in London by a gang of four GI deserters. She suffered a miscarriage as a result, and Burgess once speculated, in an interview, that her poor health and early death may have had something to do with the attack. 'CLOCK-WORK ORANGE GANG KILLED MY WIFE – AUTHOR' ran the headline in the London Evening News. The fictionalizing of this episode in *A Clockwork Orange* was a catharsis for Burgess, and, as he once said, 'an act of charity' to his wife's assailants, since he chooses to write it as if from their point of view rather than their victim's.



## Chapter Two

### Violence as a Gorgeous Symphony

Burgess parodies his contemporary British youth culture of the 1950s and 1960s through a terrifying projection of them in *A Clockwork Orange*. A vicious fifteen-year-old droogs is the central character of this 1963 classic. Burgess in his nightmare vision of the future, where the criminals take over after dark, the story is told by the central character, Alex, who talks in a brutal invented slang that brilliantly renders his and his friends' social pathology. It is a frightening fable about good and evil, and the meaning of human freedom. It is a classic of dystopian fiction which examines the current societal problems and predicts how they might become greater dangers in the future. Written with the intention of investigating the popular idea among psychologists at that time, of using psychological conditioning to eradicate crime, the novel continues to startle and inspire generations of new readers.

A new youth culture was beginning to appear, with pop music, milk bars, drugs and the Teddy Boy violence called, The Great British Teddy Boy. Burgess gave attention to the surfacing of this new world that had not existed in his own youth, and he anticipated the arrival of Mods and Rockers. At the time of Burgess's writing, operant conditioning was an exciting new idea, that "Technology of Social Behaviour" had been used to solve many societal problems, including warfare, crime, and overpopulation. In his view, a person who has been conditioned to behave a certain way loses the God-given right to free will and becomes something like a machine, something as unnatural as clockwork orange. Burgess' through *A Clockwork Orange* gave a warning against the use of such technology by presenting Alex and his troops as a gang with a tribal fashion sense and a fondness for motiveless violence.



The novel is concerned with the conflict between the individual and the state, the punishment of young criminals, and the possibility of redemption. In the novel, set sometime in the future, people would live in constant fear of violent crime, locked into their homes watching the blue screen of the government-approved world cast. Burgess focuses most on the element "state film," the government-produced cinema, and briefly describes his disdain for television and its numbing effect on the masses. He condemns the Government which owns all property; every able-bodied citizen who is forced to work; jails which are brutal and expanding; and the government which controls the media. This societal susceptibility to sadism demonstrates a cynical view that individuals are predisposed towards barbarism. The Government uses mass media as propaganda and to sedate the populace, and Burgess draws analogies between mass media and Ludovico's technique. Both exercise a form of mind control over their helpless victims, either outright or subliminally forced as with the populace to watch Government -produced films that make them obey the state again.

Alex is a dangerous and ruthless criminal, and the idea of treating him so that he will no longer be able to commit crime seems like a reasonable one. It is true that after his treatment, the formerly monstrous Alex appears "good" to the outward eye but inwardly he becomes incapable of choosing his own moral option. His so called "goodness" is hollow and insincere. He is like a robot or wind-up toy who functions as the State desires. Now powerless to defend himself, he becomes vulnerable to being victimized and exploited by others, including the government. No matter how wicked a criminal may be, even more sinister is a government that no one can take away the free will of its citizens. Burgess through Alex gives the message that thought

or behaviour control, even when used ostensibly for a good purpose like eradicating crime is fundamentally wrong, and dangerous.

Burgess narrates the story of *A Clockwork Orange* with its prophetic mixture of drugs, music, fashion and juvenile violence to develop a countercultural impact on literary, musical and visual culture. Alex, a barbarous criminal commits a possible crime that is known to mankind. After he was betrayed by his gang, he was put into prison for 14 years. Finding out that he could be set free from prison early, he is given a new treatment that psychologically conditions criminals and makes them incapable to violence. With the success of this treatment Alex was released from prison as a defenseless man who is incapable of making wrong choices and standing up for himself. Due to this, his previous friends or victims take revenge on him, leading him to attempt suicide. His unsuccessful attempt of suicide and the uproar of the media, the government changes Alex back to his old self. At the end of the novel Alex realizes his need to live a normal life.

The linguistic originality of the book, and the moral questions it raises, are as relevant now as they ever were. Burgess parodies his contemporary British youth culture in lieu of conventional youth slang, the teens have adapted in the 1950s and 1960s. It is an almost entirely new language influenced by Russian, which balances the socialistic world. *A Clockwork Orange* sees the oppression of socialism, above Nadsat, a language that the youth used more. Adults don't understand the language, which highlights the emotional and ideological distance between the generations. Burgess invented the language for the novel and called it Nadsat, which is the Russian suffix for 'teen'. The youth more generally used Nadsat, which overflows with energy. For instance, the words such as "appypollyloggy" for "apology", "eggiweg" for "egg", and "moloko" for "milk" sound as if issued from the mouths of babes. In contrast, the



adults speak the language of law and order. The doctors speak in medical language. Only the youth's language transcends these linguistic categories and barriers.

In Nadsat, high and low forms of language coexist. Street words, baby talk, and rhyming slang accompany grammar and syntax that sometimes follow formal Shakespearean English. The most dominant linguistic influences on Nadsat besides English are Russian and Slavic. Before Burgess wrote his novel, he spent time in Soviet Russia, where he witnessed youth gangs running wild, just like the ones he had seen in England. He decided to create a language that incorporated both English and Russian, the two most powerful political languages in the world at that time. The youths who use the language don't care about the politics that divided the world at the time that Burgess wrote his novel.

The phrase, "What's it going to be then, eh" is a recurring motif in *A Clockwork Orange*. Each of the book's three parts opens with these same seven words, and Burgess often repeats this question within chapters, filtered through different characters' voices. Although the phrase's exact wording is preserved in each appearance, its meaning is never exactly the same. The question is deployed in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from Alex's restlessness anticipation of a night of violence, to the prison chaplain's chastising of an unruly group of inmates, to addressing the reader's uncertainty about Alex's fate in prison. By showing that an identical linguistic phrase can serve so many different purposes, Burgess reinforces his theme of the versatility and power of language and speech contexts, which is a central focus of the book.

Burgess was a great lover of classical music and a composer. He sought to integrate more completely musical techniques into literature, and his main



contribution to musical literature in *A Clockwork Orange*, aside from Alex's great love for Beethoven and other composers, is the symmetrical arrangement of chapters. The three parts of the novel each contain seven chapters, and the descending chapters of the third part usually reverse the ascending chapters of the first part. The effect of these reversals is highly musical and discordant, and follows a symphonic rise and fall. For instance, Alex delights in a beautiful opera piece about suicide in the Korova Milk bar in part one, chapter three, while he is tortured by classical music in part three, chapter five that he tries to commit suicide. Burgess uses other musical techniques, such as peppering the novel with verbal motifs i.e. "what is going to be then, eh?", to complement his musical, Nadsat-based prose. The philosophical point of the symmetry is to underscore the change Ludovico's Technique, comprising the middle part Two, has wrought in Alex's life. He goes from being the victimizer to victim, willful agent of evil to deterministic subject of good.

