Salman Rushdie's *Shame* , as a Phantasmagoric Epic

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, as a Phantasmagoric Epic** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Albina Mary. V, 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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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, as a Phantasmagoric Epic** 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 Philosophy in English Literature 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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PREFACE

Ahmed Salman Rushdie is one of the most powerful writers among all the modern writers. He is a living British Indian novelist and essayist. He is remarkably associated with many path-breaking attempts in literature. He has dazzled the literary world with his vivid clarity of thought, lucid narration, humour, fantasy and eloquent expression of his impulsive ideas with a touch of magic realism.

The thesis titled, **Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, as a Phantasmagoric Epic** highlights the history of the new born country, Pakistan in the sub continent with an artistic re-presentation of history through magical realism.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with a short biography of Salman Rushdie, discussing the general characteristics of his novels and the inspiration behind writing the historical novel *Shame*.

The second chapter ***Shame*, as a Phantasmagoric Epic**, highlights the totalitarian powers of anarchy in Pakistan due to partition with the Phantasmagoric style.

The third chapter **Existential Anxiety** analyses how Rushdie uses a set of politico-historical and politico-cultural values as his fictional tenor of his protagonists, and cultivates an interest in the reader of the contemporary issues.

The fourth chapter **Magical Realism** explores how Rushdie uses magical realism as a tool for expressing his satirical views on Pakistan. He artfully reflects upon the real political situation in Pakistan by creating a fictional country, Paccavistan of his own where all the kinds of magic and miracles can easily take place.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the significant features 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

Ahmed Salman Rushdie is one of the most powerful writers among all the modern writers. He is a living British Indian novelist and essayist. He is remarkably associated with many path-breaking attempts in literature. He has dazzled the literary world with his vivid clarity of thought, lucid narration, humour, fantasy and eloquent expression of his impulsive ideas with a touch of magic realism.

Being an innovative writer, Salman Rushdie is also one of the most controversial writers of recent times. He has authored countless number of short stories and novels which continues to catch the interest of both critics and public alike. His ability to combine magical realism with historical fiction is a unique quality which makes him a truly unparalleled writer.

Most of his works are distinct around the Indian subcontinent, as they discuss particular themes like migrations, the East and West and the occurrences happening in between them. As a celebrity he has not only gained international repute and recognition but also acquired an equivalent commercial and critical success. Since then, there has been no looking back for this excellent writer who continues to allure his readers through his various novels, short stories and fictional writings.

As a diasporic writer, Rushdie creates cultural crisis in his fiction. He believes that migration should go ahead with multiculturalism instead of being cut off from roots. He views history, politics and identity of the Indian subcontinent through a migrant's consciousness. When his family migrated to Pakistan, he hesitated to stay there. He often has a nostalgia for Mumbai, his homeland where he has spent his

childhood days. According to Rushdie, the diasporic feeling continues even when a person returns to his own country. He is not sure whether he will be accepted in his own country or not. He says only in memories one can create an imaginary homeland. In fictions, villages and cities of his dream can be connected to his own diasporic experiences. 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 Indian subcontinent after the independence, through his writing.

Rushdie is a proud gifted recipient of several prestigious awards, honorary doctorates, and fellowships, for his substantial contribution to literature. Rushdie's works have influenced an entire generation of authors, those who have helped the Empire writing back in the new British Indian and post-colonial literary canon.

As a Post-Colonial writer, Rushdie's novels examine the historical norms and perspectives, and the constraints of humanity's linear view of time. The main engagements of Post-Colonial literature is not simply an account of history's great conquests instead, it is a discussion and analysis of the effects of colonialism: migration, slavery, oppression, resistance, representation, difference, and responses to dominating discourses. They are challenging because it exposes the exploitation of history for political ends. They deconstruct the definition of nation and national identity and cuts through the coat of social constraints imposed upon the individual.

The pre pillars of Indian Diaspora like R. K. Narayanan, Raja Rao and later novelists like Kamala Markandeya, Anita Dessai and Nayantara Sahgal have captured the spirit of the independent India, which was struggling to break away from the British and tried to capture the traditional values to establish a distinct identity that is

fraught with faith, hope, customs, traditions and rites etc. A host of contemporary Post-Colonial writers like Salman Rushdie, Meena Alexander, Anita Nair and Jumpa Lahiri have invited the process of decolonizing the Colonial English and using it as a medium to express Indian thoughts and sensibilities with a distinctive Indian style.

Arundhati Roy's contribution to social issues and discrimination, Anita Dessai's contribution to multicultural heritage of post-colonialism with a new style of psychological realism and a profound understanding of feminine sensibility and the crusaders of the contemporary and modern era including Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh, Vikram Seth and so on, elucidate the strength of the modern voice of India, with a vibrancy and energy of a gushing artesian along with an unmatched resolve to experiment and explore new avenues in literature

Among the contemporary writers, Rushdie's allegorical novels examine the historical and philosophical issues by means of surreal characters, brooding humour, with an effusive and melodramatic prose style. His treatment of sensitive religious and political subjects made him a controversial figure. Before going into the intricacies of Rushdie's works it would be noteworthy to have a brief glance on his life and his works.

Rushdie is very much shaped by what happened to him in his early years of life. Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay on 19 June, 1947 in a Muslim family. His father, Anis Ahmed Rushdie, who originally belonged to Delhi, was a lawyer, who later became a businessman, and his mother Negin Rushdie, was a school teacher from Aligarh. Rushdie's father had settled in Bombay though he was a Kashmiri. Rushdie, from his early childhood, was exposed to the multiculturalism of Bombay, a fact that occurs in his writings also. Rushdie was educated in an English Mission

School in Bombay and was thus, exposed to the Anglican culture of the newly independent India.

Rushdie's liberal upbringing and exposure to the multiculturalism of Bombay left an ever-lasting impression on his mind. He keeps in touch with Bombay through his characters novel after novel. A majority of his heroes are from Bombay. In an interview with Haffenden, Rushdie talks of his affinity to Bombay and also laments at the decay of multiculturalism and the disappearance of the spirit of tolerance in Bombay.

At the age of 14, in 1961, Rushdie was sent to a boys' school, Rugby, in England. A young child in a foreign land, Rushdie encountered the feeling of being cut off from his native place. The emotional isolation and the racial abuse that he has faced in the foreign land left an unerasable impression in his mind. This background allows Rushdie to the advantage of being brought up on two different levels of awareness. This is seen in the manner of his spontaneous depiction of both India and the West. The emphasis on history in his novels might have been reinforced by his study of history at Cambridge in 1968.

Rushdie's family had moved to Karachi, in Pakistan, in 1969 and Rushdie used to visit them during the holidays. After completing his education Rushdie went to Pakistan to live with his family. However, owing to the rigid political and religious framework of Pakistan, Rushdie was unable to accept Pakistan. Having lived in India and England he found Pakistan hard to adjust in. Rushdie points out to the differences in social framework of the two nations to John Haffenden in an interview. He says:

> India is a society about which not only multitude, but plurality is basic-there are all these different religions and different kinds of people, so you have to

> accept a kind of plural concept...India,if it means anything, means plurality. Although it also had different races, Pakistan feels much more like a singularity, because there is just the one religion and there's much greater homogeneity, both of language and faith. (67)

Rushdie also points to his lack of affection for Pakistan and the repressive nature of Pakistan when he tells,

> I don't like Karachi....Karachi is a city that has almost nourban life, because of the repression in the culture. Very little happens on the street and there is problem with sexual segregation, which makes life odd. You see men holding hands- and that is not because they are homosexual, it has to do with the need for physical contact. I find society in Pakistan very closed,and that closed world is expressed in *Shame*. (31)

In Pakistan, Rushdie, instead of joining his father's business, got involved in television production. He made a televised version of Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*. Rushdie, however, got entangled in a bitter struggle with the authorities on the censoring of the programme that the authorities considered might hurt Islamic sentiments. Frustrated, Rushdie went back to England, much against the wish of his parents.

In 1975 Rushdie published his first book, *Grimus*, a fantasy and science fiction novel that received tepid reviews. Rushdie's second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), a fable about modern India, won him international recognition. *Midnight's Children* is the allegorical depiction of India before and after independence and partition. The book basically deals with India's transition from British colonialism to independence and consequently the partition of British India. Saleem is the principal character and

narrator of the story and the book mentions various actual historical events in the fictional form. The novel reports the experiences of three generations of Sinai family living in Sirinagar, then in Bombay and eventually in Karachi. There are several themes discussed throughout the novel. Some of them are related to the social and the political realities and others are related to the historical and cultural realities of India.

Rushdie received the Booker Prize in 1981 for *Midnight's Children.* Rushdie was knighted in 2007, an honour criticized by the Iranian government and Pakistan's parliament. The honours include the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). In 1993 and 2008 it was awarded the Best of the Bookers. A film adaptation, for which he drafted the screenplay, was released in 2012.

After the grand success of *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie wrote his third novel, *Shame* in 1983. The shapeless construction of Pakistan and consequences of social issues urge him to write the novel *Shame*. It is totally about Pakistan, the other divided part of British India since the partition. It is a mixture of history, politics, satire and allegory combined in one.In the novel *Shame*, he states himself as an emigrant:

> I, too, know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where I live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will. And I have a theory that the resentments we *mohajirs* engender have something to do with our conquest of the force of gravity. (85)

Rushdie has gained a valuable insight into both cultures, because his experience transcends a nationalism which individuals from one single country cannot escape. Rushdie is not tethered by the constraints of one single position; this feeling of literary freedom is exemplified in the following quotation from *Shame* cited by George Landow in his article, "Rushdie on Roots, Rootlessness, Migration, On Being Between": "We (migrants) have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history from memory, from Time" (25).

Perhaps the above quotation provides the reader with an insight into Rushdie's motivations for writing; the act of writing could be one of the only ways to cure this floating feeling, and allow Rushdie to reconnect himself with his roots. The two quotations provide an indication of the kind of historical perspective that Rushdie has implanted in him through a life in two very different cultures. It is this idea of dislocation which is openly explored in *Shame*.

In fact, the novel *Shame* runs like a sequel to *Midnight's Children* in the matter of various aspects like comic, satire, politics, myth and history. In many ways it is like *Midnight's Children*, with the same basic concerns of the author; both are political novels, both deal with the sub-continent's social, political, cultural, religious and economic problems in the same high activeness of its linguistics and narrative craft. Both are magic realist novels. *Shame* won the French literary prize, Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, further cementing Rushdie's place among literature's upper force.

Rushdie has also been very much disturbed by tyrants and tyranny from the beginning of his career. In his first three novels, *Grimus, Midnight's Children* and

Shame Rushdie makes an attack, on the power-hungry tyrannical leaders of India and Pakistan. As a post modern writer, he tries to find an effective action against ruler. In *Shame* he highlights, "How does a dictator fall?" You try and get rid of a dictator some time" (257)

As a creative writer, Rushdie takes it up as his responsibility to present a critique on the politics of the Indian subcontinent. He plans to present proper perspectives of religion and politics. In an interview with John Haffenden, Rushdie says, "I do not think that if state has a chance of surviving, it has to remove religion from itself, and when it does that it has chance of removing the generals" (21).

Rushdie's fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses*, encountered a different reception. Some of the adventures in this book depict a character modeled on the Prophet Muhammad and portray both him and his transcription of the Quran in a manner that, after the novel's publication in the summer of 1988, drew criticism from Muslim community leaders in Britain, who criticize the novel as blasphemous.

Despite the standing death threat, Rushdie continued to write, producing the children's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990). Then he gave *Imaginary Homelands* (1991),a collection of essays and criticism. As a migrant writer, Rushdie gives a detailed explanation as to his own historical perspective as a multi-racial culmination of his Indian origins and his English upbringing. On returning to his lost city, Bombay, the history which had such an influence on the earliest part of his life. Then he published the short-story collection *East, West* in 1994.

In 1995, Rushdie published *The Moor's Last Sigh.* The novel takes place in India and Spain, where the narrator Moraes (Moor), takes a journey from India to Spain, discovering more and more about his ancestors, and how their life affected his. Moor is the last survivor of his dynasty. The novel refers to many real historical events, like Boabdil's surrender of Granada, the destruction of the Masjid of Babri, and much more. The story focuses on the several women he met during his journey, and how his relationship with them evolves and breaks. Rushdie includes the history of India during Moor's time accurately and with vivid descriptions.

Published six years into the fatwa provoked by his satire on exclusivist fictions of Islam in *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* remains Rushdie's darkest novel, marked most prominently by the theme of captivity, but also one which displays his extraordinary intellectual liveliness, attempting nothing less than a sweeping revisionist historical novel that uses satire, allegory and literary allusion to create a kind of fresco of Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Hindu relations in twentieth-century India.

In 1998, after nearly a decade, the Iranian government announced that it would no longer seek to enforce its fatwa against Rushdie. He recounted his experience in the third-person autobiography *Joseph Anton* (2012). Its title refers to an alias he adopted while in seclusion.

Following his return to public life, Rushdie published *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001). Between 1992 and 2002 he wrote a collection of essays *Step Across This Line*. Rushdie's subsequent novels include *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), an examination of terrorism that was set primarily in the disputed Kashmir

region of the Indian subcontinent, and *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), based on a fictionalized account of the Mughal emperor Akbar.

The children's book *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010) centres on the efforts of Luka, younger brother to the protagonist of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015) depicts the chaos ensuing from a rent in the fabric separating the world of humans from that of the Arabic mythological figures known as Jinn. Revealing the traditional knowledge allusion, *The Thousand and One Nights* unfurls a tapestry of connected stories celebrating the human imagination. In *The Golden House* (2017), Rushdie explores the immigrant experience in the United States through a wealthy Indian family that settles in New York City in the early 21st century.

Salman Rushdie as a minute observer of Indian society and almost all the major social and political incidents in India is bound to catch his attention to dip into his fictional imagination. Most of his novels are on India and Indian themes. His novels are devastating political satires with exquisite style. The political major incidents are so vividly narrated as if the history of the 20th century has been redrawn.

Rushdi's*Shame*, expresses the mirror portrayal of confused Pakistan. The reasons for his disappointment and repression are countless which made Rushdie hesitate Pakistan. In reality the partition of India and Pakistan results in social and political disabilities which display the trembling basement of a new country Pakistan. The history of the region that is now called Pakistan is singularly complex. Isobel Shaw has interpretted the key stages of Pakistan's history as follows:

> The story of Pakistan divides into six distinct periods: prehistory; the ancient empires, from about 3000BC to the sixth century AD; the coming of

> Islam,from 711 to the late 14th century; the Mughal period, from 1526 to the 18th century; the British period, from the mid-18th century to 1947; and Pakistan since Partition and Independence. (64)

This is a simplified overview of the region's history as the name Pakistan was not used until 1933, less than fifteen years before the country's creation. Rushdie concentrates on the more recent history of the region, because it is in the last sixty or seventy years that Pakistan's identity as a Muslim state has been shaped, from ideal to reality, and it is this shaping of a national consciousness that is central to *Shame*.

Pakistan is a relatively new country, built from two separate land masses of what had been India, separated by hundreds of miles of Indian land. In 1947 the British announced that they planned to "establish two successor states to their rule - India and Pakistan" (45). For many years before this there had been an escalating tide of feeling in Indian society not only towards the ending of British rule, but also towards the creation of a separate and independent state for Indian Muslims. This gained political momentum in 1940 when the Muslim League formed, finally called for the construction of a separate state called Pakistan. The Muslim League had been founded in order to provide a voice for the Muslim people of India who mostly lived in the north-eastern and north-western states, and while representing a majority in these states were, none the less, a minority in the diverse ethnic structure of India as a whole.

The idea of political autonomy for the Muslim Northern states had been proposed in 1930 by the then president of the Muslim League, Sir Mohammad Iqbal, who believed that these regions "should have complete control of their internal affairs within a loose Indian Federation" (41).

Up to this point in time there had been no political pressure to form a separate Muslim state; the League still thinking in terms of promoting the reforms necessary to create a less strict Indian Federation. However, this political direction soon changed. The notion of a completely separate Muslim homeland was gaining momentum in the region's psyche, and in 1933, the name "Pakistan" was coined by Chaudhuri Rahmat Ali: "meaning in Urdu 'Land of the Pure', and made from the initial letters of the Muslim-dominated regions of the *P*unjab, the *A*fghan frontier, *K*ashmir and *S*ind plus the Persian 'stan' meaning 'country'" (41). Pakistan had therefore been defined geographically, and the bringing about of this state had consolidated into an achievable objective.

One problem that the Muslim League faced at this time was opposition from the Indian National Congress, who refused to accept that the Muslim League was representative of the majority of Muslims in India. The Indian National Congress was inaugurated on 28th December 1885, with the blessing of the British Government, in order to aid communication between the many ethnic groups within Indian society, and therefore make it more stable, politically. It should be remembered that roughly only half of India was directly under British rule, with the remainder under the power of over six hundred regional princes. The Indian National Congress was based in Bombay, and was filled by the educated Indian middle classes; the majority of whom were professional people such as lawyers and teachers, who had considerable political influence.

The opposition to the Muslim League had the effect of slowing down the movement towards the creation of Pakistan. However, the events that followed caused a swift change in the Muslim League's fortunes. When the Second World War broke

out in 1939, the Indian Viceroy declared India to be at war, at Britain's side, without consulting any of the nationalist leaders of Congress. This prompted a mass resignation from these leaders, and meant that Congress lost its grip on power. The effect that this had was that the Muslim League gained in size and influence, so that, in the early months of 1940 it was no longer arguable to argue that it was not the mouthpiece of the Muslim north. The British therefore agreed to divide the sub-continent in 1947.The nation of Pakistan was born, but the country's birth was heavily overshadowed by violence. The process of partition meant that millions of people were forced to flee their homes and cross the border into their new homeland, and the tension that this caused inevitably led to hostility. As Isobel Shaw describes:

> The most explosive problem area was the fertile Punjab, where Hindu, Muslim and Sikh populations were inextricably mixed. At independence, an estimated six million Muslim refugees, mainly from Punjab, streamed across the border into Pakistan, while some four and a half million Sikhs and Hindus went the other way (into India). This migration was accompanied by some of the most grisly communal violence of modern times, resulting in the loss of perhaps half a million lives (73)

This violence and struggle, as well as political tension with India, would be evident right up to the present.