Burgess challenges the traditional idea about music's fundamental function, and here music taps into what is most dominant in Alex's nature: violence. Throughout the novel classical music moves Alex to a version of ecstasy, and he imagines hangings, bombings, and other acts of violence. However, music remains valuable as a signal of his freedom of choice. Alex lives violently, brutally, and without compassion, but what initially sets him apart from adults is that he has so much more vitality. While his weary mother trudges off to her factory job, Alex sleeps all day, then wakes up to take drug, and perpetrates more violence—only because it is exciting. He also listens to music, which for him is an ecstatic and liberating experience that expresses both the physical and the rebel in him. When doctors condition Alex's body to become ill from his own violent impulses, they simultaneously condition his body to reject music. Music is an unintentional result of

conditioning, it is symbolically significant. Music connects to Alex's drives and desires, and stripping him of his ability to enjoy it, is equivalent to stripping him of his humanity.

Burgess' chilling novel was partly inspired by the seaside fights of the mods and rockers of the early 1960s. It follows the exploits of a gang of particularly violent teenagers-the Droogs-through the eyes of one member, the Beethoven-loving, 15-year-old Alex. Their drug-fuelled celebrations and acts of robbery, rape, and torture are detailed with enjoyment in Burgess' made-up slang, Nadsat. When an attempted robbery goes wrong and Alex commits murder, he is caught and sentenced to 14 years in prison. Unable to cope up with the life behind bars, Alex volunteers to undergo an experimental programme called the Ludovico Technique, unaware that it is a brutal form of aversion therapy that will brainwash him into being physically sick if he even thinks about committing a crime.

Ludovico technique is an iconic technique where Alex's eyes are held open and he is forced to watch violent films for extended period of time as his eyes are held open with specula. He is pumped with nausea, paralysis and fear inducing drugs at the same time, with the objective being the development of a nauseous association when experiencing or thinking about violence, causing an aversion. It is essentially a mechanical, Pavlovian construct that associate's stimuli with negative reinforcement instead of positive.

The doctors who administer gruesome films to Alex seem thrilled by the violence. When the old scholar from the beginning of the book reencounters Alex, he and his cohort give the defenseless youngster a vicious beating. When Alex implores the police to rescue him from his assailants, the "millicents" instead beat him and rape



him with impunity. Even F. Alexander, the principled crusader for criminal rights, is overcome with blood lust when he discovers that Alex was responsible for the fatal rape of his wife.

In any society, individuals forfeit some of their autonomy in exchange for protection against a world that is too dangerous to navigate alone. The universe of *A Clockwork Orange* is no exception. Throughout the novel, Alex is forced to reconcile his arrogant individualism with his inability to live completely self-sufficiently. Droogs band together to protect themselves from other gangs, and Alex's selfish individualism alienates his own droogs to catastrophic results. Prisoner's band together to protect themselves, and when Alex is singled out from his cellmates he is forced to undergo Reclamation Treatment. Society as a whole forces its members to balance moral considerations with their own self-interest-the prison chaplain, for example, initially does not speak out against Reclamation because he worries about his career. And of course, the tension between absolute self-assertion and socialized life is at the centre of Alex's maturation as a human being.

After his release from prison, Alex finds that a side-effect of the treatment means that he can no longer bear to listen to Beethoven, which, together with the deprivation of his free will, leads him to attempt suicide by throwing himself out of a window. He is unsuccessful, the experience renders Alex unable to perform any violent act, or engage in any sexual activity. He is also conditioned against Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> symphony, used as the backdrop of the violent imagery, and formerly his favourite piece of music. Here lies the main ethical question of the book: whether it is better for a man to decide to be bad than to be forced to be good, and whether forcibly suppressing Alex's free will is acceptable or not. Additionally, does the state



have the right to use violence against some individuals in order to protect the majority?

The freedom of individuals to make choices becomes problematic when those choices undermine the safety and stability of society, and in *A Clockwork Orange*, the state is willing to protect society by taking away freedom of choice and replacing it with prescribed good behaviour. In Alex's world, both the unfettered power of the individual and the unfettered power of the state prove dangerous. Alex steals, rapes, and murders merely because it feels good, but when his violent impulses are taken away, the result is equally as dangerous, simply because freedom of choice, the fundamental element of humanity, has been taken away.

The minister of the interior stands on one side of Alex, supporting an ordered society, and the prison chaplain and Mr. Alexander stands on the other, supporting freedom of choice even with the negative consequence that go with it. The minister of the interior argues that government should have the power to bring law and order to the streets, and the questions of individual liberty are significant compared with the values of safety and order. He cites the suffering Alex causes his victims as evidence for his argument. Mr. Alexander, on the other hand, argues for the protection of individual liberty, but he weakens his own argument with his willingness to sacrifice Alex's life and liberty in order to further his party's agenda. The prison chaplain seems sincere in his defenses of the right of individuals to make moral choices, equating the ability to choose with being human, but with being human, his willful ignorance of Alex's true destructive potential makes him seem almost naive. Throughout the novel Burgess forces the readers to weigh the values and dangers of both individual liberty and state control.

The primary and most controversial idea in *A Clockwork Orange* is voiced repeatedly by F. Alexander and the prison chaplain: without choice and free will, man is no longer human but a "clockwork orange", a deterministic machine. Free will, Burgess and his liberal mouthpieces argue, is necessary to maintain humanity, both individually and communally; revolutions are built on free will, as Alex points out.

Burgess complicates matters more by suggesting that Alex's inclination toward evil is somewhat mechanistic as well. While Alex does gain satisfaction from committing violent acts, he does so in as reflexive a manner as he avoids violence after Ludovico's Technique. Burgess subscribes to the Biblical idea that man has Original Sin and that condition implies a lack of choice. We see the mark of Original Sin everywhere in *A Clockwork Orange*, notably in the form of the Government- the doctors and other state officials have just as much sadism and evil intentions as Alex's gang of thugs. Nevertheless, a person with Original Sin retains freer will than a subject of Ludovico's Technique, and Burgess also believes in redemption; Alex can choose goodness in Part Three, Chapter 7 on his own, once he has matured beyond the impetuosity of youth.

This form of deterministic thinking ignores the Christian idea, embraced particularly by Catholicism Burgess was a lapsed Catholic, that Adam and Eve's fall has blemished man with Original Sin. Just as there exists an impulse to do good, there exists an equally powerful impulse to do bad that cannot be reasoned away; as Alex says, "what I do I do because I like to do". He does not blame his evil-doing on the environment; rather, evil-doing like his created London's quasi-apocalyptic environment.



However, free will becomes problematic in other ways when it is extended to the community. Alex's unhindered free will violates what philosopher John Stuart Mill termed the "harm principle", that any action is permissible so long as it does not harm anyone else. Burgess presents unequivocal evidence that Alex's immoral acts do harm others, so the questions for *A Clockwork Orange* is whether it is better to allow harmful free will, or safely curb it. Burgess still maintains that people should permit harmful free will, since goodness is authentic only if it is chosen; if goodness is forced, as is done to Alex through Ludovico's Technique, it is inhuman and mechanical.

Another of the work's stylistic trademarks is its frequent and graphic depiction of violence. In the first chapters of the book, Alex savagely beats a doddering scholar, rapes women and girls, and murders an elderly shut-in. But although Alex stands out as a merciless sadist in the earlier part of the work, later events reveal that other members of his society are also capable of similar behaviour. Some characters, like Dim and Billy boy or Dr. Brodsky, find ways to bend rules and manifest their inappropriate impulses while still remaining within the realm of the socially acceptable.

For Alex, this tension is finally resolved at the end of the novel, when, as a somewhat older person, he concludes that the benefits of socialized lives are in fact worth the constraints it imposes on individual autonomy. He understands that to live peacefully and settle down with a family he must in turn subscribe some aspects of socialized life that he might previously have considered oppressive. Now that he has matured, however, Alex recognizes that the benefits of social assimilation far outweigh the costs.



But poor old Dim kept looking up at the stars and planets and the Luna with his rot wide open like a kid who'd never viddied any such things before, and he said: "What's on them, I wonder. What would be up there on things like that?" I nudged him hard, saying: "Come, gloopy bastard as thou art. Think thou not on them. There'll be life like down here most likely, with some getting knifed and others doing the knifing. And now, with the nochy still melody, let us be on our way, O my brothers". (15-16)

Alex matures in the end of the novel and one symbolic of maturity is that he also overcomes the Oedipal tensions in the novel: F. Alexander temporarily becomes Alex's father figure, and since Alex raped and killed F. Alexander's wife, it is as though he had sex with his own mother. In the end of the novel, Alex decides he wants to have his own son, a sign that he is through with his oedipal fascination with violence, breasts, and milk.

The novel ends pessimistically when we learn that F. Alexander and his group have been shut down and that the increasingly Totalitarian Government will win re-election. However, Alex's newfound desire to join the middle-class suggests that perhaps his generation will come to understand how oppressive the Government is and overthrows it.

An examination of Burgess's typescript reveals that he was always uncertain about how the novel should end. At the end of Part 3, Chapter 6, he wrote: 'Should we end here? An optional "epilogue" follows'. The final chapter of the book is redemptive, with Alex growing up and renouncing violence of his own accord. The

penultimate chapter, which is used to conclude the American edition of the book and Kubrick's film, has Alex returning to his life of crime with evident pleasure.

Actually, a lot of the source material in *A Clockwork Orange* dates to the 40s, not the 50s or 60s. Burgess said that the novel's inspiration was his pregnant first wife Lynne's beating by a gang of drunken American servicemen stationed in England during the war. She subsequently miscarried. Burgess attributed his arresting title to various possible origins; he often claimed that he had overheard the phrase "as queer as a clockwork orange" in a London pub in 1945. 'CLOCK-WORK ORANGE GANG KILLED MY WIFE – AUTHOR' ran the headline in the London Evening News. The fictionalizing of this episode in *A Clockwork Orange* was a release for Burgess, and, as he once said, 'as an act of charity' to his wife's assailants, since he chooses to write it as if from their point of view rather than their victim's. Burgess works himself into the story in the form of F. Alexander, the man whose wife is raped.

By producing such a grisly work, Burgess forces self-aware readers to assess their own barbaric tendencies and come to terms with the way in which society does and does not sanction these impulses. Important, too, is that the act of reading and enjoying *A Clockwork Orange* itself represents a relishing of violence.

Society seems somewhat arbitrarily to punish these impulses in some people, while allowing others to manifest such tendencies with punishment and to withhold for itself the right to exert violence whenever it wishes. Society believes that the environment is somehow responsible for the immorality of London's youth. But Burgess proves that with proper paternal and academic discipline, youth will comfort themselves more appropriately and not by police force.



## Chapter Three

### Dystopian Theme in *A Clockwork Orange*.

Anthony Burgess's, *A Clockwork Orange* became a pop cultural touchstone, with its' wildly inventive dystopia. It's through the work Burgess remains best-known for, although he considered it an outlier in his prodigious career. Its themes- rooted in his Catholic upbringing - of free will, sin and the wrong-headedness of forced reform, run throughout his life and work. Burgess began writing the novel in early 1961. He returned to England from colonial teaching posts in Malaya and Brunei in 1959 and noticed that England had changed while he had been abroad. A new youth culture was beginning to appear, with pop music, milk bars, drugs and Teddy Boy violence.

Set in a dismal dystopia, *A Clockwork Orange* is the first-person account of a juvenile delinquent who undergoes state-sponsored psychological rehabilitation for his aberrant behaviour. The novel satirizes extreme political systems that are based on opposing models of the perfectibility or incorrigibility of humanity. Written in a futuristic slang vocabulary invented by Burgess, in part by adaptation of Russian words, it was his most original and best-known work. This violence, so brutally rendered in the novel, could have been inspired by an incident from Burgess's own experience. He claimed that the kernel for Alex's brutal behaviour lays in an attack suffered by his first wife Llewela (Lynne) Jones. During the wartime blackout of 1944 London, Lynne was beaten up and robbed by a gang of American soldiers. A similar attack happens in the novel, when a writer's wife is beaten and raped by Alex and his droogs.

Despite this, much of Burgess's inspiration for the novel lay in literature. The dystopian writings of George Orwell (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), Diana and Meir Gillon (*The Unsleep*) and Yevgeny Zamyatin (*We*) all



provide literary context for *A Clockwork Orange*. Burgess wrote of his fascination with 'the ultimate totalitarian nightmare' as well as 'the dream of liberalism going mad'. This reading of other novels, coupled with Burgess's response to the determinism of psychologists such as B.F. Skinner (who denied the importance of culture, environment and free will) provide the background to the book described by *Time* magazine as 'that rare thing in English letters: a philosophical novel'.

A working holiday in Leningrad in 1961, for which Burgess learned basic Russian, provided *A Clockwork Orange* with its most striking feature: 'Nadsat' - Russian for 'teen' - an invented slang in which the narrator tells his story of *Crime and Punishment*. As well as Russian words, Nadsat uses rhyming slang, both real and invented, thieves' slang, and a few Romany words and phrases. According to Burgess, the Nadsat language 'was meant to turn *A Clockwork Orange* into a brainwashing primer.

Dystopia comes from the ancient Greek word 'dys' and 'topia' which means bad place'. Dystopian fiction is a genre of fiction that is used to explore social and political issues in a futuristic, imaginative world in which oppressive societal control are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopian literature is a genre of fictional writing used to explore social and political structures in 'a dark, nightmare world.' The term dystopia is defined as a society characterized by poverty, squalor or oppression and the theme is most commonly used in science fiction and speculative fiction genres. The most popular definition of dystopian literature is that it is anti-Utopian. The genre challenges utopia's fundamental assumption of human perfectibility, arguing humanity's inherent flaws negate the possibility of constructing perfect societies. Dystopian literature is written to frighten the reader. Works of dystopian literature must walk a fine line between evoking the sensation of fear and inducing a sense of futility. Dystopia makes judgement about a current trend, societal

norm, or political system. A dystopia is a utopia turned on its head, a nightmarish society wracked by violent crime, disease, or controlled by a totalitarian government.

With a twisted view of portraying good and evil *A Clockwork Orange* creates an exceptional dystopian fiction. The corruption of society in Burgess is displayed through totalitarian government, the dystopian protagonist resistance towards oppressive societal control, the use of technology, the importance of free will and attraction of evil.

The first element that is found in *A Clockwork Orange* is a totalitarianism society "tonight was what they called a worldcast, meaning that the same programme was beingviddied by everybody" (15). The society that is displayed in the novel shows people live under absolute government control where everything from jobs, and what is viewed on television is being controlled.