Shame depicts not only this physical violence of Pakistan's emergence, but also focuses on the central psychological bi-product of this violence - the guilt, both personal and collective, that arises from harming others. Malcolm Bradbury, a well known novelist and columnist from the London *Guardian* newspaper described Rushdie's novel as being concerned with shame and shamelessness, born from the

violence which is modern history. It is impossible to understand Shame without understanding the context of its origin.

The ongoing process of partition, in the shape of the mass migration between India and Pakistan left a legacy of bitterness on both sides. As Williams and Crowther described, "this exodus constituted the largest migration of mankind in the history of the world." (64) Violence between India and Pakistan was to flare up again. It was the fate of the Himalayan kingdom of Kashmir which brought the crisis to a head, and this subject is of particular relevance to Rushdie's own history, as a British Muslim of Kashmiri descent. The ruler of Kashmir, a Hindu, had refused to give up his province to either Pakistan or India as a part of the partition process.

The population of Kashmir was predominantly Muslim, (roughly eighty percent), and therefore Pakistan gave its support to the Pakistani hill-peoples in their invasion of Kashmir. India, therefore, reacted by promising support to the region's Sikh leader, on the understanding that Kashmir should join India. The resulting fight lasted until 1949, when the U.N. brokered a cease-fire in Kashmir, which effectively meant that the country became partitioned, at the peace line. The northern third of the country was controlled by the Pakistani Azad (Free) Kashmir government, and the remainder by India. The status of Kashmir became a thorn in the side of Indo-Pakistani relations right up until the present, as Shaw suggests, "The conflict is unlikely to be resolved until India makes good its 45-year-old promise of a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the Kashmiris now living under Indian rule" (72).

The violence of Pakistans's early years was echoed in the political situation in the country. Within five years of the nation's birth, its first two prime ministers had been assassinated. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, hailed as the 'Father of the Nation' was killed

leadership of government.

These political issues left Pakistan in an extremely vulnerable state at just the time when it most needed strong leadership. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pakistan's constitution was not finally drafted until 1956. It was highly ironic that very soon afterwards, in 1956, the constitution was torn up by General Ayub Khan who seized power in a military coup balance under which he set up a martial law government. The country has been controlled by the army ever since.

The shaking foundation of this country causes frustration among the people including young Rushdie. The consequences in the society urge him to write the novel *Shame*. He portrays the political leaders who failed to construct the country with refined activities.

Rushdie's influence to write the novel *Shame* is unavoidable. Although Pakistan was pure in the earlier days, the country failed to remain its purity. When Rushdie entered into Pakistan, it was declined in quality. He was not ready to stay there. So he returned to England. Disappointed Rushdie started searching the reasons for Pakistan under decrements. He deeply examined the history and came to know the irregular activities of political leaders who reshaped the construction of Pakistan. The social issues caused by awful socio-political setting made him write the novel *Shame* by interpreting history in the form of phantasmagoric Epic.

Rushdie (as narrator) states that his inspiration for *Shame* stems from his reading about the murder of "Anna Muhammad" by her Pakistani father in London's East End, after learning about her affair with a white boy" (117-119). This act is called an

'honor killing'. The narrator in *Shame* explains the notion of 'honor killing' in the following words: "...because by making love to a white boy she has brought such dishonor upon her family that only her blood can wash away the stain..." (117).

Though the story has shocked Rushdie, he says that "I, too, found myself understanding the killer ... that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride" (115). He asserts that shamelessness and shame are the roots of violence. The girl who was thus killed in London, Anahita Muhammad haunts the novel since Rushdie finds this sort of happening understandable only in the East.

Rushdie cites another event of an "Asian" girl travelling in a late-night underground train who was humiliated by a group of teenage white boys. This shame, burning within, bursts out and sets fire to shops, causing wreckage all around, but taking pride in its power. Thirdly Rushdie cites a boy in London, who had simply "ignited of his own accord without dousing himself in petrol or applying any external flame" (117).

The seeds of all three incidents are sown on the main character Sufia Zinobia. Rushdie utilizes this character to express his anger towards destroyed Pakistan through the imaginary country Paccavistan. Thus the character feels shame but at the same time finds power to bring about wreckage all around her. Rushdie also refers to Kafka's Joseph *The Trial* who is stabbed to death. '"Like a dog!' he said: it was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him" (118). She blushes uncontrollably for herself and also for the world in which shameful things are done but not felt. Sufia Zinobia does not die under a knife but the shame. Sufia absorbs unfelt feelings of shame and thus represents the simple-minded people of Pakistan who are ashamed of the shameful actions of their political leaders.

The novel covers the time span of thirty six years from 1947 to 1983, from the partition and the birth of the new country to the year of the publication of the novel. The story is provided with a narrator of multi-cultural background, who sketches a country containing the external features of the history of Pakistan over a period of thirty-six years after the establishment of the country. The author, however, has his own reservations over the literal as well as historical interpretation and weaves the story of the fictional country by fictionalizing the factual events collected from history.

Midnight's Children was a stupendous evocation of the evolution of India since independence; *Shame* is about what happened to the other part of the country after 1947. In the earlier novel, *Midnight's Children*, the protagonist of it, had already passed his judgement on Pakistan as a complete dump. Though the author denies it, the historical development of Pakistan becomes the background for assimilating the different happenings in the novel.

Critics have different opinions about the novel, *Shame*.

To Makarand Paranjape, "*Shame* offers a profound insight into Pakistani society". (222)

Novy Kapadia regards the novel as,"...a combination of a free flight-fairy tale and a savage political indictment". (244)

Cynthia Abrioux describes *Shame* as, "an urgent, courageous and committed act of protest against the democratic deficit in Pakistan of the 1970s and 1980s" (48).

D. J. Enright indicates:

> the story owes much to Salman Rushdie's imagination, Rushdie owes much to Pakistan, to the reality afforded by a real Pakistan, even while his dealings with that reality are (to say the least) high handed. Or, as some would protest, below the belt. Of course we shall agree with the author that he is not writing "only" about Pakistan. He is writing about about sexual rivalry, ambition, power, betrayal, and so forth-matters found everywhere and always -and about politics and religion and history and ghosts. Pakistan happens to provide these in abundant and striking forms. (75)

It is also quite clear that *Shame* is a much shorter book in which Rushdie has restricted his political range. Yet, this novel has much to offer to contemporary audience. Though it is about 70s Pakistan, it speaks directly to us, now, the antic fairytale of billionaires and badmash rooted in the details of a time that might sound remote, but it reads with startling immediacy.

The dissertation entitled "Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, as a Phantasmagoric Epic" aims to analyse the history of the new born country, Pakistan in the sub continent with an artistic New Historic perception. The close textual analysis is carried out on the primary sources of the thesis drawing evidences from spectrum of writers. Rushdie tries to exhibit the impure condition of Pakistan which begets shame and later violence in Pakistan.

The objective categorizes Salman Rushdie's historical fantasy. His observation of destroyed Pakistan reveals the socio-political disabilities and violence in the country. It highlights the perceptions of new historicism and existentialism, focusing

on the shameful aspects of the socio-political situation of Pakistan and sets stage for his modern phantasmagoric epic.

The field of investigation is limited to trace the social disabilities of the country through historicizing history.

The dissertation starts with a short biography of Salman Rushdie, discussing the general characteristics of his novels and the inspiration behind writing the historical novel *Shame* focusing on the totalitarian powers of anarchy in Pakistan. He stuffs the story with political upheavals, wedding scandals, debauchery, obscenity and destruction and has succeeded in elucidating the Pakistani history, politics, and identity by using fantasy inside reality and lures the readers into reading the book by using historical allusions and magic realism with great aplomb.

Chapter Two

Shame, as a Phantasmagoric Epic

Shame is Salman Rushdie's phantasmagoric epic of an unnamed country that is not quite Pakistan. The act of covering up what exists underneath is technically called a palimpsest. This word is generally used about manuscripts, usually on parchment, where the original writing had been erased or washed away and replaced by a new text. Rushdie uses this word metaphorically to reflect the attitude of Pakistan in trying to repress its past by re-writing official history.

The covered, repressed writing deals with the violence, oppression and injustices. A palimpsest obscures what is beneath the surface, that is, the multiplicity of people, languages and cultures. Masquerading something is done out of shame; shame to acknowledge one's links to history. The masquerading themes of shame and shamelessness shape the novel *Shame*. According to Rushdie Pakistan is "a peeling, fragmenting palimpsest" (87).

Rushdie views the history of Pakistan as a struggle to repress the past and portrays a new history that has been imposed on it. While discussing the origins of Pakistan, Rushdie observes: "To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done" (87).

The re-written history of Pakistan represents characters as heroes and martyrs and makes religion legitimate. But the metaphor suggests that there is a text beneath its superficial level. The novel mythologizes:

> . . . the acts of shame and shamelessness committed when another new nation was created by partitioning the Indian subcontinent, dividing people from people and resulting in communal riots and physical and moral scars on individuals, families, neighbourhoods, towns and cities. (75)

Rushdie adopts many strategies to overcome the problems of a historical novelist. They include using surrealism and symbolism in the place of realism, discarding chronology, intertwining the past and the present and taking recourse to allegory. The limited abstract world of *Shame* abounds in symbols and suggestive images, typical of the tales of *The Arabian Nights*. The narrator of the novel, like that of *Midnight's Children*, is a symbol of the country he belongs to. Thus the writer implements a further important strategy of presenting the history of the nation with a lot of human interest.

Shame is not written in a chronological order. It jumps forward and backward in time. Rushdie takes care to explain that he is not writing a realistic novel about Pakistan; but calls his fictitious country Peccavistan as:

> My story's palimpsest-country has, I repeat, no name of its own ... There's an apocryphal story that Napier, after a successful campaign in what is now the south of Pakistan, sent back to England the guilty, one-word message, 'Peccavi', I have Sind. I'm tempted to name my looking glass Pakistan in honour of this bilingual (and fictional, because never really uttered) pun. Let it be Peccavistan. (88)

Rushdie rejects historical time and takes the recourse to memory, dream and finally to fantasy. He claims his narration to be at a slight angle to reality; when he says "My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality"

(29). Rushdie utters that *Shame* is all about the correct understanding of time and memory. He documents history by creating an illusion of fantasy and unreality. It is this quest to free history from its temporality that shaped his novels. In *Shame*, he says, "It is possible to see the subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been imposed" (87).

Rushdie uses a set of politico-historical and politico-cultural values as his fictional tenor of his protagonists, and cultivates an interest in the reader in the contemporary issues. This fictional aesthetic is merged into the larger matrix of the sub-continental psyche, wherein history forms the foundation as well as an approach to Rushdie's aesthetic imagination. The unmistakable and profound historical sense of purpose enables in simultaneously conceiving events and comprehending their human and political significance.

The novel covers the time span of thirty six years from 1947 to 1983, from the partition and the birth of the new country to the present, the year of the publication of the novel. The story is provided with a narrator of multi-cultural background, who sketches the country containing the external features of the history of Pakistan over a period of thirty-six years after the establishment of the country. The author, however, has his own reservations over the literal as well as historical interpretation. The writer weaves the story of the fictional country by fictionalizing the factual events collected from history and emphasizes the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-political background of the country he has created.

The novel is partly told in two ways - one, as the narrator does and the other as done by different characters. The narrator with the help of his two-level narration

leads to the truth. Rushdie's interest in gathering and chronicling information about Pakistan, wherein two types of government characterize its functioning, is awesome. In the beginning, he mentions that the nation is divided into an East Wing (later to become Bangladesh) and a West Wing, separated from one another by the Indian landmass. According to him Pakistan is a "...fantastic bird of a place, two Wings without a body, surrounded by the landmass of its greatest foe, joined by nothing but God" (178). After the creation of Pakistan on August 14th 1947, every effort was made to wipe out its past history and rewrite it. As Nila Shah has rightly observed,

> Rushdie has picked up the thin thread of the story from the eve of the partition of the subcontinent and woven a tale, which spins around the events that have destabilized the new born country in three decades since then. The fictionalization and deliberate change of names ultimately turn out to be a story of Pakistan covering the history of initial years of the country. (56)

Rushdie tactfully portrays the shameful activities like obscenity, permissiveness and debauchery as a guise to present the historical events of Pakistan. The novel reflects the historical facts of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-Ulhaq (in the novel Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder respectively) representing the two presidents of Pakistan. The way Bhutto tried to perpetuate his power by empowering incompetent persons to higher positions in the army, the manner in which Zia ousted him by setting up a regime of religious intolerance and the other political events in the book are spun around this thinly veiled Iskander-Raza story contributing to the history of the country. The other characters in the story also represent the great names in the political history of Pakistan - Marshal A. as General Ayub Khan, General Shaggy Dog as Yahya Khan, Sheikh Bismillah as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ajumand Harappa as Benazir Bhutto.

The canvas of the narrative covers the events from the partition in general, but more precisely from the time of the East-West conflict. The subsequent events like the overthrow of the President Ayub Khan, the martial law of General Yahya Khan, the rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the military action against the tribesmen of Baluchistan in the nineteen seventies, the military coup and the downfall of Bhutto, the dictatorial regime of General Zia and his attempt to Islamize the country are all woven into the texture of the narrative. Rushdie comments on Soviet aggression of Afghanistan, the race murder in Bangladesh, the fundamental Islamic revolution of Khomeini against the monarchy of the Shah of Iran and of his family and its exodus from India to Pakistan after the partition, the general elections in Pakistan, the Bangladesh war etc.

As T.N. Dhar has rightly points out, "In Rushdie's estimation both Bhutto and Zia represent the worst period in Pakistan's history for they grew bigger and uglier as the country started growing fast in a stupid way" (45). Therefore the major part of the shameful history of Pakistan gets connected with their rise to power. Thus Rushdie fictionalizes the real and justifies his imaginative treatment of history.

The three Shakil sisters, from whom the story of the novel begins, are the prisoners of their father in their own house, Nishapur, situated in the town Q, which is a fictitious version of Quetta. Old Mr. Shakil confines his daughters- Chunni, Munnee and Bunny- behind closed doors to prevent them from having any contact with the outside world. As a result, the three sisters develop severe hatred for their father. They are forced to live a cornered life. In their loneliness, they keep on fantasizing about what a man might look when undressed. Their rebellion against such confinement finds an expression in their action after their father's death. They arrange a grand party in which the British officers are invited and some local public. They seduce a British officer and one of the three sisters becomes pregnant. These are all acts of their father,

and society at large. In their rebellion they break social and moral codes of conduct. Thus, they give voice to the silence imposed upon them.

In order to conceal the shame of an unmarried sister, the other two pretend to be pregnant, all the sisters displaying equal symptoms of pregnancy at the same time. In this way, they give birth to a son. They give him the name Omar Khayam. The three sisters nurture this boy in the strict isolation from the world, in their prison like mansion. On his twelfth birthday, Omar asks his mothers to allow him to join school as his birthday gift. In exchange for being allowed to attend the school, his three mothers order him never to feel shame in his life. During his schooling, Omar comes to know that he is the illegitimate child of a British officer, but he does not know his real mother till the end of his life.

After schooling, he gets scholarship in a medical college in Karachi. He leaves his mothers and the city of his birth at the age of eighteen to pursue medical career. Two years later, his three mothers inform him that he now has a brother named Babar. Then, the readers do not see him for a long time except when he has become a doctor of international fame and a friend of Iskander Harappa who has the image of a playboy.

The narrator introduces the readers with two more families, the Hyders and the Harappa families. These two families are connected not only by politics but also by blood. Raza Hyder (representing the historical figure of General Mohammed Zia Ul Haq) is a soldier who marries Bilquis. They have two daughters namely Sufiya Zinobia, the elder and Naveed, the younger one. Sufiya is presented as the incarnation of shame as her parents were expecting a boy in her place. She contracts a brain fever and, after receiving treatment by a local Hakim, she is cured of her brain fever, but

her mental growth gets almost blocked. Their second daughter, Naveed gets the nick name as Good News. She is the great pride in her mother's life.

On the other hand, the head of the Harappa family is Iskander, representing the Pakistani leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Iskander gets married to Rani Humayun who is Raza Hyder's cousin. Rani becomes a good friend of Bilquis after her marriage to Raza. This couple is blessed with only a daughter named Arjumand who is known as Virgin Ironpants because of her resolution never to marry. Arjumand is a great admirer of her father and his political performance. She makes up her mind to follow her father's footsteps by pursuing a political career. Here, Arjumand represents Benazir Bhutto.

Omar, the peripheral hero of the novel, befriends the rich playboy, Iskander. Both of them excessively indulge in debauchery and many other shameless acts. For many years, Iskander has been the rival of Raza Hyder, a military hero who calls himself as Old Razor Guts. The conflict between them begins from the party of Marshal Aurungzeb where both of them try to flirt with Marshal's wife, Atiya Aurungzeb who is known as Pinkie Raza desires her so intensely that it makes the bruise on his forehead ache, but he loses her to Iskander, right there at the Marshal's reception. At the age of forty, Iskander decides to join politics. In order to cleanse his image, he gives up all his bad habits and also abandons his friendship with Omar.

Concentrating on the high profile world of international affairs, Iskander writes a series of articles analyzing his country's requirements. All these articles are followed by his public speeches. His oratorical genius makes him an instant hit. His notion of Islamic Socialism and a close alliance with China gains such wide public support that he gets direct entry in to the cabinet of the government. When the government starts

losing popularity, Iskander resigns and forms his own political party Popular Front, which he funds out of his bottomless wealth. He becomes the first chairman of this party. Then after, his campaign for return to democracy becomes unstoppable. He extensively travels to the villages and promises every peasant one acre of land and a new water-well. In fact, he has been put in jail, but the government has to release him on account of great public demonstration.

On the other hand, Raza Hyder has been observing the rise of Iskander with barely suppressed envy. Under such uncertain political condition, Raza remains wondering which way to jump; whether to support Iskander's party with demand for election, or to put his reputation behind the unstable government in the hope of being favoured. At that time, he receives a proposal to accept Haroun as the husband for his daughter, Naveed. Raza takes it as his trump card as Haroun is the son of Mir Harappa and nephew of Iskander. So he becomes ready to accept Haroun as his son-in-law.

Thus, Raza gets an opportunity to remain connected with both the feuding political parties as Haroun's father is connected with the ruling party namely, Public Party while his uncle, Iskander is the chairman of the another party called Popular Front. But, unfortunately this marriage does not take place, as Naveed on the eve of the wedding declares her intention to marry Talvar-ulhaq and not Haroun. It gives all the family members a terrible shock. Raza becomes so furious with anger that he thinks of killing her. But, after much weeping and persuasion from Bilquis, Raza becomes ready to let Naveed marry Talvar. On the other side, the disappointed Haroun Harappa rejects Arjumand's marriage proposal. In fact, Haroun is the only man whom Arjumand has loved.