Another element of dystopian fiction that is present in *A Clockwork Orange* is the protagonist's resistance towards the oppressive societal control. Alex, the dystopian protagonist in this novel has a rebellious approach to the rules that are laid out by the government. Now being harmless due to the treatment, Alex feels like a "poor Malchick who was govoreeting about his sufferings and how the government had sapped his will and how it was up to all lewdies do not let such a rotten and evil government rule them again" (119). Being angered about this treatment he meets with a man who he abused during his violent days, and teams up with him to expose the state's crimes. In the novel, the "character who must oppose this government are naturally those who are extreme libertarians" (Rabinovitz 2). Even though Alex has violent nature towards government is the only way, who made him suffer most.

Usually a situation in dystopian novels "the dystopian enterprise depends upon the totality of one relentless and overpowering experience social oppression, governmental



oppression and natural/scenic oppression bears down upon a specific character. Nevertheless, those negative characteristics, in turn, oppresses the individual's or a particular character's fighting against that system in the novel" (Lewis 3). In relation to Alex, usually in dystopian novel characters tend to have an oppressive nature towards the government, they would try different ways on fighting against the government for them to feel the character's pain and suffering.

The next element of dystopian fiction that is shown in *A Clockwork Orange* is the use of technological advancements by the government to psychologically turn criminals into law abiding citizens. While in prison, Alex was selected as a test subject to a new experiment called Ludovico's technique which brainwashes its victims Alex into ridding themselves from violence. In the novel, it is described as "behavioral conditioning technique that will help to store up state power" (Sumner 49). Alex conducted this experiment in exchange for an early release from jail. According to the doctors, "what is happening to Alex is now what should happen to any normal healthy human organism contemplating the actions of the forces of evil, the workings of the principle of destruction. Alex being made sane, he is being made healthy". The government in this novel tries to manipulate certain individuals so that they can control and mold how society should be. This generally is displayed a lot in dystopian fiction novels in fact, "technology in dystopian fiction merely an instrument in the hands of the state's totalitarian rulers, used by them to enforce a set of values extrinsic to the technology itself, or is it, rather, an autonomous force that determines the values and thus shapes the society in its own image".

Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* is a dangerous and ruthless criminal, and the idea of treating him so that he is no longer able to commit crime seems like a reasonable one. At the time of Burgess's writing, operant conditioning was an exciting new idea, presented



by Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner as a "technology of behaviour" that could be used to solve many societal problems, including warfare, crime and over population. Burgess's novel warns against the use of such technology. In his view, a person who has been conditioned to behave a certain way loses the God-given right to free will and becomes something like a machine, something as unnatural as *A Clockwork Orange*.

It is true that after his treatment, the formerly monstrous Alex appears "good" to the outward eye. However, since he is not capable of moral choice, his "goodness" is hollow and insincere. He is like a robot or wind-up toy who functions as the state desires. Now powerless to defend himself, he becomes vulnerable to being victimized and exploited by others, including the government. No matter how wicked a criminal may be, even more sinister is a government that can take away the free will of its citizens. The message of the book is that thought or behaviour control, even when used ostensibly for a good purpose is fundamentally wrong, and dangerous.

Readers of *A Clockwork Orange* may be sickened by Alex's description of red red krovvy (blood) flowing "beautiful," by his unrepentant attraction to the depraved. However, the depiction of demonic teens in Kubrick's movie version of the novel spawned many copycat crimes, proving that there really is something about ultraviolence that appeals to people. Burgess explained it as follows "unfortunately there is so much original sin in us all that we find evil rather attractive. To devastate is easier and more spectacular than to create. We like to have pants scared off us by visions of cosmic destruction." *A Clockwork Orange* presents the attraction to evil as a natural part of being human. Alex does evil simply because he likes to. To him, violence is as gorgeous as a symphony. While his violence cannot be condoned, perhaps the point is that violence and evil must be recognized as a natural part of humanity-just as natural good. It will never be

eradicated, as long as free will exists, simply because deep down, humans find it attractive.

Perhaps the most disturbing social phenomenon in the late twentieth century of England was the rise of soccer thugs. Gangs of men of varying ages would wreak havoc on English cities during football season, creating drunken, violent spectacles. *A Clockwork Orange* differs from many dystopian novels in that the protagonist embodies the dystopian nature of society and is not presented merely as a victim of it.

In his article "Utopia and Anti-Utopia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century," Krishna Kumar discusses how literary treatments of utopians have evolved over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kumar identifies totalitarian movements such as Nazism and Fascism as the inspiration for many dystopian literary works. One of the premiere dystopian novels, George Orwell's *1984* features a common backdrop in dystopian literature an oppressive, omniscient government forcing conformity on its citizens. The people themselves are often portrayed as victims, or at worst, sycophants. However, in the dystopia shown in *A Clockwork Orange*, it is everyday people who create the dystopia. Alex and his band of droogs are relatively autonomous. While loosely constrained by his family and the perverted social worker, Alex is free to brutally beat beggars, rob houses, and rape the elderly. It is his actions and the actions of those around him that make the society in the novel.

The central paradox of *A Clockwork Orange* is that the Ludovico treatment has ramifications just as sinister as the problem it was deployed to remedy – ultraviolence. After Alex is cured of his violent tendencies, he is able to function in society without raping or assaulting others, yet he is presented as a soulless shell of his former self. While the Alex of the first half of the novel was surely evil, he was also undeniably human. In



"The Politics of Utopia," Frederic Jameson explores the relationship between political theory and various conceptions of Utopia. Jameson identifies "banishing evil" as the way various thinkers including More and Plato have framed Utopia.

The characters' varied responses to and uses of art in *A Clockwork Orange* suggest that art has within it the potential for both good and evil. Art both expresses and channels human impulses, and it can therefore enhance or deaden life. It can bring people closer to reality or it can distance them from it. Most human relationships, including sexual ones, revolve around the question of control: who will control and who will be controlled. The minister of the interior sees Alex as a guinea pig for his experiment in law and order. Mr. Alexander sees Alex as an instrument he can use to bring down the minister of the interior and his party. Alex himself wields power not only over the victims of his crimes but also over his other gang members. Even the economy turns people into objects to be controlled or used. Alex's mother goes to work in a factory, presumably functioning as just one piece of the machine. In this depersonalized world of users and used, sex ceases to be an act of intimacy and instead becomes an act of brutality and an assertion of power.

*A Clockwork Orange* challenges traditional ideas about music's fundamental function, and here music taps into what is most dominant in Alex's nature: violence. Alex lives violently, brutally, and without compassion, but what initially sets him apart from adults is that he has so much more vitality. While his weary mother trudges off to her factory job, Alex sleeps all day, then wakes up to have sex, take drugs, and perpetrate more violence-only because he wants to and because it is exciting. He also listens to music, which for him is an ecstatic and liberating experience that expresses both the brute and the rebel in him. When the doctors condition Alex's body to become ill from his own violent impulses, they simultaneously condition his body to reject music. Though this is



an unintentional result of the conditioning, it is symbolically significant. Music connects to Alex's drives and desires, and stripping him of his ability to enjoy it is equivalent to stripping him of his humanity.

In *A Clockwork Orange*, characters view and use art in many different ways, creating a complex and conflicted picture of how art and real life interact. Alex uses music, film, and art to express and understand his life. During the two weeks that doctors show Alex reel upon reel of sex and violence, he is amazed that the real world looks even more real on a television screen. He and other characters also use art to detach from life and to cut themselves off from other people. When Alex beats Mr. Alexander and prepares to rape his wife, he sings "Singin' in the Rain" and dances like Gene Kelly did in the musical. By making the violent act into a song and dance, Alex distances himself from the brutality and from his victims' suffering. The cat lady, whom Alex kills, expresses her sexuality through her statues and the paintings on her walls, but when Alex touches her statue of a penis, she screams at him not to touch it because it's a work of art. Through art, she makes sexuality an object not to be touched, rather than an act that is all about touching.

Alex uses a slang spoken only by young people. Adults don't understand the language, which highlights the emotional and ideological distance between the generations. In Nadsat, high and low forms of language coexist. Street words, baby talk, and rhyming slang accompany grammar and syntax that sometimes follow formal Shakespearean English. The most dominant linguistic influences on Nadsat besides English are Russian and Slavic. Before Burgess wrote his novel, he spent time in Soviet Russia, where he witnessed youth gangs running wild, just like the ones he'd seen in England. He decided to create a language that incorporated both English and Russian, the two most powerful political languages in the world at that time. The fact that Alex, a

completely apolitical youth, speaks it also makes it a language of rebellion. The youths who use the language don't care about the politics that divided the world at the time that Burgess wrote his novel.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony punctuates the heights and depths of emotion Alex experiences, just as Beethoven hoped the symphony would express the heights and depths of human experience. The symphony literally drives Alex to his lowest point, when he jumps from Mr. Alexander's window trying to escape the sickness Ludovico's Technique has made him feel whenever he hears it. In turn, he knows he is cured of the effects of Ludovico's Technique when the minister of the interior plays the symphony for him and he no longer feels sick. Unlike Beethoven's vision, for Alex, the glory of the final movement represents simply his own personal glory.

While More and Plato saw private property as the root of all evil, the obvious root of all evil in *A Clockwork Orange* is violence, specifically the way young men delight in carrying out acts of extreme violence. The government's use of the Ludovico Treatment may seem utopian on face as the technicians successfully condition Alex to feel repulsed by violence, therefore allowing him to function in society. The newly rehabilitated Alex is more reminiscent of familiar dystopian works, in which the government creates uniform, conforming citizens. The reader is thus put in an uncomfortable position as we find ourselves feeling disturbed when Alex acts peacefully instead of being his usual violent self. The juxtaposition between the human, evil Alex and the reformed Alex especially clear when the reformed Alex encounters the drunken beggar whom he and his friends beat and elderly couple whose house Alex and his friends pillage before raping the wife.

Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> symphony plays an important role in the novel, appearing at various points in different forms. Alex is transfixed by that particular work of music. The



reader experiences a rare moment of pity for Alex when he reveals that after undergoing the Ludovico Treatment, he is unable to listen to Beethoven without feeling sick-he was conditioned not only to hate violence, but also to hate Beethoven. The symphony features lyrics adapted from Friedrich Schiller imagines a heaven realized. The poem describes a Cristian utopia in which brotherhood, love, forgiveness and joy abound.

Like the soccer thugs that would become a fixture in English society in the years following the release of *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex and the other droogs find themselves detached from the society in which they live. The reformed Alex, who is incapable of committing acts of violence, reinforces this particularly bleak view of human nature by presenting the peaceful Alex as devoid of the humanity present in the earlier, violent Alex.

What Burgess was trying to say was that it is better to be bad of one's own free will than to be good through scientific brain washing. When Alex has the power of choice, he chooses only violence. But, as his love of music shows, there are other areas of choice. In the British edition of the book-though not in the American, nor in the film- there is an epilogue that shows Alex growing up, learning distaste for his old way of life, thinking of love as more than a mode of violence, even foreseeing himself as a husband and father. . . Given the right positive inducements-to which one respond not rationally but through one's conditioned instincts-he/she shall all become better citizens, submissive to a state that has the good of the community at heart. We must, so the argument goes, not fear conditioning. We need to be conditioned in order to save the environment and the race. But it must be conditioning of the right sort. The way has always been open; at last he chooses to take it. He has been a sour orange; now he is filling with something like decent human sweetness.



## Chapter Four

### Ethical values

Burgess creates Ludovico's Technique in the fictional world of *A Clockwork Orange* in order to interrogate the ethical implications of behaviorism in his own world. Burgess goes on to explore the kind of spiritual life that might, in fact, lead to damnation. This novel, which is, Burgess most brilliant and blackest achievement, is set in a shabby metropolis at some unspecified time in the future, where teenage gangs habitually terrorize the inhabitants. The story is told by one of them in the first person, in a superb piece of mimetic writing. This narrator is morally but not mentally stunted; he writes an alert witty narrative in a special kind of slang that incorporates a large number of words of Russian origin; one is never told the social or political events that underlie this linguistic intrusion, but it is possible that Burgess is trying to comment, in a mirror-image fashion, on the current dominance of Americanisms in colloquial English speech.

And what, brothers, I had to escape into sleep from then was the horrible and wrong feeling that it was better to get the hit than give it. If that veck had stayed I might even have like presented the other cheek (90).

Burgess also refutes the argument that ethical goodness has any relationship to aesthetic goodness. Alex comments on a newspaper article that proposes moralizing London's youth through the fine arts. Alex has refined taste in classical music, especially when compared to his pop song-loving teenage counterparts, but the gorgeous, sophisticated music only riles him up for violence and sex. When music becomes associated with immorality for Alex through Ludovico's Technique, Burgess demonstrates the utter malleability of aesthetic and ethics.

The superiority of evildoers to neutrals is perhaps a reason for Alex's redemption in the original version of *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex is firmly committed to evil: he enjoys a sadistic fantasy in which he helps to crucify Christ, and, in a discussion of goodness, calls himself a patron of "the other shop" (81,40). The neutrals are the scientists who destroy Alex's freedom of choice by administering the Ludovico technique. Dr. Brodsky, for example, cares little about the ethical questions raised by the treatment: "We are not concerned with motive, with the higher ethics. We are concerned only with cutting down crime" (128). Alex one would think he had little right to throw stones calls Brodsky and his fellow scientists "an evil lot of bastards", and complains that their use of Beethoven's music in the treatment is "a filthy unforgivable sin" (117,115). Burgess apparently feels that science lends itself easily to the neutrality he detests; though Alex is often beaten in the novel and once driven to attempt suicide, this is the only place where he moralizes about his oppressors.

There are a number of reasons why Burgess considers the scientists who rob a man of his capacity for ethical morally inferior to the criminals they treat. In Christian terms, Alex as a sinner must be permitted to enhance the possibilities for his salvation by choosing well over evil. A man rendered incapable of moral choice can never attain salvation; but a sinner may choose to repent and win redemption.

In *A Clockwork Orange*, the principles of behaviorism are used to support Ludovico's Technique, a new, cutting-edge technology that allows the State to convert otherwise-incorrigible criminals into reliably law-abiding citizens. In Burgess's own time, behavioral science was a relatively new field, one whose experts considered themselves highly sensitive to issues of ethics. Many behaviorists saw their profession as a chance to



redesign society based on universally benevolent principles, but Burgess had a distinctly less idealistic attitude toward the nascent discipline. Reform may qualify as an admirable sentiment, but in these chapters, we witness as behaviorism is used to justify the hijacking of Alex's free will and the reduction of his moral choices to a set of predictable outcomes.