On the day of Naveed's marriage, the whole city is burning with the riots. The government of the President A is toppled and Gen. Shaggy Dog replaces the President

In the following days, Iskander becomes the Prime Minister through the process of election. Raza goes to Iskander to apologize for the wedding fiasco. Here, Iskander, taking the political stance not only forgives Raza, but also promotes him to the rank of General and places him in command of the army. He also favors Talvar by making him the police chief.

Along with the political narration, the novelist keeps on informing the readers about the hero of the novel, Omar Khayam Shakil who is a peripheral man, a marginal man and not a central figure in the novel. He and his wife, Sufiya Zinobia represent the people of Pakistan on different levels. They enter in to the world of broken dreams, shattered illusions, religious fanaticism and a shameful atmosphere. Sufiya stands for shame and Omar for shamelessness.

The shame that Sufiya feels is that of a young woman having the mind of a mere child. The novelist calls her a wrong miracle and Bilquis calls her as shame. Sufiya never grows up in intellect. After Sufiya is left mentally retarded by a fever, she forever remains the child who absorbs the shame of all those around her. As the shame builds up inside Sufiya, it becomes an inner beast that can take her over, transforming Sufiya into the most powerful and horrible killer. The beast of shame grows stronger gradually in her. She has already killed Pinkie Aurangzeb's turkeys and tries to kill Talvarul- Haq, the bridegroom of her sister, Naveed.

Sufiya goes for treatment to Omar. During the treatment, he desperately falls in love with the patient. When Omar marries her, she is a fully grown-up woman of twenty one, but has the mind of a seven year old child. In fact, Omar is thirty one years her senior and older than her own father. On their wedding night, Sufiya's ayah, Shahbanou threatens Omar to kill him if he tries to do anything improper with his

wife. Thus he is forbidden to have sexual relation with his mentally retarded wife. But, after a few days, the ayah, Shahbanou offers herself to Omar assuming that he may not harm Sufiya by losing his patience. Then after, she comes to him almost every night. Despite her mental limitation, Sufiya knows that husbands are for giving women babies. When her husband impregnates her ayah, Shahbanou, the beast inside Sufiya again takes over and the beauty becomes the beast.

Burdened with her family's shame, Sufiya discovers the hidden path which links *sharam* to violence. Later she becomes a dangerous woman in veil wandering at night and killing urchins after fulfilling her sexual desires. When Omar Khayyam comes to know about this aspect of her character, he reports it to her father, Raza Hyder who wants to put an end to her life. Here it is also a matter of shame that a father wants to kill his daughter. But, her husband takes the initiative and resolves to keep her chained so that she may not be a danger to others.

After some days, the beast in Sufiya takes complete charge, breaks the iron chain and runs away. In fact, Sufiya escapes on the night of Iskander's hanging. Raza is greatly shocked to learn that her chained daughter has escaped while Omar feels proud of his wife, Sufiya for acquiring her ultimate freedom. The beast in Sufiya creates disturbance all over the country by killing a number of innocent people and animals.

On the other side, When Iskander, the Prime Minister, is arrested on the charges of Mir Harappa's murder and misuse of public money. He is sent to a jail where he is terribly tortured before his death sentence. The architect of this event is Raza Hyder, the chief commander in army. He takes benefit of the situation and becomes the President and dictator of the country. He rules over the country by establishing

Islamic law. He is haunted by the ghosts of Iskander and Dawood till the last day of his life.

Raza is overthrown by a military coup the same way as he did with Iskander. After a few days of house arrest, Raza flees for life with his wife, Bilquis and Omar disguised as women in burqas. Omar takes them to his childhood house, 'Nishapur' where Omar's three mothers feel happy to find Raza, the murderer of their second son, Babar, in their web. At first they become the victims of malaria and Bilquis dies a pathetic death. The Shakil sisters compel Raza to enter their specially designed dumb-waiter along with the dead body of Bilquis. Here, the three sisters push the buttons and the eighteen-inch stiletto blades of death drive in to Raza's body, cutting him to pieces. Thus, the Shakil sisters take the revenge by killing the murderer of their son. And finally, the Beast in Sufiya finds her husband, Omar in 'Nishapur' and kills him.

In this way, almost all the major characters of the novel are destined to die their tragic death. It is shown by Rushdie that the worldly tyranny of Raza Hyder is defeated by the otherworldly power of the Beast.

Through the ongoing duel between the families of two men - one a celebrated wager of war, the other a immoral lover of pleasure–Rushdie brilliantly portrays a world caught between honour and humiliation - shamelessness, shame, the roots of violence. The shameful aspects of the social, political and cultural scenes of Pakistan are reflected in the lives and activities of its two prominent leaders, Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, who represent civilian and military authority respectively. Though *Shame* deals with a few issues since the country's Independence and its post-imperial existence, it concerns about religion, Islamic revival and cultural and moral norms of

the country. In the novel Rushdie has explored bi-ethnicity and bi-culturalism. The novel, as Cynthia Abrioux has rightly observes:

> . . . enacts the rejection of all legitimising authenticity based on any one fixed, logocentric, authoritarian form . . . (it) is an exemplary incarnation of the modern, post-colonial novel - of the novel as a metamorphosing process itself, where names, nations, narrations are subject to de-formation and re-formation, underscoring the central affirmation of Shame that the human condition is one of flux, not fixity. (34)

The parallels between the story and the historical events also seem to be made obvious by the author himself. The puritan Raza Hyder is made to embody the dictatorship, the west-oriented dissipated Iskander Harappa, the corrupt democracy. The historical Bhutto has become the character Iskander Harappa. The ancient city Mohenjo-Daro in the novel has been split into two parts. Little Mir Harappa lives on the Dare Estate and Iskander on Mohenjo. Mir is the name of one of Bhutto's sons. Thus, the real history has been reversed into the fiction.

A further parallel between fiction and history is that Haroun Harappa leads terrorist activity from Kabul, like Bhutto's sons. Rushdie verifies he is not writing a realistic novel for fear of being dumped and banned. He further observes,

> . . . The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart. Fortunately, however, I am only telling a sort of modem fairy-tale, so that's all right ...
>
> What a relief? (70)

As S. K. Tikko rightly opines:

> Although, historically speaking, the causes of the partition were many, Rushdie presents only a casual picture of the communal disturbances that were to be witnessed on the eve of the great divide when bombs had begun exploding in different places. (45)

The explosion kills Mahmoud Kemal, strips Bilquis off her clothes, burns up her eyebrows and she is forced to escape naked and enters the Red Fort. Bilquis is rescued by and married to Raza Hyder, a military man, who represents the greedy military generals of Pakistan. Raza and Bilquis are forced to leave the country when it is divided, and flies to the West Wing of Pakistan.

From a historical perspective, Rushdie's aim is to connect the religious fanaticism with the sufferings experienced by the people due to partition. The partition of India was a shameful act which was a result of the selfishness of the egoist politicians. It also reflects the haughty and reckless attitude of the divide and rule policy of the Britishers.

Rushdie portrays the shamelessness of the politicians through the characters like Bilquis. The shame which Bilquis felt so strongly at the time of the bomb-blast, runs parallel to that of the newly born country of the pure. Captain Raza Hyder temporarily succeeds in clothing the shame of his bride and takes her to Pakistan, where, in the house of Bariamma, Rua Hyder's grandmother, she is compelled to tell the story of her shame. Thus her marriage introduces her to the dynastic Hyder family. Bilquis, "whose life had blown up, emptying her of history" (67), symbolises the plight and status of a Pakistani migrant. As Nila Shah rightly puts it, "...her denuded body, with just a dupatta of modesty around her and with the signs of congealed blood oozing fiom many cuts and scratches, represents the plight of an uprooted migrant" (50). Like

her husband Raza Hyder, she is periodically called mohajir, an immigrant. She is without roots, dreaming of stability.

From another perspective, naked Bilquis also symbolizes Pakistan, the Land of the Pure for nakedness is purity. Rushdie describes that she has been emptied of history which reflects the Pakistani temperament to disown the unified Indian history. And the dupatta she uses to cover herself might be the trials to officially re-write history is the palimpsest. The signs of jellied blood oozing from many cuts and scratches are symbols of the violence that took place during the partition.

Pakistan after trying to disown its roots of Indian history is left conductor, hanging on to religion for survival. Similarly, Bilquis is orphaned because of her father Mahmoud Kemal's death and so she clings on to Raza Hyder, a religious fantasist, for her survival. The partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan becomes the core of the novel. By delving deep into the thoughts of the individuals, who have been victims of the partition, the novelist draws out their innermost senses of shame, shamelessness, hope, despair, ambition and anguish besides banking upon their optimism at the rise of a new country.

Like the naked Bilquis who fled to Pakistan, the Indian Muslims also wanted to believe that they had arrived in a wholly new country. For those already living in that part of the subcontinent which became Pakistan, however, confusion arose. The natives realized the truth that Pakistan was not as pure as the Garden of Eden. Rushdie knows that Pakistan made a vain attempt to reject its past which was open and pure and tried to garb itself in a history; a kind of mingle pseudo history based on religious fanaticism. He uses motifs like violence, shame and shamelessness that help in the reality of narration. They indicate that the development of the country is moving in

the wrong direction. The gradual growth or development of these motifs results in the central theme of the novel - repression; with inversion and exile as ancillary motifs. Into these themes and patterns of tragedy, Rushdie successfully configures history. He structures both the central and peripheral characters in an equally skilful way.

The most important character who suffers from oppression is Sufiya, mainly when Rushdie states that he wants her to be retarded and innocent in order to make her pure. But, the monster within Sufiya destroys the men's domination that has controlled her in the whole life. Her father and husband deserve to have that dark end when suppression grows too high; the truth of the notion destroys everything around Pakistan. Despite of the fact that *Shame* has a horrific ending, Rushdie does not blame Pakistan but their corrupt leaders who want the nation for their benefits under the name of God and religion using violence and brutality against women and all common citizens.

While talking about the thematic concern of the novel Rushdie admits the fact of being a political novelist and says that he was fairly a political animal, he didn't think that when including political material in fiction, it creates special problems. He feels that now the lives are so affected by public from fictional personal lives.

Rushdie invests everything with a cultural meaning while playing upon the themes of periphery and fantasy. Rushdie shows how shame and shamelessness, and the evil they are responsible for, are manifested in all the characters, especially in Omar Khayyam Shakil the protagonist, who faces his shame and takes up full responsibility for his shameless deeds, and finally moves out of the wings onto centre stages. There is a strange consummation between husband (shamelessness) and wife

(shame). He actively plays his part and in doing so sacrifices himself to Sufia Zinobia and she in turn consumed by the power of shame is blown up.

Rushdie having explained the theme of hybridity of culture and the ambiguity of identity, proclaims that in the post-colonial and post-modern world, no one has a clear or a singular identity. The stabilization of Pakistan is about creating a pure nation which is impossible. This task has resulted in the suppression of citizens and the corruption of leaders.

The major part of shameful passages of Pakistan get connected with the political rise to power. Thus Rushdie fictionalizes the real and justifies his imaginative treatment of history. Rushdie portrays the characters in a complex way by intertwining realism and symbolism. Iskander Harappa's wife Rani Harappa embroiders the shawls that depict the political oppression and cruelty of Iskander Harappa's regime. The shawls, woven by Rani Harappa, symbolize not only Iskander Harappa's faithfulness and violent conduct, but also the abuse of political power. The eighteen shawls she embroiders that are entitled as The Shamelessness of Iskander Harappa the Great encompasses realism and symbolism that makes the work allegorical as Brendon Nicholls rightly observes, these shawls are:

> . . . the best indication of the shamelessness of oppression. The shawls with their secrets function as an aspect of the theme of repression. They are patiently worked expressions of how chauvinism and political suppression coverage.(115)

They are all concerned expression of the fact that Pakistan has followed the wrong direction.

The partition of India was a shameful act which was a result of the selfishness of the egotist politicians. It also reflects the haughty and reckless attitude of the divide and rule policy of the Britishers. Pakistan is described by Rushdie as a product of "the miracle that went wrong"(87). Its creation was something that was much fought against and unforeseen till the last moment. Much was expected from the leaders of Pakistan, who wanted to separate themselves from India. They claimed religious differences to be the reason against staying united. Pakistan which was given freedom, a day prior to that of India, was expected to fare well. But time showed that the miracle went wrong since it chose wrong options like religion, for politically administering the country.

Though the history of Pakistan is quite short, it has seen a number of events since the formation of Pakistan till the publication of the novel, *Shame*. A few major incidents in chronological order are – a democratic government, a thirteen - year military period, during which Ayub Khan was the President for seven years, another democratic period in the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as the Prime Minister (1971) who was then overthrown by his protege, General Muhammad Zia Ul-Haq (1977) and began another phase of military government that would last until 1988, a period of eleven years.

Rushdie makes use of satire effectively to expose the Pakistani ruling class. In the presentation of Pakistani society, satire is also used in a very effective manner. Rushdie exposes the falsehood and pretentions of those, whose actions appear to be virtuous and innocent. The double mindedness and the hidden cruelties are revealed in a very powerful manner, using satire as the weapon. Deterioration in values is seen everywhere, especially in case of the government officials. Bribery is something that the administrative official expects and it is accepted as a fact of life. The custom

officer at the frontier receiving bribes is a part of life. Nobody sees it any longer as a crime.

> A custom officer depends, for a decent income, on traffic. Goods pass through, he not unreasonably impounds them, their owners see reason, an accommodation is reached, the custom's man's family gets new clothes. Nobody minds this arrangement. (51)

Bribery, which is actually a shame, is accepted as a way of life where principles have no value at all. The interest of the society and the land are sacrificed for the sake of personal well- being and luxury. The gradual degradation of the society is presented.

The meaning of democracy is fulfilled, when just elections are held and popular candidates are elected by people. Force and causation should not have any role in this process. But election in Pakistan is a force. Force, partiality and unjust means influence the result of an election as proved when Iskander Harappa came to power as the ruler. Great voter manipulation took place. It is narrated by the author in the following words:

> Large numbers of men and women were swept away by the ocean of bewilderment, unable to locate ballot boxes or even ballots and failed to cast their votes. Other stronger swimmers in those seas, succeeded in expressing their preferences twelve or thirteen times. (178)

In certain places where the result may not be compatible with the expectation of the Popular Front led by Harappa, recounts were held at night:

> Outside the errant polling stations large number of democrats assembled, many holding burning brands above their heads...And by morning the people's will had been expressed, and Chairman Iskey had won a huge and absolute majority....(178)

Wild justice becomes the face-mark of Pakistan. The playboy, Iskander Harappa is also presented. The author asks rhetorically:

> Did any man ever sacrifice more for his people? He gave up cock-fights, bear-fights, snake and mongoose duels, plus disco dancing, where he had watched special compilations of the juiciest bits excised from incoming foreign films. (125)

Iskander Harappa's ill-treatment of the ambassadors is one more black spot not only on his character but also on the political history of the country. Iskander Harappa makes their lives hell by cutting off their facilities and luxuries and humiliating them gravely, as a result of which old ambassadors left the country at the earliest and new ones never turned up. This aspect is effectively revealed by Rushdie:

> He made them wait weeks for audiences...Embassies would constantly be subjected to power cuts. Isky would open their diplomatic bags and personally add outrageous remarks to the Ambassador's reports...blocked their drain and censored their incoming calls. (185)

This torture came from a man who appeared to be a saint in front of the people. With all contempt and anger, Rushdie shows the unseen face of Harappa who was hailed as the protector of the people. The element of satire is strong here. Through Harappa, the double mindedness and cruelties of the reckless politicians are revealed.

Through his novel, *Shame* Rushdie severely criticizes the political conditions of Pakistan. At the same time, he does not spare social life of the nation. The concept of 'shame' is at root of almost all evils in the country and this concept, born in social life, extends itself in the field of politics, too. It gets reflected in the narrator's words: "Repression is a seamless garment, a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honor and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well" (173).

The author presents *Shame* as having a collective effect particularly in social life. It means that if one member of the family makes a mistake, shame will befall the entire family. In such a pattern, woman is the worst sufferer. The consequences due to social disabilities are thus clearly explained in this novel, *Shame*. In fact, the country referred to in *Shame* could be any country that has been ruined by dictatorship and corruption.

Thus the novel, *Shame* holds a mirror to the contemporary society and exposes the totalitarian powers of anarchy that put forth and establish their own voices, dogmas, rules and regulations suppressing all other voices which are ultimately ruinous. By digging deep into the thoughts of the individuals, who have been victims of the partition, the novelist draws out their innermost senses of shame, shamelessness, hope, despair, ambition and anguish besides banking upon their optimism at the rise of a new country.

Chapter Three

Existential Anxiety

Rushdie uses a set of political and social values as his fictional pitch of his protagonists, and cultivates an interest in the reader of the contemporary issues. This creative technique forms the foundation as well as an approach to Rushdie's aesthetic imagination. The unmistakable and profound historical sense of purpose enables in simultaneously conceiving events and comprehending their human and political significance. It enriches the human context of his fictional plots with their mythical past, thereby defining strategies of political expression.

The ensuring concept of history is further extended and casually liberated into a world of timelessness in *Midnigh's Children*, the history of the protagonist is linked to that of India; whereas in *Shame* the story is the history of Pakistan. This kind of concentrated focus on selected aspects of Pakistan's political and cultural history is not because of Rushdie's love for post-modernist technique, but is a known feature of his satiric work. The shameful aspects of the social, political and cultural scenes of Pakistan are reflected in the lives and activities of its two prominent leaders, Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, who represent civilian and military authority respectively. Though Shame deals with a few issues since the country's Independence and its post-imperial existence, it concerns about religion, Islamic revival and cultural and moral norms of the country.

As Sushila Singh rightly points out, "Unfolding the truth about Pakistan, the novel is a queer combination of free flight fairy tale and a savage political indictment". Thus the fanciful novel covers up an underlying theme of shame; while shamelessness

pervades it unobtrusively. The act of covering up what exists underneath is technically called a 'palimpsest'. This word is generally used about manuscripts, usually on parchment, where the original writing had been erased or washed away and replaced by a new text. Rushdie uses this word metaphorically to reflect the attitude of Pakistan in trying to repress its past by re-writing official history.