In an interview, Burgess called writer George Steiner "the biggest bloody fool who ever lived" for being "so foolish as to wonder why Nazis, why a concentration camp officer could listen to Schubert and at the same time send Jews to the blast." There are, Burgess says, "two different kinds of good": the aesthetic and the ethical, and, as he demonstrates with the character of Alex in Part One, these two kinds of goodness don't necessarily correlate with one another. Alex loves doing cruel things to people, and Alex loves listening to Beethoven. Though this situation may instinctually feel counterintuitive to us, there's no logical reason why these two predilections should conflict with one another. On the contrary, as we see, Alex thinks they go together perfectly—he likes very much to lie on his bed, listening to Mozart and fantasizing about beating and raping people. It makes sense, then, that Alex would give Dim a great big punch in the mouth for being disrespectful toward a beloved opera. This incident, which sows the seeds of a rebellion against autocratic Alex, does again illustrate Alex's strange fastidiousness: he's violent, but he abhors vulgarity.

Burgess explored the duality of goodness vs. evil in Chapter 5 which explores the opposing forces of intuition and intellect. Alex decides to attack George when he catches a bit of Beethoven pouring out of a passing car. At that point, he says: "I viddied [saw] that thinking is for the gloopy [stupid] ones and that the oomny [smart] ones use like inspiration and what Bog [God] sends." Alex's implication that only stupid people rely on intellect may, at first, seem like a paradoxical conclusion. However, Deltoid and his colleagues have spent years studying and analyzing teen violence, to no avail. Given their



academic and scientific worldview, they can't comprehend the ways in which non-intellectual impulses, like desire and pleasure, can affect human behaviour. Just as Alex's commitment to violence serves to resist the oppressive force of the State, his commitment to intuition and instinct mocks the State's dedication to rational, logical thought. In Alex's eyes, intuition becomes the smart choice because it affirms the individual free will. Alex claims that he received his inspiration from God, which echoes his earlier claim that criminal behavior—because it affirms the validity of free will—affirms the power of God. The debate over intuition vs. intellect continues throughout the book, becoming especially significant when the State uses Alex's intuitive urges against him in order to prevent him from committing violence.

Alex casually compares himself to Jesus Christ. He says, "Mum gave me a tired little smeck, to the fruit of my womb my only son, sort of." Referring to himself as the fruit of his mother's womb, Alex makes a direct allusion to the Hail Mary prayer. In the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ is believed to have died in order to atone for the sins of others. Though Alex's fate won't be nearly as terrible—a fact he suggests by the offhanded "sort of" he tacks to the end of the allusion—he will, in fact, suffer a terrible fate for the redemption of others like him. The Christ reference not only serves as an important instance of foreshadowing, but also serves as a structural motif for the entire novella. Just as Jesus dies, is buried, and is resurrected on the third day, the novel's three-part structure charts Alex's fall, his interment in prison, and finally, the return to his former self.

Alex feels justified in praising the virtues of intuition over intellect, in these two chapters he experiences firsthand how intuition can fail him. Alex's trouble with the cat-lady and his subsequent arrest are caused by his youthful impetuosity. Whereas earlier chapters exhibit, in one critic's words, "the naked beauty of an uninhibited psyche," these

chapters reveal the self-endangering potential of a cocksure punk, ruled by his immature urges. Juvenility proves both a benefit and a disadvantage for Alex. In the past, being underage has allowed Alex to avoid serious legal trouble, but now it seems to have led him toward punishment and incarceration.

Before Alex leaves Staja 84F, he's brought to see the chaplain, who is very drunk. The chaplain laments Alex's fate and wants Alex to know that he had no part in the decision. The chaplain goes on to question the ethics of a program that removes the desire to hurt and offend others. Alex, who knows nothing about his treatment other than it lasts two weeks, doesn't quite understand the chaplain and finds the notion that he is "to be made into a good boy" laughable.

The next day, the guards bring Alex across the prison yard to a new, hospital-like building. There he meets Dr. Branom, whom he instantly likes. Alex can't believe his good luck as he's given new clothes, slippers, his own room, magazines, and a cigarette with his lunch. When Branom describes the treatment, Alex feels even luckier. All Alex has to do is watch a series of "special films." Branom also mentions a needle after every meal, which Alex assumes will contain a nutritional supplement.

The first of these shots comes that same day, before his afternoon film session. Alex notices that he feels weak going into the session, but attributes his fatigue to the malnourishment he suffered in prison, and is confident that the hypodermic vitamin supplement will set him right.

Not only does the application of aversion theory rid Alex of his attraction to violence, it also has the unintended consequence of eliminating his ability to enjoy music. Ludovico's Technique may be an effective instrument, but it also seems to be a blunt and problematic one. Ludovico's Technique doesn't make any distinction between Alex's



aesthetic pleasure and its own so-called moral concern: since music, like violence, prompts an instinctual response in Alex, it too becomes susceptible. In behaviorism, this unintended transference is known a "false positive," the incidental stimulation of a secondary sense that shares some of the same faculties with the impulse being tested. Brodsky is aware of the phenomenon, but the consequences don't faze him. Ludovico's Technique is predicated on the notion that the criminal impulse can be isolated and eliminated, but Brodsky himself admits that human psychology remains more complicated and that the removal of violent tendencies runs the risk of extinguishing other, more benign inclinations. Brodsky explains that all of Alex's violent impulses are accompanied by intense physical distress, and therefore, any ill will on Alex's part ends up forcing him to exhibit good behavior.

Brodsky's guarantee that Alex will become a "true Christian" not only provides insight into the State's position on religion, it also sheds some light on Alex's status as a martyr. At other points in the book, Alex has toyed with the notion of playing Christ. Each time, however, he's always been willing to forsake his identification with Jesus for the chance to nail Jesus to the cross. Now, however, Alex has become a true—though unwilling—martyr. What may have begun as a form of self-flattery has now been wrested from his control, as the State forcibly imposes martyrdom upon Alex. After going through Ludovico's Technique, the doctors say that Alex is now "ready to turn the other cheek," an explicit reference to Christ's Sermon on the Mount (found in the Bible's Book of Matthew.) Alex has become a Christian martyr, in the sense that he now exhibits a commitment to humility and acceptance, as well as a political martyr, sacrificed to the cause of social stability. We'll see in forthcoming chapters that these two things are very much the same.



Thus, while Brodsky claims that Alex, who remained unreformed after two years of imprisonment, has now become a "true Christian" because he not only does good, but also *intends* to do good, the chaplain rightly points out that Brodsky's conclusion rests on a crucial technicality. Alex's incapacity to reason morally invalidates his intention to do good deeds, since he has ceased to be capable of making his own choices. The State has replaced Alex's autonomy with its own decision-making. Alex imagines that his consciousness has been infiltrated by an unseen police force that patrols his impulses. When he sees the beautiful young woman, his first thought is to rape her, until "skorry as a shot came the sickness, like a like detective that had been watching around a corner." The introduction of an internalized moral police force isn't just a subtlety, as Brodsky calls it. Choice, not behavior, is the essential factor in a Christian moral framework. Thus, Brodsky's claim that Alex has become a "true Christian" represents nothing more than a serviceable party line, designed to bolster the State's image. The State emerges as an institution that seeks to perpetuate itself by appropriating competing individualist philosophies and forms of self-organization, and imprisoning the remaining dissidents. As it has already done with youth violence, so it does with Christianity. Alex unwittingly alludes to this phenomenon when, in Chapter 6, he describes Ludovico's Treatment with the final line of the "Our Father" prayer: "so that I would be sick always for ever and ever amen."