Salman Rushdie believed that history means not merely narration of events from the precedent to the current time but it includes the memory and imagination of the author. History is the presence of the precedent and it is expected in the consciousness of narrator. He predicts demise for his Pakistan, demise at the hands of the very history that created it and witnessed the confinement of Bangladesh in 1971.

The people of Pakistan have no future prospects of their own lives. There is a conflict between native populace and migrants-'Mohajirs' from India. Sufia is an output of the combination of the Mohajirs and the natives, Omar. The split between the two sets is complete and it symbolizes the aftermath of colonialism in Pakistan. As *Shame* informs us Pakistan's establishment resembles as a palimpsest that obscures what lies beneath, to build Pakistan, it was necessary to cover up the Indian history. To deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani time. The past was rewritten and there was nothing else to be done.

From another perspective, naked Bilquis also symbolizes Pakistan, the Land of the Pure for nakedness is purity. Rushdie describes that she has been emptied of history which reflects the Pakistani disposition to disown the unified Indian history. The partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan becomes the core of the novel. By digging

deep into the thoughts of the individuals, who have been victims of the partition, the novelist draws out their innermost senses of shame, shamelessness, hope, despair, ambition and anguish besides banking upon their optimism at the rise of a new country.

The covered, repressed writing deals with the violence, oppression and injustices. A palimpsest obscures what is beneath the surface, that is, the multiplicity of people, languages and cultures. Masquerading something is done out of shame; shame to acknowledge one's links to history. The masquerading themes of shame and shamelessness shape and form the novel *Shame*. The novel mythologizes:

> ...the acts of shame and shamelessness committed when another new nation was created by partitioning the Indian subcontinent, dividing people from people and resulting in communal riots and physical and moral scars on individuals, families, neighbourhoods, towns and cities. (21)

Rushdie tries to show how shame is a part of the architecture of the society that the novel describes. He says:

> Shameful things are done; lies, loose living, disrespect for one's elders, failure to love one's national flag, incorrect voting at elections, overeating, extramarital sex, autobiographical novels, cheating at cards, maltreatment of women-folk, examination failures, smuggling, throwing one's wicket away at the crucial point of a Test Match: and they are done shamelessly. (122)

Rushdie weaves the story of the fictional country by fictionalizing the factual events collected from history. He emphasizes the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious

and multi-political background of the country he has created. The novel is partly told in two ways - one, as the narrator does and the other as done by different characters. The narrator with the help of his two-level narration leads to the truth. Rushdie's interest in gathering and chronicling information about Pakistan, wherein two types of government characterize its functioning attracts everyone.

Although, historically speaking, the causes of the partition were many, Rushdie presents only a casual picture of the communal disturbances that were to be witnessed on the eve of the great divide when bombs had begun exploding in different places. The explosion kills Mahmoud Kemal, strps Bilquis off her clothes, burns up her eyebrows and she is forced to escape naked and enters the Red Fort. Bilquis is rescued by and married to Raza Hyder, a military man, who represents the greedy military generals of Pakistan. Raza and Bilquis are forced to leave the country when it is divided, and flies to the West Wing of Pakistan. From a historical perspective, Rushdie's aim is to connect the religious fanaticism with the sufferings experienced by the people due to partition.

Rushdie portrays the characters in a complex way by intertwining realism and symbolism. As far as the characters are concerned, Rushdie portrays them in an appreciably realistic way. They have derived traits from the historical ones, though the factual and fictional biographies differ in many ways. Like Sufiya who is born to Bilquis as "a wrong miracle" (89), Pakistan is also created on either side of India. Pakistan is described by Rushdie as a product of 'the miracle that went wrong' (87). Its creation was something that was much fought against and unforeseen till the last moment. Much was expected from the leaders of Pakistan, who wanted to separate themselves from India. They claimed religious differences to be the reason against staying united. Pakistan

which was given freedom, a day prior to that of India, was expected to fare well. But time showed that the miracle went wrong since it chose wrong options like religion, for politically administering the country.

Sufiya's birth is preceded by the symbolic still birth of a male child, who is strangled by the umbilical cord in Bilquis's womb. He is dead before he is born. The narrator explains that the dead child obtains a kind of life through the parents' fantasy and belief. Similarly, the idea of a country born out of religious fanaticism is prone to be still born. The baby supposed to be born healthy and kicking is strangulated by its source of nutrition, the umbilical cord resembling the country which was denied of its energy after Independence. But the irony is that the parents, the founders of Pakistan, had a fantastic imagination that it is alive. They did not realise that the sustenance they provided to their child, religion, did not allow it to live. Thus Rushdie asserts that Pakistan is built on unstable or shaky foundations of cheating, illusions and violence from the beginning.

Similar qualities are reflected in the lives of the other characters also. For example Raza Hyder's cousin Rani is married to Iskander Harappa, a land owner and a play boy. Iskander gradually interests himself in politics. Rani Harappa is alienated from her husband soon after her marriage and gets confined to his vast country estate for most of the novel. Ajurn and, the daughter of Rani Harappa, whose refusal to accept feminity earns her the nickname The Virgin Iron pants, plays a more significant presence in the life of Iskander. Rani spends most of her time embroidering the shawls that depict the political oppression and cruelty of Isky's regime. The shawls, woven by Rani Harappa, symbolically articulate a suppressed memory of Iskander Harappa's infidelities, violent

conduct and abuses of political power also. The eighteen shawls she embroiders that are entitled "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great" (191), not only encompass realism, but also symbolism that makes the work allegorical. For instance, one of the shawls depicts the abortive military campaign against East Pakistan. The shawl portrays Harappa and Shaggy Dog as cruel boys cutting open the throat of an emerald chicken and pulling the feathers from its east wing.

Rushdie asserts that repression has been the way of life in Pakistan. It is a repression of all sorts - repression of human rights, repression of democracy, repression of women, and repression of proper education - which has made Pakistan rigid, unstable and violent. Bhutto, who founded the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), declared his fanaticism in his speech on October, 1966: Islam is our faith, democracy is our policy, socialism is our economy. All power to the people. Rushdie in his *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* confirms that the other ruler portrayed in the novel, Zia-Ulhaq, Islamized Pakistan constitutionally. He "was one of the cruelest of modern tyrants "...Pakistan under Zia has become a nightmarish, surreal land, in which battlefield armaments meant for the Afghan rebel are traded more or less openly on the country's black markets" (51). In the same essay, Rushdie further adds, "The medieval misogynistic stultifying idealogy which Zia imposed on Pakistan in his Islamization programme was the ugliest possible face of the faith and by which most Pakistani Muslims were, I believe, disturbed and frightened" (52).

Rushdie reflects his perspective through Rani Harappa, who sees Pakistani history as a grotesque nightmare. Rani Harappa acquires a heavily emphasized role in the novel, since she preserves the past, unlike the others who try to repress it or even burn it.

Similar to Nusrat Bhutto, wife of Z.A. Bhutto, who worked tirelessly for the well-being of her fellow citizens, Rani Harappa offers her services to the realisation of truth in the novel. When Ajumand tries to preserve the memories of her father Iskander as a real martyr, Rani presents the historical evidence to Ajumand. But Ajumand is reluctant to accept truths. Taking recourse to history, Rushdie in his essay, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism,* comments that Benazir Bhutto in her book *Daughter of the East* was unwilling to admit that her martyred parents committed any sin. Rushdie observes:

> The resulting omissions from the story are as revealing as the bits she puts in. She manages, for example, to get through her entire account of her father's government without once mentioning the little matter of genocide in Baluchistan ... She fails entirely to mention Bhutto's strenuous efforts at election rigging in 1977...Wont of all, she falsifies Bhutto's role in the events leading to the secession of Bangladesh. (61)

Writing upon the development of his women characters, Rushdie simultaneously echoes his concerns for the muted nature and condition of Pakistani women. Women like Sufiya, Bilquis and Rani and their histories can be taken as alternate histories of Pakistan. Sufiya has been "stricken with a brain disease that dislocates her time sense, further underlining her association with a Pakistan, progressively unable to take its place in history" (22). Thus individual histories, when combined, contribute to societal history, which in turn makes the national history. Hence the histories of the individual characters portrayed as icons in Rushdie's *Shame*, assemble to provide the history of the nation.

Rushdie subtly and ironically reflects the prevailing political background through the story line. Rani Harappa and Bilquis belonging to the two main families Hyders and Harappas - discussed in the novel, arrange for a matrimonial alliance between Iskander's nephew Haroun Harappa and Hyders younger daughter Naveed or Good News. There is a political motive behind arranging the alliance. The offer of securing Haroun Harappa for a son-in-law is beneficial to Raza Hyder, either way. Firstly, the match would please the President, Marshal A., Raza Hyder's boss; because Haroun Harappa's father was very close to Marshal A. Secondly, Haroun Harappa hated his father and had close ties with Iskander. Iskander on his part was trying to secure political power and it was known to Raza. So securing Haroun as a son-in-law would speak for him near Iskander. His position in would be safe. But when Naveed discovers that Haroun Harappa has no ambitions, she claims Tulvar Ulhaq, the captain and the great star of the police team, as her future husband.

As a result, the two families are disunited over the failure of the proposed alliance between them. Rushdie thus introduces true occurrences with the thoughtful air of someone who finds them much stranger than fiction. Perhaps the only way to understand realities is to make up stories about them. During his years in power, Iskander creates a Federal Security Force and appoints Talvar Ulhaq as its head. The clairvoyancy of Talvar Ulhaq enabled Iskander to compile detailed information on issues of bribery, conspiracies, tax evasion, student sects, and homosexuality. Clairvoyancy made it possible for Talvar to arrest a future traitor before he committed his act of treason, and thus ironically save the fellow's life.

Rushdie subtly presents the interplay between the oppression and violence in real Pakistan. He draws parallels between Sufiya and Pakistan. Sufiya, overcome by shame, physically attacks her sister's husband Talvar, during their marriage, by burying her teeth into his neck. Omar Khayyam, in the meanwhile has fallen for his destiny by marrying the afflicted eldest daughter of Raza Hyder, whom he had treated in his profession as a doctor. Sufiya, burdened with her family's shame, gradually discovers the hidden path which links shame to violence and a great beastly force is unleashed.

Finally, towards the end, she kills her husband Omar Khayyam Shakil, a person incapable of feeling any shame. The increased violence at last becomes impossible to control. Her violence is expressed when both family and political disturbance raging from shame erupt. Her actions mirror the gathering storm on the political scene. Thus Sufiya functions as an image or the soul of Pakistan. The novelist tactfully portrays the shameful activities like obscenity, permissiveness and debauchery as a guise to present the historical events of Pakistan. The novel reflects the historical facts of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-Ulhaq (in the novel Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder respectively) representing the two presidents of Pakistan.

Ensuring a strong factual base from the historical data secured, comparisons can be drawn with the events also. Bhutto's counterpart in the story, Iskander's rise in the novel is significant. He rises to the post of Foreign Minister in President A's government. When political situation in Pakistan has deteriorated, Field Marshal A. ordered troops into the streets to restore peace. An agitation against Field Marshal A. leads to the transfer of power into the hands of General Shaggy Dog. To pacify the mob, General Shaggy Dog puts Marshal A, under house arrest and promises to restore democracy

through democratic election. Rushdie incorporates the actual happenings that took place in Pakistan following Ayub Khan's downfall and Yahya Khan's capture of power.

The way Bhutto tried to preserve his power by empowering incompetent persons to higher positions in the army, the manner in which Zia replace him by setting up a regime of religious intolerance and the other political events in the book are spun around this thinly veiled Isky-Raza story contributing to the history of the country. The other characters in the story also represent the great names in the political history of Pakistan - Marshal A. as General Ayub Khan, General Shaggy Dog as Yahya Khan, Sheikh Bismillah as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ajumand Harappa as Benazir Bhutto.

The political leaders presented in the novel are autocratic, not democratic. They are rooted in the past, refusing to extend into the present. Rushdie makes use of politics prevailing in Pakistan to highlight the fact that the scheming political leaders are not interested in the welfare of the people, but in grabbing and enjoying power. They do not offer any hope for the people. The social life is characterized by communal riots, coups and Islamization. Seema Bhaduri is of the opinion that "Rushdie's Shame reconstructs the sordid political history of Pakistan bringing to light the deep socio-cultural imbalances that have shaped this country" (25).

As a post-modem writer, Rushdie tries to find an effective action against tyrants. He observes:

> How does a dictator fall? There is an old saw which states, with absurd optimism, that is in the nature of tyrannies to end. One might as well say that it is also in their nature to begin, to continue, to dig themselves in, and,

often, to be preserved by greater powers than their own. My dictator was to be toppled by goblinish, faery means. 'Makes it pretty easy for you,' is the obvious criticism; and I agree, I agree. But add, even if it does sound a little peevish: 'You try and get rid of a dictator some time.' (257)

The fabric of the narrative covers the events from the partition in general, but more precisely from the time of the East-West conflict. The subsequent events like the overthrow of the President Ayub Khan, the martial law of General Yahya Khan, the rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the military action against the tribesmen of Baluchistan in the nineteen seventies, the military coup and the downfall of Bhutto, the dictatorial regime of General Zia and his attempt to Islamize the country are all woven into the texture of the narrative. Rushdie comments on Soviet aggression of Afghanistan, the race murder in Bangladesh, the fundamental Islamic revolution of Khomeini against the monarchy of the Shah of Iran and of his family and its exodus from India to Pakistan after the partition, the general elections in Pakistan, the Bangladesh war etc.

Rushdie fictionalises the historical realities of Pakistan which led to the army crackdown on the East Wing on 25th March 1971, the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh; The West in a state of shock, the sound of one Wing flapping, beset by the appalling notion of surrendering the government to a party of swamp aborigines, little dark men with their unpronounceable language of distorted vowels and slurred consonants; perhaps not foreigners exactly, but aliens without a doubt.

It is once again evident from his comments on the situation in the country when India supported the struggle of the East Wing:

> the idolatrous nation positioned between the West-backed bastards and the Russian bastards to the hilt, for obvious, divide-and-rule reasons. In the West, oil-refineries, airports, the homes of God-fearing civilians bombarded by heathen explosives. (179)

Rushdie even criticises Pakistan arm's failure in the war. The narrator comments, "This single army proved to be the undoing of the ablest statesman who ever ruled that country which had been so tragically misfortune, so accursed, in its heads of state" (181).

'Might is right' has been the politics of the world during most times in history. Though there is a frantic return to democracy at times, it has been only a masquerade for a short time. Democracy, the most refined form of government, becomes successful only when the entire population of the country is educated and possesses common sense. Till then, this hide and seek with tyranny, autocracy, dictatorship and family rule is a must in the political history of any nation. Pakistan definitely is not an exception to it. Rushdie's *Shame* is an urgent, courageous and committed act of protest against the democratic deficit in Pakistan.

Framing constitutional rules, regulations and statutes has been the jurisprudence of governing nations. Making laws flexible to suit the needs of the ruling has also been in vogue. Different tactics are adopted to assume power. In *Shame,* the facts occurred or the characters that succored them clearly prove it. Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, the two main historical images portrayed, are dealt with in stinging tones. The political events in the novel are related to the rise and fall of the leaders who are mainly army generals, except Iskander Harappa.

The political development in the country turned their [illegible] leading the country towards democracy, they had moved [illegible] fundamentalism. Veritable facts provide the needed base for discussion in the [illegible] scenario of Pakistan, there is a succession of leaders engaged in bringing about [illegible] But the last coup bringing Raza to power inaugurated a new trend, the so-called Islamic fundamentalism. This was strongly supported by military administration. The political leaders presented in the novel are despotic, not democratic. They are rooted in the past, refusing to extend into the present.

The most interesting feature of the army rule in Pakistan has been that the generals legitimised it by linking it with religion. When Raza Hyder imprisoned Iskander similar to Zia-Ulhaq. Raza Hyder's origin and early career deviate from Zia's; but Raza's resemblance to the historical character increases as he enters the political scene. General Zia, a religious intolerance, believed that only religion could improve the state of affairs and put his ideology to severe and unrestrained practice. Rushdie suggests that religious fanaticism is not the right solution to this conflict.

As T.N. Dhar points out, "The main thrust of Rushdie's censure of the regime of Zia is that he used religion to perpetuate himself in power and revived medieval barbaric laws and practices" (26). General Raza felt safe in talking about the Islamic scriptures and imposing its dictates. General Raza justified measures like flogging and cutting of limbs as injunctions of God. To a team of foreign journalists he is reported to have said: "These are not laws... which we plucked out of the wind. These are the holy words of God, as revealed in sacred texts. Now if they are holy words of God, they cannot also be barbaric. It is not possible" (245).

Islamization of Pakistan under General Razas regime included curbs on consumption of liquor, rescheduling of TV programmes, promotion of religion through media, discouraging donations to politicians, allowing charities and even incarcerating beggars; because "God and socialism were incompatible" (247). Citing the name of God, he invoked the principle of stability for the country only to put Generals everywhere. Consequently, Raza Hyder crushes individual liberty and punishes women moving out unveiled in the streets and people going against the norms during fasting months. The army's hold on the lives of people was so deep that there was no freedom to an individual. Even Raza's own men who conspired revolt against him are liquidated overnight. As the narrator visualizes the consequences of such imposition, he remarks:

> ...the ramming-down-the-throat point stands. In the end you get sick of it, you lose faith in the faith ... And then the dictator falls, and it is discovered that he has brought God down with him, that the justifying myth of the nation has been unmade. This leaves only two options: disintegration, or a new dictatorship. (251)

It is pointed out that Pakistan need not go the way of Iran. Rushdie does not approve of Zia's imposition of religion on people and administration, seeking, "a convenient and dependable exploitative ideology to maintain status quo, which people found difficult to oppose"(27). In an interview Rushdie says, that Zia cloaks what he does in the language of faith, and because people respect the faith they do not want to question what he does and further says that's the way religion legitimises tyranny, and Islam linguistically protects Zia. It cannot be said that Rushdie is against the organisation and working of states on Islamic principles:

so-called Islamic 'fundamentalism' does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religions shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited, disenfranchised, mocked. (251)

The people of Pakistan are repressed ecome helpless. They remain mute spectators when the monsters terrorize them. They live in a political system which does not allow them to nurture their political skills. They get used to maintain a stoic silence even in the face of adversities, unheard of before. It is only nature, in the form of Sufiya Zinobia that provides a solution to the atrocities committed. As a creative writer, Rushdie takes it up as his responsibility to present a critique on the politics of the Indian subcontinent. He aims at presenting a proper perspective of religion and politics.

In an interview with John Haffenden Rushdie says, "I do think that if the state has a chance of surviving, it has to remove religion from itself, and when it does that it has a chance of removing the generals" (25). He firmly believes that Islamic revival has failed to unite the Sindhis, Baluchis, Punjabis and Pathans under the religious banner imposed by autocratic rulers for their convenience. He strongly propagates the great ideals of French Revolution - Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and considers them alternatives to Islamization. He declares:

> Few mythologies survive close examination...only two options: disintegration, or a new dictatorship... no, there is a third, and I shall not

substitution of a new myth for the old one. [illegible]
available from stock at short notice: liberty, equality, [illegible]
recommend them highly. (251)

Thus Rushdie suggests that his nods to the Left are mostly a pious wish for equalizing social disparity rather than ideological commitment.

Rushdi's alternative to the crippling process of autocratic power, liberty, equality and fraternity - cannot claim to be perfect and can become successful only when used judiciously and prudently. Rushdie even "suggests that such principles could have provided the basis for a possible unity of what had been left of the country after it got split into two" (29).

Shame also delineates the absurd political system in the history of Pakistan. It is a despotism in which there are no fixed values. Iskander Harappa who tries to impose perfect political order in the country, never himself follows the rules. Though he professes democracy, he grooms his child Arjumand to take his place. In spite of preaching freedom to the people, he again draws a line demarcating that liberty. His actions are an indication of his egotism that he is beyond rules and laws. Raza Hyder, on the other hand, uses religion to realise his political fantasies.

Rushdie presents realistic details of Pakistani political events, including the sensational execution of Bhutto, creatively for the development of the historical plot in the novel. But Rushdie vehemently denies that he is not for writing in a realistic vein. He says:

> How much real life material might be compulsory? ... for example ... the long ago Deputy Speaker who was killed in the National Assembly when the furniture was flung at him by elected representatives ... or about the issue of Time magazine (or was it News week) which never got into the country because it denied an article about President Ayub Khan alleged Swiss bank account.. . or about genocide in Baluchistan ... or about the extra hangings ... that were ordered purely to legitimize the execution of Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto ... or about smuggling, the boom in heroin exports, military dictators, venal civilians, corrupt civil servants ... Imagine my difficulties. (69-70)

While expressing his opinion on gender politics, Rushdie is clear-cut in his tone. This gender politics is an abnegation that reflected the social status of the 'weaker sex'. Rushdie says that *Shame* is partly about the way in which women are socially repressed. Rushdie tells that in a country where women are so badly treated as in Pakistan, there can never be a democratic society, because such a country does not recognize or accept the freedom of individual human relationships. For any ideal democratic country there should be equal rights and acceptance of the power for every individual despite of their religion, sex and ethnic group. If the country failed to establish the permanent bond of human relationships, it would results in a catastrophe and thus, there is always bloodsheds and daily crimes committed in every home and street of the state.

Pakistan is the ideal example of this situation where there is no freedom of expression to the half of their population i.e. women. The formation of Pakistan was itself out of bloodshed and carnage of millions of Indians and Pakistani inhabitants of this

country. The partition of India into two nation states in 1947 was an unexpected and unwanted incident for millions of people except the politicians and the radicals. It was a dark chapter in the Indian and world history of humanity.

As Indira Bhatt has rightly suggests, the Sufiya phenomenon "...represents the growth of political Pakistan which has not grown to true nation-hood". Pakistan has been passing through trouble and turmoil in the fields of religion, social, and gender intolerance or prejudice for various reasons. It is evident from Sufiya's attitude and behaviour. The unrestrained gender violence of Pakistan is slanderous to the nation's very existence.

Rushdie underscores that the role of a woman in a country like Pakistan is confined to the home and as any other religion observes she is a mere chattel. But he is surprised to find women in *Shame*, slowly playing an active role in a typical patriarchal world. Rushdie comments:

> What I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale, a saga of sexual rivalry, ambition, power, patronage, betrayal, death, revenge. But the women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my 'male' plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and 'female' side. It occurs to me that the women knew precisely what they were up to. (123)

Inderpal Grewal opines that, "What Rushdie writes for is the image [illegible] of Pakistani women" (390) and then accuses him of failing to [illegible] Bhagwany Needham, Rushdie doesn't create "a utopian or visionary space for [illegible] he seeks rather to expose the particular and horrifying conditions of their oppression" (40). Having exposed the horrifying condition of women oppression, Rushdie also provides a solution in the form of Nature, where Sufiya is selected to implement it. Her violent acts slowly increase. Her husband Omar Khayyam tries to imprison her, but she escapes. Having escaped she prowls around during nights murdering people. These time period adventure are immensely damaging to her father Raza Hyder's existence as the head of the state. Hence he wishes to see her dead.

Towards the end of the novel, Raza Hyder, Bilquis and Omar Khayyam escape from the country and they arrive at the town 'Q'. Bilquis dies of fever. Raza's body is cut into pieces by stiletto blades operated by the three Shakil sisters as an act of revenge for having killed their second son, Babur Shakil. Raza is shown to fall a victim to his own religious beliefs and violent policies which he implemented during his reign. After the death of Raza Hyder, the Shakil sisters vanish. An explosion takes place in Nishapur in which Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyam are burnt. "If the images of cruelty, perversion and waste dominate the narrative, it is because the reality of Pakistan is unpleasant, repressive and exploitative"(140).

In spite of presenting all the negative facts, Rushdie attracts the readers into reading the book. He achieves the impossible by using historical allusions and magic realism with great aplomb. As the narrator wants to give an image of the country and of its past, the ancient history of the country is evoked throughout the novel in the names

and actions of the characters. Timothy Brennan is of the opinion that [illegible] history in allusive references to the past which are buried in social [illegible] family titles and ironic corporation of figures from legend." (211) The [illegible] Iskander Mirza of Punjabi bureaucracy returns in the figure of Iskander Harappa [illegible] alluded to in *Midnight's Children* also as Brigadier Iskander. The surname Harappa alludes to the ancient Harappan civilization that borders Bhutto's family estate in Sind province. The famous Macedonian conqueror Alexander who invaded India in 326 B.C. gives his name to a chapter entitled 'Alexander the Great' that deals with the rise of Bhutto.

The selfishness and the powerful temperament of the historians are responsible for making history more creative than authentic. So Salman Rushdie observes, history is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge. In a way many historians have made history more a fantasy than a reality. But Rushdie uses fantasy to present the reality in an amazingly perceptive method. And in some novels, he details history and fantasy which ultimately turn to magic realism

Thus *Shame* holds a mirror to the contemporary society and exposes the totalitarian powers of anarchy that put forth and establishes their own voices, dogmas, rules and regulations suppressing all other voices which are ultimately ruinous. The double mindedness and the hidden cruelties are revealed in a very powerful manner, using satire as the weapon. Deterioration in values is seen everywhere, especially in case of the government officials. Rushdie affirms that *Midnight's Children* is 'a novel of

memory', whereas *Shame* is a novel about truth. Rushdie's Shame reflects the emotions of embarrassment, humility, decency, repentance of hostile words and sense of guilt for a crime. He enumerates shameless acts like untruths, ill treatment of women or gender bias, smuggling, lack of patriotism, and incorrect way of exercising franchise; ironically and politically.

Chapter Four

Magical Realism

Magic realism is a literary genre that integrates fantastical and supernaturalism as mundane and realistic. It is a technique used by postcolonial writers like Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, Gunter Grass and many more to disrupt the rationalistic and scientific beliefs of the West with the mythical and magical beliefs of the East. It is a mode of writing that presents the unbelievable like the existence of ghosts, humans could fly on carpets or a huge giant could appear from a small lamp and so on. In a way the movement also reminds us that life is not only rational and scientific rather mystical and unknown. The magic realist writer mixes fantasy and fiction to give a realistic flavor to the novel.

As said Magical realism is where magic elements are part of an otherwise mundane, realistic environment. Rushdie uses this in many of his novels, and in *Shame* he creates a fictionalized version of Pakistan called Q in which the story takes place saying the country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. The first person narrative makes it obvious that Rushdie is inserting his own commentary into the story as he tells anecdotes about his process of writing the novel and the actual differences between Q and Pakistan.

The novel is a portrayal of the lives of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Iskander Harappa) and Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (Raza Hyder). Rushdie jumps around many different story lines and brings them all together to explore the concepts of shame vs. shamelessness, authenticity, truth, and heritage in all the characters. The central point projected is the violence born out of shame.

Rushdie focuses very much on women in the [illegible] stereotyped perspective of women in Pakistan. He [illegible] as very unreal and unbelievable although their stories are based [illegible] events.

Rushdie as a diasporic writer employs magical realism in order to expose the society of Pakistan. He uses fantasy to present the reality in an amazingly perceptive method which ultimately turns to magic realism. In authoritarian societies, particularly in countries long ruled by totalitarian dictators, the resourceful energy of the artist is turned to oblique methods of expression, zigzag, tortuous ways to let out suppressed explosive vision of protest against injustice and torture. Merriam Webster defines 'Magical realism' as:

> A literary genre or style associated especially with Latin American that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction-called also magical realism. It is the same painting of images and fantastic scenes in meticulously real and magical stories that rely on the acceptance of the ordinary and the extraordinary. (193)

The manner in which Rushdie combines these two contrasting features to build on the basic structure can also be viewed as a technique of escapism from ethical and ideological responsibility. Rushdie not only attempts to shake off narrative responsibility, but also imbues the same features in his characters.

As a diasporic writer, Rushdie lights on imaginary homeland. He uses magic realism to portray his ideas and thoughts on Pakistan politics. If a writer attacks a country or the political leaders directly in his writings, the work of art will not only be banned or criticized violently but also the author will be in remission. So the migrant

[illegible] would exploit their ideas from their [illegible] point of view.

Rushdie views *Shame* as a great social and political satire. He lampoons caricatures social and political conditions in Pakistan where democracy was thrown for winds time and again and dictatorship ruled the roost thereby imposing Islamic Fundamentalism and bigotry on the country. Though the period covered in *Shame* is from 1947 to 1983 but in fact Pakistan belongs to the century so far as the ethos of the country is concerned.

Rushdie uses magical realism as a tool for expressing his satirical view on Pakistan. He artfully reflects upon the real political situation in Pakistan by creating a fictional country of his own where all the kinds of magic and miracles can easily take place. He also tries to disguise his narrative in a fairy-tale by employing a story-telling mode. For example, he sets his narrative at several places like; "Once upon a time (45)", "there was once a young woman", (197) "Once upon a time there was a plot of land" (133), "And once upon a time there was a retarded daughter" (135). Again by using the Hegiran calendar and by claiming a part of the story set in the fifteenth century, Rushdie has tried to cover the facts with the clock of fantasy.

In Rushdie's *Shame,* divergence between fact and fiction, real and unreal becomes immaterial. In such a world anything becomes possible. The novel depicts the collective fantasy of a submissive people, the reality that exists but cannot be acknowledged. Sufiya Zinobia vanishes in increasing amount of malicious hardship, in her slow process of disintegration in a world of fantasy:

> . . . yellow fire behind her closed eyelids, fire under her fingernails and beneath the roots of her hair. Yes, she was dead allright, I'm sure of it,

no more Sufiya - Zinobianess. Everything burned up in that [illegible]

body on a funeral pyre and it will jerk, genuflect, sit up, dance [illegible]

pulls the nerve strings of the corpse, which becomes the fire's [illegible]

Conveying a ghastly illusion for life amidst the flames.... (243)

The fantastic mode operates on a principle of dreaming. Here, it becomes the world of nightmares of regret and betrayal. Omar Khanam's search for identity begins thus in the inverted-world of Nishapur, "long before his own brother saw a winged and golden-glowing man watching him from a roof top. Omar Khayyam Shakil had become aware of the plausible theory that paradise was located not in the sky but beneath his very feet, so that the earth's movements were proof of the angel's interest in scrutinizing world affairs" (23). The world of fantasy is mostly realized in plentiful bizarre detail:

> Have you heard of those wolf-children, suckled- we must suppose- on the feral multiple breasts of a hairy moon-howling dam? Rescued from the pack, they bite their saviours vilely in the arm; netted and caged, they are brought stinking of raw meat and faecal matter into the emancipated light of the world, their brains too imperfectly formed to be capable of acquiring more than the most fundamental rudiments of civilization . . . Omar Khayyam too fed at too-many mammary glands....(30)

Rushdie uses magical realist style to describe the psychological effects of shame in a patriarchal society which is based on capitalistic class values.

> ... a Pakistani father murdered his only child, a daughter, because by making love to a white boy she had brought such dishonour upon her

family that only her blood could wash away the [illegible]

grew out of the corpse of that murdered girl. (111)

Rushdie's ideas and thoughts are conveyed through the character of [illegible] Zindha. She is introduced into the story as a child who was much awaited. But even born, she is rejected shamelessly by her parents. This is somehow instilled into the baby and she starts blushing, right at birth. This is something that is hard to comprehend. She grows physically, but remains retarded psychologically. Even then, she feels the shame of all her family members and tries to undo it. The manner in which she retaliates to every action of shame is highly supernatural. Her innocence also leads her to take on the shame of everyone around her- Sufiya is the depiction of shame. All the shame eventually results in her explosion and the innocence is gone in an instant when she turns into a beast and rapes and kills young children.

Rushdie employs twist in the dilemma Sufia faces, though true in projection, is said to have resulted in the fantastic beastly invasions which are hard to accept as reality. The birth of children to Sufiya's sister Naveed in profusion is likened to the growing population of the country. This profusive birth of children appears quite unbelievable. Unable to bear the strain, Naveed commits suicide; maybe in a way symbolising what lies in store for Pakistan. The birth of children is acceptable as reality, but the profusion and the steady increase only mystify the reader.

Rushdie not only attempts to shake off the narrative responsibility, but also penetrates the same features into his characters as well. The birth of Omar Khayynm is one such instance. His father is hinted to be a Britisher and the identity of his mother is also a mystery. Instead of the usual parent and three children story line, the novel presents a usual fairy tale syndrome of three mothers and a child. In fact it

sadness that of the three Shakil sisters, one becomes pregnant without [illegible] in order to protect honour and conceal shame, the other two sisters pretend [illegible] pregnant at the same time.

The three of them begin, simultaneously, to thicken at the waist and in the breast. when one is sick, the other two begin to vomit in such perfect synchronized sympathy that it becomes impossible to tell which stomach has heaved first. Their wombs, too, ballooned identically towards the pregnancy's full term. They enter in to the labor at the same time and a male child is born behind the doors. No doctor has been summoned to the house during the entire term of pregnancy. The most fantastic description follows the child birth:

> …she found the three sisters sitting up together in the capacious bed….They were all wearing the flushed expression of dilated joy that is the mother's prerogative; and the baby was passed from breast to breast, and none of the six was dry. (21)

It is quite common for any woman to be a pregnant, but to display all the symptoms of pregnancy without being pregnant, in case of other two sisters, is really fantastic. It indicates the fusion of fact and fantasy, an important characteristic of magic realism. It is general practice of the doctors to hold the baby by the ankles at the time of birth, but in the case of Omar Khayyam, such type of practice causes in him a sense of inversion, a sense of a world turned upside down. And by this, he gets afflicted by the fear that he is living at the edge of the world, so close that he might fall off at any moment. This sense of inversion stretches throughout the novel. Everything in the world of Omar is inverted. He has three mothers and no father, marries Sufiya as an old man and sleeps with her servant (ayah), Shahbanou. It is

very fantastic to note that Omar cuts down his sleeping time [illegible] forty minutes at night, 'the famous forty winks' (22) in order to [illegible] falling off the edge of the world.

The role of fantasy in the character of Sufiya goes beyond these incidents of unnatural blushing and resultant heat. Sufiya, like a sponge, soaks up the invisible shame and shamelessness resulting from military, political, ethnic, sexual and religious repression. She becomes the embodiment of shame. The shame is then transformed in to a deadly magical power. Despite her frail body, Sufiya develops supernatural strength and roams the country, hypnotizing her victims and wrenching their heads with her bare hands. This magic realist transformation of Beauty into a Beast is really fantastic as well as horrible. The most surprising matter is that Sufiya remains oblivious to the crimes she has committed.

The possession of Sufiya by the beast prevails at all the major junctures of her life. On the eve of her wedding with Omar, her mother Bilquis advises her about husband-wife relationship: "You must think of yourself as the ocean, yes, and he, the man, imagine him a sea creature, because that is what men are like, to live they must drawn in you, in the tides of your secret flesh" (215). But, Shahbanou paves the way for the further outburst of the beast in Sufiya by denying Omar to have sexual relation with his wife, Sufiya. In fact, she wants to protect Sufiya from any harm. Then after, with a view to protecting Sufiya, she offers herself to Omar and sleeps with him almost every night and becomes pregnant. Sufiya at twenty-eight has advanced to a mental age of approximately nine and a half and begins to understand what has happened. She has also heard the night-time noises, his grunts and her birdlike cries. She also wonders; "There is a women do at night with husbands. She does not do it,

Shahbanou does it for her. I hate fish. Her husband does not come to her at night.

(215)

The narrator's comment follows that "Here are two things she does not like: that he does not come to her, that's one, and the thing itself makes two, it sounds horrible…But she is a wife. She has a husband. She can't work this out."(215) Her craving for sex has been described in very fantastic words: " There is no ocean but there is a feeling of sinking. It makes her sick. "There is an ocean. She feels its tide. And, somewhere in its depths, a Beast, stirring." (215) Despite her many attempts to divert her thoughts to fine things, Sufiya cannot suppress her internal cravings.