Alex begins to truly understand the significance of his "reclamation" when he refers to himself as a clockwork orange. We may recall that this phrase was the title of the manuscript Alex saw in Part One, in the little cottage where the droogs encountered the writer and his wife. The manuscript was a polemic against the imposition of "laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation." Those are precisely the kind of laws that have been levied against Alex, who has been technologically conditioned to behave in a

given way, in response to a certain set of stimuli. He is at once organic and mechanized, aware of his conditioning but powerless to change it. During Brodsky's two demonstrations, Alex begins to recognize the futility of behaving in anything other than a socially acceptable manner. Alex has become harmless to society, but he is now also helpless in the face of it. This situation doesn't bode well for Alex's impending release, if the audience's coarse and gleeful behavior is any indication of the world outside prison.

In terms of Burgess's cyclical system, Alex in his youth may be predestined to do evil; but with maturity comes freedom, when his determined phase is transformed into its polar opposite. The Ludovico treatment, invented by ethical neutrals, forces its victims to become neutral; it removes them the cyclical process and prevents their transition into a mature phase. The neutralizing treatment turns Alex into a perpetual victim whose weakness provokes violence in those who encounter him. But when Alex's ability to choose is restored he finally grows tired of violence, and reforms.

Burgess's moral point of view, however, still seems ambiguous. The neutrals, both in *Tremor of Intent* and in *A Clockwork Orange*, are given rather small roles; and in his zeal to condemn the neutrals Burgess seems to be condoning criminal behaviour. It was perhaps with this problem in mind that Burgess made the following comment in an article entitled, appropriately enough, "The Manicheans":

The novelist's need to be adventurous, to pose problems, to shock into attention, is bound to lead him to ground perilous for the faithful. And there is something in the novelist's vocation which predisposes him to a kind of a Manichaeism. What the religious novelist often seems to be saying is that evil is a kind of good, since it is an aspect of Ultimate



Reality; though what he is really saying is that evil is more interesting to write about than good.

It may be that Burgess is speaking of himself; like Milton writing *Paradise Lost*, Burgess may occasionally be distracted by aesthetically interesting wickedness. But this hardly explains Hillier's enthusiasm for devil-worship, an endorsement which perhaps makes him unique among even the most liberal of modern clergymen.

Burgess has indicated that he feels these conflicts within himself just as he observes them in others. One might make a comparison between Burgess the young composer and Alex the music-lover, or between Burgess the middle-aged novelist and the writer F. Alexander. Like Anthony Burgess, F. Alexander has written a book called *A Clockwork Orange*; and Alex, who tells his own story, is in a sense also the author of a book with the same title. Burgess is hinting that he detects within his own personality elements of both characters, that they form a yin-yang opposition which he sees within himself. But if he indicts himself, Burgess also invites the reader to examine his own capacity for playing the roles of both Alex and F. Alexander.

At the end of the novel, Alex states his opinion in more overtly religious terms; as long as God keeps spinning the earth around, young men will continue to act immorally. By equating Original Sin with God's control over the earth, Burgess points out that Original Sin implies a certain lack of free will; we do not choose to act immorally, it has chosen us. However, Alex's maturation in Part Three, Chapter 7 provides hope for Christian redemption: over time, we can erase the effects of Original Sin by choosing goodness.



## Chapter Five

### Summation

British literature refers to literature associated with the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands as well as to literature from England, Wales and Scotland prior to the formation of the United Kingdom. By far the largest part of British literature is written in the English language, but there are bodies of written works in Latin, Welsh, Scottish, Gaelic, Scots, Cornish and other languages. Northern Ireland has a literary tradition in English, Ulster Scots and Irish. Irish writers have also played an important part in the development of English-language literature.

Burgess's fiction ranges in technique from Dickensian realism to Orwellian fable and Nabokovian fantasy and in subject from the failure of Empire to the character of the poetic Muse, most of his novels have the dialectic of opposites at their core.

Anthony Burgess isn't Irish, but he could be. He writes with the intonation, and a good deal of the flattery, and the roving eye for earthly detail.... Joyce has been the lion in the modern novelist's path, but Burgess, whom nothing much intimidates, meets him eye to eye: a fellow musician (Burgess was trained as a composer), a linguist, a renegade Catholic, a cultural aristocrat from the back streets and pubs of a hard city. He shares Joyce's true sense of the pith and pitch of the spoken language, his uncommon touch for the common life of a man, a family, a community, that creates a thick social atmosphere in which characters move and breathe, rather than just a background against which they stand. Finally, there are strong affinities in point

of view: a sympathetic attitude toward men, tempered by the Catholic awareness of human presumption, and emerging as comedy.

The exploratory nature of Burgess's novels makes him the most achievement as a writer. Taken together they can be said to constitute consciousness of every man. They may be called a quest for spiritual life. However, Burgess's vision of life in his fiction does not have a fixed, static round off form, it is a developing vision. They evoke the development of his soul. They express the experience of his self. The desires, aspirations and struggles dramatized in his novels are not only his but also of a large section of humanity. Burgess held the view that evil is connected with the free will in his novels.

Burgess, from the beginning of his career as a novelist was plagued by legal difficulties. The second volume of his Malayan trilogy, *The Enemy in the Blanket* published by William Heinemann in 1958, was the subject of a successful claim for libel in the High Court in Singapore. The judgement was overturned on appeal, but Burgess gained a reputation for being troublesome. Matters were not improved when another novel, *The Worm and the Ring*, was also judged to be libellous in 1962. Unsold copies of the book were pulped, and the novel has never been reprinted in its original form.

This was the context in which Burgess became a champion of free expression. When, in the early 1960s, his friend William Burroughs was having trouble finding a British publisher for his scandalous novel *The Naked Lunch*, Burgess wrote a letter to the Times Literary Supplement which was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1964, promoting Burroughs and his work, and another article published in the Manchester Guardian. Among the novel's detractors was Dame Edith Sitwell, who wrote to the TLS, saying:



"I do not wish to spend the rest of my life with my nose nailed to other people's lavatories."

Despite this, much of Burgess's inspiration for the novel lay in literature. The dystopian writings of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World Revisited*, Diana and Meir Gillon's *The Unsleep* and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* all provide literary context for *A Clockwork Orange*. Burgess wrote of his fascination with 'the ultimate totalitarian nightmare' as well as 'the dream of liberalism going mad'.