The narrator prepares the readers for another outburst of the beast in the following words:

> She is a tide rising towards flood, she feels something coming, roaring, feels it take her, the thing, the flood or perhaps the thing in the flood, the Beast bursting forth to wreak its havoc on the world, and after that she knows nothing, will remember nothing, because it, the thing, is free. (219)

Sufiya begins to think about sex, children and her husband's treachery. In a lunatic frenzy, she (the monster) rises from the bed and walks the street in the night. She gets four youths in the slums and transfixes them by her appalling eyes and then satisfies her sexual hunger with all the four boys. After fulfilling her desires, she kills them. The entire event is described in the following words;

> Shame walks the street of night. In the slums four youths are transfixed…Down she lies; and what Shahbanou took upon herself is finally done to Sufiya. Four husbands come and go, four of them

in and out, and then her hands reach for the face, the neck, the others stand still and wait their turn. And heads bowed, sleigh, sinking into the scattered clouds, nobody saw them fall, the snow, the home. And sleeps, the Beast subsides. (219)

By using magical realism Rushdie modifies Sufia Zinobia as a beast. The beast in Sufiya kills a number of innocent people and animals all over the country. In a very short time, Sufiya ceases to be human and becomes a white panther. Rushdie states about Sufiya as:

> ...the panther was travelling to the capital. Black head, pale hairless, awkward gait…it was the time-honoured man-eater scare, but with a new terrifying twist: 'What animal', a six foot Frontiersman asked Omar Khayyam with the innocent awe of a child, 'can tear a man's head off his shoulders and drag his insides out through the hole to eat?' (253)

She turns in to a myth of destruction. "Murders of animal and man, villages raided in the dark, dead children, slaughtered flocks, blood curdling howl"(253). The description clarifying the aim for such killing creates horror in the novel:

> The killings continued: farmers, pie dogs, goats. The murders formed the death ring round the house…murders without rhyme or reason, done, it seemed, for the love of killing, or to satisfy some hideous need. The crushing of Haroun Harrappa removed the rational explanation; panic began to mount. (259-260)

Finally, the Beast that has taken over Sufiya hunts Omar, her husband in 'Nishapur' exactly in the same bed where his grandfather died. Her hands reach out to

Sufiya whose name suggests union with the God is possessed by the satanic power. Sufiya, in her blood-curdling murders, is projected as the Goddess Kali of Hindu religion. When Sufiya tears the heads of youths, no one knows where these heads have landed. Rushdie describes it as: "And heads hurled high, sinking in to the scattered clouds; nobody saw them fall" (219). The narrator emphasizes the point that "the heads were never found" (216). Here, it can be presumed that the heads might have been taken by Kali to add some more skulls in to her garland of skulls – as it goes with the image of Goddess Kali.

Commenting on Sufiya's role as Kali, Peter Vander Veer observes "The more Sufiya's father restrains women and female sexuality through his Islamic Laws, the more frightening becomes his daughter, who ends as a monster wandering through Pakistan beheading men and drawing out their entrails like a Muslim version of the Hindu goddess Kali" (102).

In this way, the character of Sufiya is more fantastic than any other character in the novel. Jenny Sharpe has observed about the presentation of Sufiya Zinobia in the following terms:

> The fantastic element of her character demonstrates how monstrous women's shame is to look at, if only it were something that could be seen. Through Sufiya Zinobia, Rushdie introduces the imaginative possibility of women's shame producing anger and self-pride rather than embarrassment and family honor. By creating a magical

character that plays with the rendering of [illegible] and *sharam*[shame], he breaks down the [illegible] taken for granted [illegible] female modesty. (2)

Rushdie creates a tyrannical world that becomes bizarre where fantasy converts into the nightmare that is Sufiya Zinobia. She evolves into a myth and a legend, a beast, lusty to kill, stalking the country, naked, matted with grime and blood. In Salman Rushdi's attempt to fictionalize the integral human emotion of shame, Sufiya Zinobia becomes the name he gives an abstraction. In this Rushdie uses fantasy as a mode of perceiving what appears as unreal in accepted situation. He projects Pakistan as the "aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy, a land because it has forgotten shame, registers horror and nightmare, objectified in the series of eighteen shawls that Rani Humayun embroiders" (115).

Apart from the incident of Sufiya's possession by the demon, there are many other incidents which present the elements of fantasy. For example; the multiple pregnancies of Naveed (Sufiya's sister) who is known as Good News is really fantastic. She gives birth to children whose number keeps on increasing every year. It is presented in the following words of the narrator:

> Good News gave birth to fine, healthy twin sons…Exactly one year later Good News became a mother again; this time she produced triplets…Precisely twelve months later Good News brought forth a beautiful quartet of baby girls…Five more granddaughters turned up one year later to the day…and in the fifth year Good News's womb released six more new lives, three male, three female…the number rose to twenty children in all, and by that time everyone had lost count

of how-many-boys-how-many-girls. Twenty-seven children aged between one and six...Meanwhile Good News had expanded yet again...Everyone knew with a terrible certainty that this time no fewer than eight babies would be produced.... (206-226)

It is common for any woman to give birth, but twenty-seven children and still some more in the womb leads the readers in to the area of fantasy. By these events, Rushdie tries to convey the agonies of women in their unavoidable duties. She attempts suicide to escape from those agonies.

Rushdie represents some traits of fantasy through Bilquis too. The bomb-blast in her father's Empire Talkies leads her towards the state of being a neurotic. From that moment, she has developed a sense of horror for the after-noon heat and Loo (hot wind). In fact, hot wind has awakened strange terror in Bilquis that she used to lock all the doors and windows of the house. When the Loo begins, she shouts at the servants to come and hold down the furniture in case the wind may blow it away. She also screams at her daughters to cling tight to something heavy, something fixed, lest the fire wind bear them off in to the sky.

Omar's brother, Babar who lives on the mountains with guerillas turns in to an angel before he dies. This incident is described as:

> And shortly before his death the guerrillas noticed that their bearded comrade's skin had begun to give off a yellow light; the little buds of new wings were visible on shoulders. It was a transformation familiar to the denizens of the Impossible Mountains. (132)

It shows that metamorphosis is quite an ordinary event for the [illegible]

the best example of fusion of ordinary and extra-ordinary elements. Captain Ka [illegible]

[illegible] had is blessed with clairvoyance, a magical trait on account of which he [illegible]

the hint of events that are to take place in near future. With the help of [illegible]

clairvoyance "...he could divine where crimes were going to be committed before the

thieves had worked it out themselves, so that his record of arrest was unbeatable

(164).

Apart from this, there is a man named Edurado Rodrigues who has the ability to speak in capital letters. It seems to be comic fantasy, but it has nothing to do with the main plot of the novel. The tribal's beliefs about the emergence of the angels throw light on the fantastical nature of the novel. The whole region of the mountains in the town of Q suffers from periodic earthquakes and the tribals believe that "the tremors were caused by the emergence of the angels through fissures in the rocks." (23). In this way, Rushdie has profusely made use of fantasy throughout the novel, but at the same time holds mirror to the certain evils of the society and politics of the concerned period of the subcontinent. This can easily be termed as fusion of fact and fantasy. In fact, the novel *Shame* is about Pakistan and particularly about the ruling class of the country.

To show the parallel history of Pakistan, the characters in *Shame* have similarity to the public figures of the recent past and present. But, the narrator cautions that:

> . . . if this were a realistic novel about Pakistan..." and "My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centering to be necessary ... My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan. (29)

It is not a realistic novel about Pakistan but a magic realistic or a neo surrealistic because it includes the type of hyperbolic images. Here, Rushdie has fictionalized the real and justified his imaginative treatment of history.

In order to portray the colour and vividity of the human experience Rushdie abandons the traditional restraints of the linear novel. Rushdie, interestingly, turn over into his own cultural history in order to replace this more traditional approach. The inspirations behind his literary technique in *Shame*, as in his earlier novel *Midnight's Children*, are the "traditional techniques of the Indian oral tradition". In the following article Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin cite Rushdie's views as:

> ...an oral narrative does not go from the beginning to the middle to the end of a story. It goes in great swoops, it goes in spirals or in loops, it every so often reiterates something that happened earlier to remind you, and then takes you off again, sometimes summarizes itself, it frequently digresses off into something that the story teller appears to have just thought of, then it comes back to the main thrust of the narrative. (55)

This kind of oral narrative reflects the mechanics of the human mind. Our minds are constantly delving into the realm of memory in reaction to environmental stimuli over which we have little control. We may smell something or hear something that reminds us of a past event or place. Digression is the nature of human expression, and the oral narrative provides Rushdie with a vehicle that allows him the breathing space to develop on his train of consciousness and to draw on other tales and anecdotes in order to illustrate his point.

narrative are mirrored in the Indian belief in "an immense cyclical pattern [by which] order is brought out of chaos and the universe dissolved back into chaos". Therefore to engage in this kind of oral narrative is to engage in a fundamental process of reflection which, in turn, reflects the great cycles of history itself.

Presentation of history is one of the important aspects of the genre, Magic Realism. Rushdie has profusely used historical material in his novel, *Shame*. Rushdie has based his novel, on the history of a newly born country of the subcontinent. At the same time, it can be said that the novel is not only a record of historical events, but also an artistic re-presentation of history. In comparison to *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* covers rather a shorter span of history, but it presents some of the crucial movements of the history of Pakistan. Rushdie's fictionalization and deliberate change in the names of characters turn out to be the story of Pakistan. It presents the history of the country in its initial phase. The parallels between the story and historical events are made quite clear by the narrator who is an alter-ego of the author. He states:

> My view is that I am not writing about Pakistan…I have not given the country a name. And Q. is not really Quetta at all. But I don't want to be precious about this: When I arrive at the big city, I shall call it Karachi. And it will contain a 'Difence'. (29)

There are number of historical events that attract the author's attention. He says: "But suppose this were a realistic novel! Just think what else I might have to put in"

(69). Rushdie's confusion about the framing of history becomes quite clear by his following statement:

> As for me: I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history: what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change. (87-88)

Rushdie's narration is governed by his own understanding of the events since the partition of the sub-continent. Generally, he seems to be suggesting what should have happened rather than what has happened. He presents eminent historical persons and places with fictitious names. The canvas of the narrative covers the events from the overthrow of the President Ayub Khan and the subsequent events like Martial Law of General Yahya Khan; the rise of Mr. Bhutto, the military action against the tribesmen of Baluchistan; the coup and downfall to the dictatorial regime of General Zia and his attempt to Islamize the country are woven in the texture of the narrative. All these events have been fictionalized in the novel, *Shame*.

The author has efficiently portrayed the fictional counterparts for historical events and personages in *Shame*. The Indian narrative technique does not, therefore, seek to describe an overt reality, like, for instance, the stream of consciousness technique adopted by the modernist school of writers of the early twentieth century. For whilst the modernist writer attempted to provide realism by entering the mind of a character and explaining this character's thoughts in great detail even to the point of slightness, theoral narrative moves in a very different direction. Rather than adopting an approach which seeks to tell a story entirely from someone else's perspective, by attempting to enter the mind of a central character, the narrative tradition draws from

the personal experiences of the storyteller, coupled with the fictional tales of their imagination or past.

Rushdie arranges his experiences into sequential stories. The novel *Shame* is not simply one story, therefore, but represents a collection of different stories from different perspectives. It draws on many influences, breaks down barriers and is not hampered by the restrictive nature of convention. This highlights the complexity of what he is attempting to accomplish in the novel. *Shame*, written along the lines of an oral narrative, is open to criticism from some quarters, who could argue that some of his deviations from the main plot of the story are unnecessary, and represent a break-down in its cohesive structure.

This highlights the complexity of what he is attempting to accomplish in the novel. *Shame*, written along the lines of an oral narrative, is open to criticism from some quarters, who could argue that some of his deviations from the main plot of the story are unnecessary, and represent a break-down in its cohesive structure. Rushdie's use of the oral tradition breathes life and colour into the novel in much the same way as an impressionist style of painting a picture. It deeply resonates and reflects life on a subjective level, and is not concerned with seeking the unobtainable; an objective reality.

Rushdie has imposed an imaginary story of a mythic land called Peccavistan upon the actually existing Pakistan as it records only the history that is excluded from the official one. The list of such excluded events includes:

> the issue of Time Magazine which never got in to the country because it carried an article about President, Ayub Khan's alleged Swiss Bank Account: or about the bandits on the trunk roads who are condemned for

doing, as private enterprise, what the government does as a public policy or about genocide in Baluchistan...or about why Bhutto's hangman had vanished in to thin air...or about smuggling the boom in heroin exports, military dictators, venal civilians, corrupt civil servants, bought judges, news-papers of whose stories the only thing that can confidently be said is that they are lies. (70)

In juxtaposing the real with the fantastic, Rushdie presents the readers with 'anti-history'. In fact, the country referred to in *Shame* could be any country that has been ruined by dictatorship and corruption.

Throughout the novel, the narrator keeps on reminding the reader through authorial comments about the fictionality of the text; "I must get back to my fairy story, because things have been happening while I have been talking too much" (71). He also states; "I am only telling a sort of modern fairy tale, so that's all right; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously. No drastic action need be taken, either" (70).

At times, Rushdie acts like a magician and plays tricks upon the readers confusing them with his shifting of the narration like "A plague on this disobedient time! I command this death scene back in to the wings at once: Sharam!" (23).

Rushdie creates the impression of unreliability of his narration when he makes his narrator confess: "The elections which brought Iskander Harrappa to power were not (it must be said) as straight forward as I have made them sound" (178). The entire novel covers the story of Pakistan, but an interview with John Haffenden, the narrator says:

> I have never lived there for longer than six months at a stretch. I have learned Pakistan in slices. I think what I am confronting is that however I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors...I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits". (69)

Such remarks confuse the reader and make the narrative doubtful, but in fact, it is a deliberate action on the part of the narrator. This type of 'fragments of broken mirrors' are scattered all over the novel. For instance, after learning about Omar Khayyam's exploits as the protagonist throughout the first three chapters, the readers come to know at the beginning of the fourth chapter that "This is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia...or perhaps it would be more accurate, if also more muddy; to say that Sufiya Zinobia is about this novel" (59).

Rushdie views *Shame* in political or historical allegory where the characters and actions represent historical personages or events. In the allegory of ideas, the literal characters represent concepts and the plot allegorizes an abstract doctrine. In the second type of allegory of ideas, the central device is personification of abstract entities such as virtues, vices etc. In Shame both types of allegory can be found. The political rulers of Pakistan are thinly veiled. The fictional characters who represents the real leaders allegorize real political personages of Pakistan. In the second type of allegory of ideas Sufiya allegorizes shame and Shakil represents shamelessness. Shakil's shamelessness develops peripherally but Sufiya sense of shame permeates all aspects of the novel.

Heightened language and linguistic techniques are the hallmarks of the works of Magic Realism. Rushdie has used both the things in this novel, *Shame*. It is exposed

n criticizers' view as no Indian novelist has had the courage to handle English language with the gaiety and joyousness as Rushdie.

In fact, Rushdie has established such a style of language that can only be labeled as Rushdiesque. For the use of language, *Shame* has earned a significant place in the literary history. The readers can easily find nasty and crude expressions of cynical frankness.

Rushdie has a very large and effective vocabulary to deal with the wide range of his subject matter. The gentle touch of humor makes it more touching. Though he is not a humorist, but he often uses slight humor even in describing serious matters. For example, when a British reporter asks Raza about his barbaric punishment like cutting of hands and flogging, Raza replies back:

> It is not barbaric…we are not savages…we will not simply order people to stick out their hands, like this, and go fataakh!, with a butcher's knife. No, sir. All will be done under the most hygienic conditions, with proper medical supervision, use of anesthetic etcetera…these are not laws, my dear fellow, which we have plucked out of the wind. These are the holy words of God as revealed in sacred texts. Now, if they are holy words of God, they cannot also be barbaric. It is not possible. They must be some other thing. (245)

Describing characters with the marvelous use of language is the benchmark of Rushdie. His description of Bilquis remains outstanding. He describes her as:

> …that lady whose father was a woman and whose son turned out to be a girl as well, and whose man of men, her Razzoo or Raz-Matazz,

was himself obliged, in the end, to put on the humiliating black shroud of womanhood or Perhaps as a being in the secret grib of fate...(68)

Rushdie has established a wider ethnocentric base for the English language by creating a magical and humorous Indian blend of English. He uses several devices such as the use of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani words, phrases, and expressions in *Shame*. Such a fabulous use of linguistic techniques displays the extent of Rushdie's inventiveness and shows his mastery over the English language. This type of heightened use of language is the benchmark of magic realism.

The fictionalization and deliberate change of names ultimately turn out to be a story of Pakistan covering the history of initial years of the country. The parallels between the story and the historical events also seem to be made obvious by the author himself. The puritan Raza Hyder is made to embody the dictatorship, the west-oriented dissipated Iskander Harappa, the corrupt democracy. The historical Bhutto has become the character Iskander Harappa. The ancient city Mohenjo-Daro in the novel has been split into two parts. Little Mir Harappa lives on the Dare Estate and Iskander on Mohenjo. Mir is the name of one of Bhutto's sons. Thus, the real history has been reversed into the fiction.

As in the case of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the other Latin American writers, Rushdie chooses the fantastic and magic realistic mode of telling the story to present the contemporary reality. His fear of choosing such a mode is not unwarranted as his later novel, *The Satanic Verses* got banned by a number of countries. The theme of *Shame* refers to the sub-continental history of post-partition period through complex

networks of transcultural relationships between the individual and the historical forces.

To conclude Rushdie is a master craftsman who knows how to combine fact with fantasy and present linear stories disguised as nonlinear narration. He consciously uses ingredients of fiction that interest readers everywhere: mythical and grotesque characters, vampires, demons and witches, magic and miracles, murders and suicides, physical fights and bloodshed and satirical treatment of historical personages familiar to readers. Such type of fabulous narrative technique undoubtedly places the novel, *Shame* in to the category of Magic Realism.

Chapter Five

Summation

Salman Rushdie is a major writer in Indian Diasporic Literature whose modernist art reflects in its own difficulties and the complexities of the modern world. As a provocative and aggressive writer, his works are almost always baffling and ambiguous. His novels abound in imaginative richness and a vitality and complexity of language that has often defeated his critics. He consciously adopts the modes of the modern writer to present the complexities and disjunctions of modern of modern experience.

Rushdie's *Shame* is both vividly colourful, and controversial, both in style and content. At its heart the novel questions historical norms and perspectives, and the constraints of humanity's linear view of time. It is intriguing because it exposes the exploitation of history for political ends; it deconstructs the definition of nation and national identity and cuts through the veneer of social constraints imposed upon the individual. It is this deeper sense of understanding that makes this novel as relevant now as it was when it was first published in 1983.