Many novelists of the twentieth century had found themselves in a position where the word "morality" did not seem to make any sense. Recently, our vision of the world has reduced into binary terms like 'good' or 'bad' because they are simple and give us grounding. The concept of hate helps our understanding of the concept of love; the word 'evil' has no reason to exist unless 'good' is present at the same time. Therefore, the word morality also needs a scale so that we know that one thing is worse or better than another. Thus, to judge morality in human behaviour, we must look at the moral and immoral aspects of mankind and balance them amongst our strengths and weaknesses. Early modernist texts were concerned of human flaws and saw it as a consequence of progress rather than process. Often these seemed to offer hope that a perfect 'utopia' can be established. However, since the mid twentieth century, as humanity lapsed into a rather 'immoral' territory, many writers, artists, poets and musicians began to see human behaviour as a matter of process. Anthony Burgess, George Orwell and Stanley Kubrick are a few examples of 'artists' that brought forward this post-modern thought which offered very little hope for future.



*A Clockwork Orange* is a classic of dystopian fiction that explores the idea, popular among psychologists at that time, of using psychological conditioning to eradicate crime. In the novel, set sometime in the future, people live in constant fear of violent crime, locked into their homes watching the blue screen of the government-approved worldcast. The youth culture is violent, oversexed, and slavishly obsessed with the latest fashion. A sinister method of behaviour control becomes a solution to antisocial behaviour.

Burgess began writing the novel in early 1961. He returned to England from colonial teaching posts in Malaya and Brunei in 1959 and noticed that England had changed while he had been abroad. A new youth culture was beginning to appear, with pop music, milk bars, drugs and Teddy Boy violence. Burgess was interested by this emergence of a world that had not existed in his own youth, and he anticipated the arrival of Mods and Rockers when he presented Alex and his droogs as a gang with a tribal fashion sense and a predilection for motiveless violence. This violence, so brutally rendered in the novel, could have been inspired by an incident from Burgess's own experience. He claimed that the kernel for Alex's brutal behaviour lay in an attack suffered by his first wife Lynne Jones. During the wartime blackout of 1944 London, Lynne was beaten up and robbed by a gang of American soldiers. A similar attack happens in the novel, when a writer's wife is beaten and raped by Alex and his droogs.

A working holiday in Leningrad in 1961, for which Burgess learned basic Russian, provided *A Clockwork Orange* with its most striking feature: 'Nadsat' — Russian for 'teen' — an invented slang in which the narrator tells his story of crime and punishment. As well as Russian words, Nadsat uses rhyming slang both real and invented, thieves' slang, and a few Romany words and phrases. According to Burgess, the Nadsat language 'was meant to turn *A*

*Clockwork Orange* into a brainwashing primer. The Reader should read the book and at the end the reader should find themselves in possession of a minimal Russian vocabulary — without effort but with surprise'. Yet, these exotic sources for the language of the novel obscure an influence closer to home. A 1973 recording of Burgess reading from the novel reveals that the narration is also inspired by the Manchester voices he heard growing up on the streets of the Harpurhey and Moss Side areas of the city.

The title of the novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, derived from, Burgess claimed: 'a phrase which I heard many years ago and so fell in love with, I wanted to use it as the title of the book. But the phrase itself I did not make up. The phrase "as queer as a clockwork orange" is good old East London slang and it didn't seem necessary to explain it. Now, obviously, I have to give it an extra meaning. I've implied an extra dimension. I've implied a junction of the organic, the lively, the sweet — in other words, life, the orange — and the mechanical, the cold, the disciplined. I've brought them together in a kind of oxymoron'. Like many of Burgess's proclamations, this origin of 'clockwork orange' is rather hard to back up. It is not recorded in any dictionaries of London slang, and some linguists believe that the phrase originated in Liverpool. It is apparent that there are no recorded citations of the phrase before the novel was published in 1962, and the only authority for its usage is Burgess himself. It is possible that Burgess is misremembering the genuine Cockney phrase 'All Lombard Street to a china orange', or that he simply made it up.

*A Clockwork Orange* has variously been described as 'a nasty little shocker' in the magazine *Time*, 'an inventive primer in total violence, a savage satire on the distortions of the single and collective minds' in the journal *New York Times*, 'a terrifying and marvellous book' by Roald Dahl and 'a fine farrago of outrageousness' by Kingsley Amis. The novel is sure to live on as a classic of twentieth-century literature.



On publication in 1962, *A Clockwork Orange* sold poorly, with most reviewers baffled by Burgess's linguistic inventiveness, and disturbed by its violence. However, it quickly became an underground hit, and was adapted by Andy Warhol for his Factory film *Vinyl* (1965). It did not reach a global audience, however, until its second film adaptation by Stanley Kubrick. Despite being over half a century old, *A Clockwork Orange* has continued to live on as an important cultural work. After several unofficial stage productions, Burgess wrote his own dramatic adaptation, *A Clockwork Orange: A Play with Music*, which continues to be interpreted by theatrical companies all over the world. In 2012, Burgess's song cycle received its European premiere performance at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester. To mark its fiftieth anniversary, William Heinemann published *A Clockwork Orange: The Restored Edition*, with notes, a glossary and previously unpublished essays and pages from the typescript. The novel has also inspired other artists, from musicians and novelists, and has influenced television and film, from Bart Simpson's Halloween costume to Heath Ledger's portrayal of the Joker in *The Dark Knight*.

There is a well-established epigram in democracies that the morality in a society can be judged by the way it treats its criminals and the less fortunate. If the accused are treated like animals then it reflects the animalism of the accuser. While often most people interpret human behavior as an individual trait or characteristic, when morality is considered, it can be said that human behavior is a consequence of a collective societal condition. In Chapter six, Dr Branom informs Alex [that] "...the process of life, the make-up of the human organism, who can fully understand these miracles..., violence, is a very horrible thing. That's what you're learning now. Your body is learning it". There is a certain degree of power that he asserts by the biblical



reference of science as "miracles" and by relating the 'mind' to the 'body'. It is as if he is trying to twist meanings by suggesting that bodies can learn if they are properly programmed and thus scientific discoveries have enough power to do "miracles" just like God. Thus, Burgess makes his point quite clear. He believes that even though science has been an integral part of philosophy and the arts, in the recent years, it has created an array of seemingly unrelated and supposedly oppositional disciplines. In some cases, we seem to disregard existing ethics and seek to make new ones. Thus, it can be said that the social hypocrisy of the state in the novel has a direct influence on the way that Alex behaves. It forms a completely new argument where the state's immorality as a collective function makes Alex's unethical actions negligible or forgivable. Therefore, despite his immoral acts, we seem to sympathize with him. The scientists in the novel show this clearly as they are dismissive of humanity and turn Alex into 'a clockwork orange', a creature incapable of one thing that makes people human- moral choice.

When the portrayal of morality is considered, a trend emerges- modernist literature tends to offer hope while post-modernist literature offers very little hope. While Anthony Burgess's, *A Clockwork Orange* generally has a post-modern form and structure, there is still a supreme hope which suggests that human behavior has a supposedly higher moral goal making it slightly 'modernist'. This is seen as Alex's immature actions transcend into mature and reasoned decisions. Thus, to say that all post-modern literature is completely pessimistic about human behavior and its immorality is not entirely correct. While literary texts of the mid twentieth century seem to share inter-medium similarities by rejecting the modernist quest for improvement in human behavior, some writers tended to create their own criteria and limitations by which 'good' and 'evil' can be judged. Thus, not all novels, whether

modernist or post-modernist, seem to offer a 'black and white' view. For Burgess, it is moral choice which is above all; if choice is present then human behavior has a definite capability to achieve morality or moral stability. It is the option and the "freedom to choose" that is important. There are no other criteria that need to be met.

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