As a diasporic writer, Rushdie observes Pakistan from outside. The partition of India and Pakistan results in social and political disabilities which display the trembling basement of Pakistan. The political leaders of Pakistan mislead the society and deconstruct the political rules for their convenience. It causes social issues and repression over the country. As an outsider Rushdie becomes frustrated after analysing the consequences of power politics. The reasons for his disappointment and repression are countless which made Rushdie hesitate Pakistan. Rushdie tries to exhibit the impure condition of Pakistan and so he starts writing the novel *Shame*. The

violence in Pakistan is born out of Shame. Rushdie selects this title to portray the shameful condition of Pakistan.

Rushdie's novel *Shame*, expresses the mirror portrayal of confused Pakistan. It also deals with the history of these two families whose destinies could not be unraveled till the end. Rushdie presents the political uproar in Pakistan, basing his characters on the real leading politicians of Pakistan; Raza Hyder (based on former President Zia-Ul-Haq) and Iskander Harappa (based on former Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto).

The novel reflects the social consciousness following the breakdown of the British Empire. It was a pivotal point in British history, as it brought into question the morality of oppression and occupation; this is reflected in the postcolonial movement in literature, where writers have attempted to come to terms with the collective shame of the imperial past.

Rushdie's perspective is particularly interesting in this context as he is the product of both oppressor and oppressed, as a British Muslim born in India before Independence who received a privileged British education. His language is the language of the oppressor; his words transcend this constraint and provide an insight into the perspectives of the oppressed. If there is to be hope for the future, in a multicultural and technologically advanced world, drawn ever closer by breakthroughs in communication, but seemingly further apart as religious tensions increase, this hope must emanate from the learning of the lessons of the past. Writers such as Rushdie, who is a product of several cultures, can transcend cultural and spiritual barriers and promote understanding and tolerance.

Shame is not so much about the logistics of creating a new nation, Pakistan, but rather the fact that whilst the nation itself may be new, its people are still very much under the influence of the psychological baggage of history; a history that has been manipulated by the governing group of the time. As Judie Newman points out, the darkness and uncertainty of the past and how this past has been represented by history, is the backbone of postcolonial writing:

> despite the challenge which postcolonial writing lays down to the temporal paradigm of 'Eng. Lit.', its deliberations keep turning into an argument with history, whether as a pseudo-tradition, commodified past or silenced trauma (192).

What is revolutionary about Rushdie's view of history is that he embraces the inaccuracies and biases, the exaggeration and distortion of facts. The quagmire of history is, for Rushdie, a testament to the human condition itself. The limitations of any particular historical perspective reflect the fact that when it comes to past events, absolute truth is unattainable. Human beings have to live in this world full of uncertainty, and so must come to terms with it.

Rushdie interweaves the story stuffed with political upheavals, wedding scandals, debauchery, obscenity and destruction. In spite of presenting all the negative facts, Rushdie lures the readers into reading the book. He achieves the impossible by using historical allusions and magic realism with great aplomb.

As the narrator wants to give an image of the country and of its past, the ancient history of the country is evoked throughout the novel in the names and actions of the characters. Timothy Brennan is of the opinion that "*Shame* hides history in allusive references to the past which are buried in casual place names and family titles and

reincarnations of figures from legend" (42) The ex-major general Iskander Mirza of Punjabi government officials returns in the figure of Iskander Harappa. He is alluded to in *Midnight's Children* also as Brigadier Iskander. The surname Harappa alludes to the ancient Harappan civilization that borders Bhutto's family estate in Sind province. The famous European conqueror Alexander who invaded India in 326 B.C. gives his name to a chapter entitled 'Alexander the Great' that deals with the rise of Bhutto.

The selfishness and the parochial temperament of the historians are responsible for making history more creative than authentic. So Salman Rushdie observes, that history is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge. In a way many historians have made history more a fantasy than a reality. But Rushdie uses fantasy to present the reality in an amazingly perceptive method. And in some novels, he details history and fantasy which ultimately turn to magic realism.

Thus *Shame* holds a mirror to the contemporary society and exposes the totalitarian powers of anarchy that put forth and establishes their own voices, dogmas, rules and regulations suppressing all other voices which are ultimately ruinous. The double mindedness and the hidden cruelties are revealed in a very powerful manner, using satire as the weapon. Deterioration in values is seen everywhere, especially in case of the government officials. Rushdie affirms that *Midnight's Children* is a novel of memory, whereas *Shame* is a novel about truth.

Rushdie's Shame reflects the emotions of embarrassment, humility, decency, repentance of hostile words and sense of guilt for a crime. He enumerates shameless

acts like untruths, ill-treatment of women or gender-bias, smuggling, lack of patriotism, and incorrect way of exercising franchise; ironically and politically.

Rushdie presents *Shame* which treats the social life and that of the individual describing the failure of the dreaming mind. The Pakistan, which is considered as the pure nation is, in fact, a home for people that are living under suppression and suffering from corrupt leaders.

Moreover, Rushdie shows how shame is a part of the architecture of the society that the novel describes, focusing on the oppression of history, the instability of relationships and the rejection of hybridity, in order to cover up Indian history claiming that to have a pure identity, a suppressed nation which suffers from violence must be established. *Shame* is a rewriting of history.

The rejection of history in the novel is clarified by characters where Bilquis is considered as Mohajir and victimized by her past history and Sufiya who is depicted as a monster without history. The nation of Shame is a veiled Pakistan that reveals the insecurity and instability of it. In fact, the pure dream is impossible, endlessly, that space results in oppression that eventually leads to violence and destruction. Also, Rushdie's *Shame* ignores the bright side of politicians. It focuses only on the gloomy part showing corruption, tyranny and oppression where shame becomes a part of Pakistan politics.

Women in *Shame* are considered as victims of shame, their rights are dismissed and men are usually making all decisions to make their powers of their own. Rushdie shows the gloomy picture of the Pakistani society that women have to face. He also portrays the sufferings of women through the use of fictional women characters. He shows how women are marginalized in a patriarchal society as the political and social

corrupt is gender-biased. Eventually, violence is a result of what Pakistan suffers from where shame and the shamelessness of the world's price are precipitous and disastrous. The Uncontrollable beast of the novel is a result of the corruption, tyranny, and suppression of politicians and leaders. It is also a result of the dreaming mind in creating a pure nation without past history; a nation that though it is destroyed and hollow, it keeps on dreaming of getting a pure identity.

Rushdie has succeeded in elucidating the Pakistani history, politics, and identity by using fantasy inside reality, he has brought up techniques such as magical realism, allegorical political figures, and satiric exaggeration in the description of characters in order to show the oppressed history which leads to violence. Rushdie has succeeded in blending real events with fantasy. He has asserted that there is no pure identity, and compelling someone to forget his history causes damage. Then, he has addressed with cleverness the Pakistan historical and political issues clarifying to the reader the reality behind the screen. Furthermore, he describes the political tyranny and the trouble caused by corrupted leaders which lead also to violence towards masses and specifically women.

Ultimately, Rushdie portrays women as victims and submissive to men and society. However, he uses some female characters as the power of the novel, portraying their presence as the changing point of history and society. Once again, the shamelessness of the world causes violence, and this is shown when Sufiya has reacted violently against men's oppression and the shamelessness of the world. At the end, Rushdie kills the protagonist after her explosion, in order to show the dark future and the gloomy fate of every society that practices tyranny, corruption, and repression against women and common people.

The novel covers the time span of thirty six years from 1947 to 1983, from the partition and the birth of the new country to the year of the publication of the novel. The story is provided with a narrator of multi-cultural background, who sketches a country containing the external features of the history of Pakistan over a period of thirty-six years after the establishment of the country. The author, however, has his own reservations over the literal as well as historical interpretation and weaves the story of the fictional country by fictionalizing the factual events collected from history.

Rushie views *Shame* as a phantasmagoric epic. The re-written history of Pakistan represents characters as heroes and martyrs and makes religion legitimate. But the metaphor suggests that there is a text beneath its superficial level.

Rushdie adopts many strategies to overcome the problems of a historical novelist. They include using surrealism and symbolism in the place of realism, discarding chronology, intertwining the past and the present and taking recourse to allegory. The limited abstract world of *Shame* abounds in symbols and suggestive images, typical of the tales of *The Arabian Nights*. The narrator of the novel, like that of *Midnight's Children*, is a symbol of the country he belongs to. Thus the writer implements a further important strategy of presenting the history of the nation with a lot of human interest. Rushdie tactfully portrays the shameful activities like obscenity, permissiveness and debauchery as a guise to present the historical events of Pakistan.

The novel reflects the historical facts of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-Ulhaq (in the novel Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder respectively) represent the two presidents of Pakistan. The way Bhutto tried to perpetuate his power by empowering incompetent persons to higher positions in the army, the manner in which Zia ousted him by setting up a regime of religious intolerance and the other political events in the book

are spun around this thinly veiled Iskander-Raza story contributing to the history of the country.

The other characters in the story also represent the great names in the political history of Pakistan - Marshal A. as General Ayub Khan, General Shaggy Dog as Yahya Khan, Sheikh Bismillah as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ajumand Harappa as Benazir Bhutto.

The canvas of the narrative covers the events from the partition in general, but more precisely from the time of the East-West conflict. The subsequent events like the overthrow of the President Ayub Khan, the martial law of General Yahya Khan, the rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the military action against the tribesmen of Baluchistan in the nineteen seventies, the military coup and the downfall of Bhutto, the dictatorial regime of General Zia and his attempt to Islamise the country are all woven into the texture of the narrative.

Rushdie comments on Soviet aggression of Afghanistan, the genocide in Bangladesh, the fundamental Islamic revolution of Khomeini against the monarchy of the Shah of Iran and of his family and its exodus from India to Pakistan after the partition, the general elections in Pakistan, the Bangladesh war etc.

From a historical perspective, Rushdie's aim is to connect the religious fanaticism with the sufferings experienced by the people due to partition. The partition of India was a shameful act which was a result of the selfishness of the megalomaniac politicians. It also reflects the haughty and reckless attitude of the divide and rule policy of the Britishers.

Rushdie portrays the shamelessness of the politicians through the characters like Bilquis. The 'shame' which Bilquis felt so strongly at the time of the bomb-blast, runs parallel to that of the newly born country of the 'pure'. Captain Raza Hyder temporarily succeeds in clothing the shame of his bride and takes her to Pakistan, where, in the house of Bariamma, Raza Hyder's grandmother, she is compelled to tell the story of her shame. Thus her marriage introduces her to the dynastic Hyder family. Bilquis, "whose life had blown up, emptying her of history" (67), symbolises the plight and status of a Pakistani migrant.

Basically, *Shame* is a fairytale story written in magical realism style to which myth and fantasy are blended into real life; a fantastic representation of the political and social correctness. Rushdie uses techniques with cleverness to reach up to the sequence of events. He uses the political allegory.

Rushdie has achieved the notion of literary fiction by using the mimicry of historical figures and political allusions to make evident all the corruption and the tyranny of leaders that are criminalizing ordinary people, precisely women. Besides, the use of satire recites serious and important events with ridiculous description of characters throughout the novel.

Rushdie's aim is not only to make humor and entertainment, but it is rather to inform the readers about the history and social issues of Pakistan. Rushdie is relentlessly interested in rewriting history in different styles and methods focusing on political, realistic figures and historical background to clarify the reality and let the audience know the Pakistani world better.

Thus, it becomes clear that *Shame* presents some parallels which can be found between the events in the novel and history of Pakistan in reality. His ability to

combine the fact and fiction, to play upon the words, to fantasize the realistic makes a seemingly ordinary political history of Pakistan an eminently readable one with the features of magical realism.

From a brief recall of the various chapters it has been understood that Rushdie's literary work *Shame* discloses his progressive ideas which he revolts against the totalitarian leaders and social system. The creation of historical fantasy and magical realism reveal Rushdie's language and narrative style which motivates the readers to looks up to read his novel with historical thirst.

Shame depicts not only this physical violence of Pakistan's emergence, but also focuses on the central psychological bi-product of this violence - the guilt, both personal and collective, that arises from harming others.

Rushdie's influence to write the novel *Shame* is unavoidable. Although Pakistan was pure in the earlier days, the country failed to remain its purity. When Rushdie entered into Pakistan, it was declined in quality. He was not ready to stay there. So he returned to England. Disappointed Rushdie started searching the reasons for Pakistan under decrements. He deeply examined the history and came to know the irregular activities of political leaders who reshaped the construction of Pakistan. The social issues caused by awful socio-political setting made him write the novel *Shame* by interpreting history in the form of phantasmagoric Epic.

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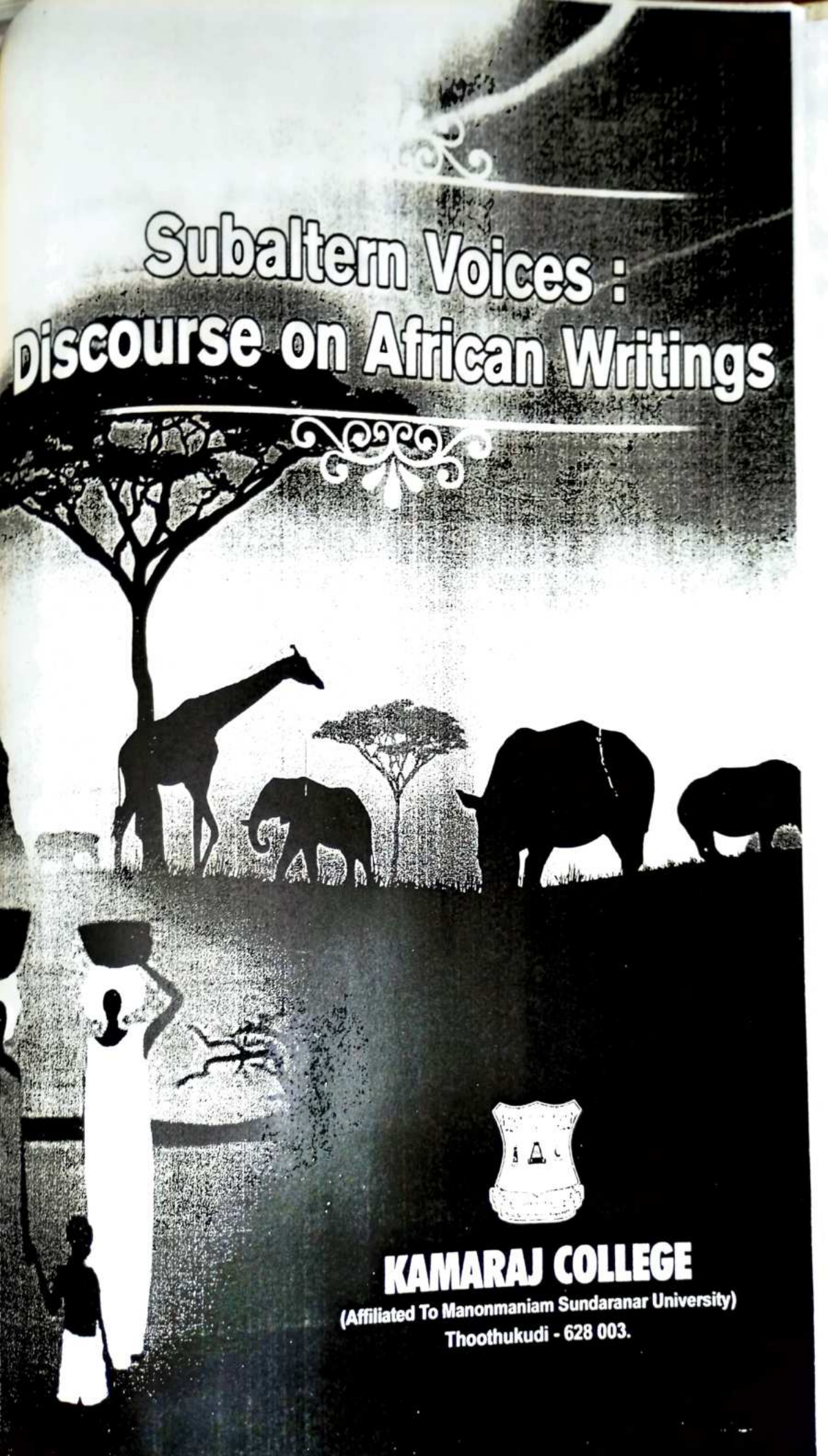
ANNEXURE

Subaltern Voices : Discourse on African Writings



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The Culture Conflict in the African Novels of Chinua Achebe and Cheikh Hamidou Kane

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Modern African Literature of 1950 and 1960 was born in a hostile milieu of conquest and struggle for freedom and assertion of the African identity, for the aim of colonization. It was not merely to dominate and exploit the African. It was to deny his very existence as a thinking individual, as a member of a community and as a creator of the most essential and cultural human thinking. Moreover, the colonial system produced the kind of education which nurtured subservience, self-hatred, and mutual suspicion. It produced a people uprooted from the masses. In this hostile atmosphere of cultural conflicts recent African literature came into existence. The colonial impact has produced indelible impression on its development and growth.

African Literature was, first of all, a call for adhesion and return to African sources and roots. All these different factors show that the African novel first emerged and then developed from two worlds which are quite alien to one another at best. Hence the conflicts of cultures were permanently inherent in the composition of African novels, and almost as inevitably an element of their content.

For the examination of works and authors considered in this study it is necessary to have a working definition of culture and conflicts of cultures. Culture is what enables men to give shape to their lives. The pattern designed by the society is called the culture. Obviously cultures vary in their values, goals, tastes, and the behavior designed to express them. A culture is a living organism which emerges, grows, and develops and may even fade away with its own people's decadence. Culture is as complex as the complexities and diversities of human beings themselves. Therefore one may have cultures in communities and groups.

This paper is devoted to examine novels of Chinua Achebe and Cheikh Hamidou Kane. Their works are deeply permeated with the elements of conflicts of cultures which are greatly enhanced by the sudden historic encounter between Africa and Europe.

Kane belongs to the French West African zone whereas Achebe belongs to the English, but both have more or less used the conflicts of cultures as a subject-matter in their writing, those cultural conflicts that have been stimulated by Western colonization of Africa.

In the case of Achebe, only his first three novels contain ample material on the conflict of African and European cultures. This study of conflicts of culture will be based upon a descriptive, analytic and comparative approach. Besides, its major focus is not on the conflicts of cultures alone, but how they have been handled by each author, and to what extent they have influenced the different patterns of their writing in terms of characterization, themes, styles, plots and thoughts.

Chinua Achebe is one of the most versatile African writers in English. He has contributed much to the growth and development of the African novel in English. Achebe is the product of two different cultures and two conflicting civilizations. As a result he has drunk to the dregs the cups of his uneasy isolation and cultural alienation. This experience has led him back to deep down into his Igbo culture for themes and inspirations.

His three novels which are based widely upon his Igbo cultural background and conflicts of cultures are *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964). All of these three novels deal with the colonial situation between 1890 and 1960, and its impact on the African society, culture, people and history

They are set in Eastern Nigeria but *No Longer at Ease* moves around the Igbo village, Umuofia, and the city of Lagos.

Things Fall Apart is the story of Okonkwo, the hero, and the disintegration of traditional values of Umuofia as a result of the white man's incursion. Like *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*, *Things Fall Apart* centers on personal tragedy. The hero, Okonkwo, in spite of all the weaknesses and social failures of his father, Unoka, has managed to secure an honourable social position within his community. He even gains fame and titles that is the Igbo's highest symbols of social status.

Nevertheless, he remains taunted and obsessed by the continuous fear that he may inherit the flaws of his father's cowardice, idleness and consequent low social status. He also fears that his son, Nwoye, may prove to be unworthy of his inheritance and too much like Unoka. By the decision of the 'elders', Ikemefuna, a child offered as a sacrifice to Okonkwo's village, is slain, and Okonkwo happens to take part in killing.

Later, he accidentally kills a clansman, after which according to the customs of Umuofia, Okonkwo has to live in exile for seven years. Upon his return to Umuofia, he finds that many changes have taken place during his absence, of which the European penetration is supreme. People have begun to proselyte to Christianity. Moreover, the emulation of European culture has taken place to the detriment of the local traditions. *Things Fall Apart* finishes not only as a personal tragedy of Okonkwo, but as an exemplification of a social tragedy, for Umuofia succumbs to the white intrusion.

To some degree *No Longer at Ease* is equal to *Things Fall Apart* for it deals with Obi, the grandson of Okonkwo. However, this time the setting is wider than that of *Things Fall Apart* since the story oscillates between the contrasting modes of village and urban life.

At this point, in *No Longer at Ease*, the British administration has been firmly entrenched. At home, Obi has shown great academic progress. Therefore, he has been given a loan by the Umuofia Progressive Union Party to study in England. This loan, however, must be repaid within four years after his return to Nigeria. He had departed for England with the intention of studying law, but he changed to English. During his return voyage home, he meets Clara, who plays an important part in his life. At home, he is appointed as the Secretary to the Scholarship Commission in the Ministry of Education.

Presently, he drifts into the cul-de-sac of his ambivalence. He wants to remain faithful to the traditional values on one hand, yet he wishes to lead a Western life style. The conflicting obligations of both value systems contribute to his tragic downfall, he is caught when he stoops to take a small bribe of twenty pounds in order to meet the soaring expenses of his new urban life.

Arrow of God is set in Igbo land during the period of colonial entrenchment in Eastern Nigeria. The novel is concerned mainly with the deadly struggle of Ezeulu, who strives to preserve his authority as a spiritual leader against rival elements within his tribe and against the impending influence of colonial intrusion, both missionaries and political officers. Ezeulu, a man of ripe maturity and experience, dignity, command and pride, and above all, a man of intelligence, accepts and believes strongly in the inevitability of change. Thus, as a matter of strategy, he sends one of his sons, Oduche, to the mission school to be his eyes and ears, and in particular to learn the secret of the white man's power.

Nonetheless, the strategy fails. Oduche becomes a zealous Christian who even goes so far as to defy the village customs by attempting to kill the sacred Royal Python, a sacrilege which endangers the safety of the six villages. Through a basically intra-cultural conflict, Ezeulu's pride, stubbornness and hostility towards the white administration combined with his refusal to eat the sacred yam end up by a loss of his religious status as a Chief Priest of Umuofia. Like many African writers, Achebe did not escape at all the sweeping impact of colonization upon his psychology and the formation of his personality. This circumstance is a fundamental factor deeply influencing Achebe's thought and consequently channeling the mainstream of his writings. This impetus is very evident in his trilogy: *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*.

Consequently Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God* are primarily based upon the conflicts of cultures which have directly or indirectly shaped their themes, plot, characterization, language and structure. Some of these conflicts of cultures are embodied in the novels' moral, social, religious, tribal, problems, whether collective or personal.

Chinua Achebe's characters are given flesh and life as representatives of cultures and cultural conflicts. This applies to characters of the African and European origins such as Ezeulu, Okonkwo, Nwaka, Obi, Clara, Odiche, Winter Bottom, Mr.Green, Smith, and Clarke.

The African characters are, however, quite familiar with Achebe's own cultural background and colonial experience. In other words, they are his own people with whom he has shared the colonial occupation and its consequences, a shocking encounter. For example, in depicting Ezeulu of *Arrow of God*, the writer always keeps one eye on his culture:

> This was the third nightfall since he began to look for signs of the new moon. He knew it would come today but he always began to watch three days before its time because he must not take a risk. In this season of the year his task was not too difficult; he did not have to peer and search the sky as he might do in the rainy season. His Obi was built differently from other men' huts. There was the usual, long threshold in front but also a shorter one on the right as you entered. (11)

Much of Ezeulu's character is shown by his conflicts within his own culture. Hence, he is also delineated through conflicts with his own sons like Edogo and Oduche. Ezeulu sends his son, Oduche, to the mission school. Paradoxically, he wants him to remain faithful to his traditional duties, beliefs, and customs. Ironically, he develops the very opposite personality.

Instead of following and deciding their own fate, according to their growth, struggle, success or failure, Achebe's characters appear to be a mere recreation. They are conditioned to follow a certain and definite kind of life (for the Africans it is their author's cultural background) which their culture imposes upon them. In this manner, they appear pre destined characters. The plots of *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease,* and *Arrow of God* are developed within the framework of cultural aspects, which are interwoven into scenes, incidents, characters and themes.

Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1928), a Senegalese Muslim novelist, belongs to the generation of David Diop, Olymp Bhely Quenum and Camara Laye. Like many African writers and intellectuals in French, he experienced the cold hostility of the Western milieu of Paris where he led, for some years, a life of isolation. It was also in Paris that the movement of Negritude first arose and flourished. Therefore, he was more or less, influenced by its teaching.

Kane's only novel, *L'Aventure Ambigue* (1956), is an allegoric account of Samba Diallo, the hero, who, after a spiritual education in the Senegalese Islamic system, goes to join the new colonial school in order to learn. At the white school, he shows academic progress that eventually leads to pursue the study of philosophy.

In Paris Samba Diallo realizes that he is [illegible] alienated from both his African and French cultures. He feels himself living in a state of emptiness and [illegible] loss, since he begins to forget the Koranic verses and [illegible] no longer adequately perform his prayers. *L'Aventure Ambigue* is set between Africa (Senegal) and France (Paris), a journey between two different worlds physical and metaphysical. The explicit theme of this novel is based on the conflicts of cultures of these worlds, a theme which is developed mainly through characterization [illegible] philosophical thought of the characters.

As a matter of fact, Samba Diallo is introduced into a metaphysical world from his early age in the court of the Diallobes. Following the tradition, he is sent to the Koranic School where he becomes profoundly moved by the Islamic faith and its mystic teaching. He learns to recite the Koranic words without even understanding the meaning, and whenever he fails to do so, he is harshly tortured for having profaned the sacred word.

Sambo Diallo's ambiguity has been produced specifically by the painful shock between the European technological ethic and the African cosmolythic value. Furthermore, Samba Diallo has been chosen as a spiritual and temporal leader of the Diallobes. Thus, he becomes the main focus of a relevant argument between the unescapable conflict of the African spiritual world on one hand, and the materialism of the West on the other.

In Paris too, Samba Diallo is flung into a tragic and complex situation of loss of self and cultural identity. He has adjusted a new type of culture which, in turn, has robbed him of his religious convictions and cultural personality. He has become divided between two opposite worlds. All in all, he becomes unknown to himself. His resistance against the French assimilation proves futile. By the end he finds himself in an uneasy isolation, saddling two cultures African and Western.

After his return to Africa he is accused of having forgotten too much of the essential values of his African heritage. He is struck down by a madman. Thereby his homecoming is a tragic one and his death has metaphysical and spiritual significance. It is a solution to his ambiguous adventure and for his displaced soul. Thus Kane's hero appears to be a victim of cultural adaptation and cultural conflicts he experienced both in Africa and Europe. And to some extent, his death is a small symbol of the Western victory over Africa. Moreover, Kane has produced a philosophy of the individual hero within

context of the conflict culture. Thus, Samba Diallo's ambiguous adventure is a vivid example of the tyrannies of these two conflicting cultural forces.

Achebe is a committed African writer, because he believes, first and foremost, that the African writer has the urgent duty and the serious social responsibility of guiding, leading, his people, and protecting their culture and dignity. Above all, he should educate them. Kane's commitment included the need to prove to the West that Africa was never devoid of culture or cultural values. Moreover, Achebe pointed out that the African writer should be a cultural nationalist aware of his social responsibility to explain the traditions and African history and values of his people to that unfriendly alien world. He should instill in his people a new energy, a new dynamism, and a new consciousness. All in all, both Achebe and Kane teach them their dignity as Africans.

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Department of English (SF)
National Level Seminar

on

SUBALTERN VOICES : DISCOURSE ON AFRICAN WRITINGS

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This is to certify that ~~Dr.~~ / ~~Mr.~~ / Ms V. Albina Mary, St. Mary's College, Tuticorin *has ~~served as a~~ Resource Person/ Chair Person/ Participated/ Presented a paper titled* Culture and Tradition in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart *in the National Level Seminar on*

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organized by the Department of English (SF) on 30th August 2018.

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Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*: A Revisionist Study of African American Counter Discourse

A Dissertation submitted to

St. Mary's College (Autonomous)

Thoothukudi

affiliated to

MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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By

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JUNE 2019

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*: A Revisionist Study of African American Counter Discourse** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Lydia 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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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*: A Revisionist Study of African American Counter Discourse** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is my original work and that, it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

A Lydia

THOOTHUKUDI **LYDIA A .**

JUNE 2019

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PREFACE

This project entitled **Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*: A Revisionist Study of African American Counter Discourse** analyses the African American literary and cultural counter discourses in the post-racial America where an African American confronts the erasure of black identity and how the African Americans through cultural appropriation try to ascertain racial justice.

The first chapter **Introduction** gives a glimpse of the history of African American culture and literature and the biography of Paul Beatty discussing the general characteristics of his works.

The second chapter **Displaced Racism** analyses the two primary characters who ironically wear inauthentic masks of black radicalism and represent the dissolution of black group identity.

The third chapter **Reconstructing the African American Legacy** critically analyses how the narrator through his varied experiences enlivens the black togetherness against racist authority.

The fourth chapter **Redeeming Black Identity** throws light on the African Americans' ethical strife to restore their identity, and the fact that identities should be based on shared cultural allegiances in the post racial America.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the significant aspects dealt in the preceding chapters and emphasizes Paul Beatty's conviction that reaffirmin communal identity is the step towards achieving racial justice.

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

Chapter One

Introduction

African American literature has become a significant component of American literature and culture. This literature has documented the struggles of African Americans with race and racism slavery their own African heritage and Euro American influence and social assimilation as well as the specters of history and modernity. It has always been talking about the darker truths of oppression and was often judged by both the white and the black critics. In the United States, the African American is constituted in white and black binary of signification, which defines white as a normative and superior being and represents black as a victim and as an inferior being. Toni Morrison comprehends the gravity of the situation thus: "I would like to write novels that were unmistakably mine, but nevertheless fit first into African American traditions and second of all this whole thing called literature" (4).

The African American literary tradition is neither stable nor complete. It begins with the importation of African slaves by European colonizers into the new world beginning in the seventeenth century. It continues through the abolition of slavery into unstable period toward the end of the nineteenth century, when African Americans no longer had the slave status, yet faced abhorrent discrimination. The early twentieth century saw the great migration of more than a million African Americans from the south to cities in the industrial north. Following the two world wars, African Americans concentrated on attaining what came to be known as civil rights and voting rights legislation in mid 1960s which were positive steps in the direction of long overdue racial equality.

The 1970s and 1980s saw less violent and less urgent demonstrations arising from the desire for harmony, yet despite the prominence of high profile black politicians and presidential candidates, the main focus during those deludes in the popular imagination was on the alarming rise of black involvement in black homicide, the rise of gang culture, and an unprecedented spike in the rate of incarceration of black people. The 1992 Los Angeles riots following the acquittal of police officers accused of beating a black motorist Rodney King indicated that a great deal of racial animosity remained just below the surface of American life.

African American literature has become a challenging task to every critic and academician. Because in the second half of the century, everything began to change. A vogue for black servants within British aristocratic households further increased the number of blacks with access to formal education. These combined changes never provided reliable opportunity to talented African people who were caught up in the machinery of British slavery. The vast majority of the victims of Atlantic slavery were killed miserably. A number of black authors began to publish as self styled African authors. They faced a daunting cultural landscape. Britons in England and America used the term Africans interchangeable with Negroes and Blacks to refer the people whom they purchased and imported to America. Black authors were not the only ones to challenge this image but they were among the most important. They did not succumb to the prevailing views of Africa.

The first two important black writers to revise about Africa and Africans were Ignatius Sancho and Philis Wheately a poet. Both rose from slavery to literary prominence. Sancho achieved fame as a letter writer and Wheatly as a poet. Each quickly became an emblem of the potential African people in the eyes of the white arguing for or against slavery. They didn't contribute much but they still served,

however, to open one path through which an image of Africa rooted in biblical and other western literary traditions entered black discourses. They also acted as conducts through which early western notions of Africa entered this nascent black Anglophone tradition.

As riots erupted on the streets in 1960s America, there was also a riot going on in the literary world. The Black Arts Movement, led by Laura Neal, Amiri Baraka, Addison Gayle and Asika Joure planned a meeting with the Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X to infuse their works with a new permission for radical change and their impassioned writings were difficult to ignore. Finally the black writers burst through the barrier that had once held them back in terms of widespread acknowledgement of their contributions. Black writers arrived at a new level of artistic freedom in the early decades of the twentieth century, especially in the 1920s when the Harlem renaissance marked an outpouring of creative expression and a flourishing of artistic spirit that had not occurred earlier. Black writers in the following decades explored some of the contradictions, discontentment and rage in no certain terms and his works, along with those of Ralph Elison, Ann Petry, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margret Walter and Lorraine Hansberry, made the 1940s and 1950s a time of intense literary examination of the psychology as well as the sociology of black life in America.

Langston Hughes was one of the prolific writers of Harlem Renaissance era. Hughes's works are best known for the sense of black pride, they convey Hughes's implantation of Jazz into his poetry. In 1926, Hughes wrote the critically acclaimed essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" for the Nation Magazine. In this essay Hughes scolds artists who shy away from their racial identity to satisfy fearful Negroes and white audiences recognize their interest in black art means for stereotypical entertainment. Hughes wanted African American artist to show pride in

legacy. He recognized that many artists were fleeing from their culture. Most of Hughes's poems are a result of his own life experiences and encounters with racism. Richard Wright states that:

> The Negro writer who seeks to function within his race as purposeful agent has a serious responsibility. In order to do justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all of its manifold and intricate relationships, deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary.(98)

These writers turned their attention largely to history, which became an enduring topic for the African American writers of the late twentieth century. Revising and Revisiting history has remained a prominent subject in African American literature, but it is not necessary the central subject of contemporary African American literature. This literature may no longer be about any one thing, including even, a generic umbrella category like black identity. Depending upon one's perspective, this development can be seen as a triumph or as a failure. These writers wrote about black experiences, black times, black history etc.

There are two particular themes that recur in many discussions of black literature; the tradition of storytelling and the blues. To connect oral literature and the blues may seem to conflate two distinct modes of expression, but in fact the black vernacular does not draw a hard line between them. Virtually all critics agree that the blues are integral to an understanding of what black literature is. Blues lyrics state a theme, restate it and provide a clever variant of it that often comments on and ironically reverses the meaning of the original lyric, indicating the ambiguity of the

African American experience and their stoic power of endurance by expressing their pain through laughter.

The parallels in African American literature are clear; the most acclaimed African American literature is distinctive because it is familiar within a broader tradition of American literature yet identifiable as something unique and expressive. Literature is often presented as a form of cultural production that is challenging to understand due to its complex layering and obscure illusions. Yet within every tradition there are works of literature deemed to be popular or works that might fit into certain genre categories. Many early works of African American literature had specific rhetoric intent: to persuade the reader of moral repugnancy of slavery and to expose readers to the physical, mental and spiritual degradation suffered by the slaves.

A popular slogan of the second wave feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s was the personal politics meaning is an incident of oppression against an individual is a powerful testimony to the larger oppression of groups. There has never been any critical agreement about whether or not African American literature has a greater duty than the other American literature to be political or socially conscious or anything besides carefully constructed and self-expressive.

Literature has different pressures, obligation and functions over time and even within a given time period there are great variations regarding what is seen as an appropriate balance of individual expression and social consciousness. Yet with its origins in the era of slavery, African American literature has often felt the pressure of the political truth about society's injustice as a way of spurring action. Most of the earliest works of African American literature were slave narratives. The slave narratives are the beginning of African American literature. The slaves who suffered the oppression of white racism, by the help of new printing methods, understood the

importance of expressing own feelings of racial oppression and writing their own memories. Slave narratives reveal the historical context of the US at the time of slavery. They illustrate the illogical, irrational and unfair relationship between the white slave holders and the oppressed black slaves.

Although the search for freedom was a uniting factor among the African American community members, the ways of achieving their freedom was different. The profound interest among the free slaves to write their narratives was not only a historical background in African American literature. Some of the finest master pieces produced by direct influences of slavery of the slave narratives: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, and such prize winning contemporary novels William Styron's *The Confession of Nat Turner* and Toni Morrison's Beloved, bear the direct influence of slave narrative. As the genre evolved in the early nineteenth century, virtually all of these narratives shared a few common features: they were framed by the testimonies of white authors about the veracity and characters of the author; they were clearly committed to the cause of abolition and often spoke directly to their intended audiences who were presumed to be whites. These works though powerful and inspirational are somewhat formulaic. While fighting for their literal freedom, the earliest African of creative freedom went towards the end of the era of slavery, black writers started to branch out into imaginative forms of literature by the end of nineteenth century handful of black writers who made a living from writing. The horrors of slavery and the traumatic aftershock of segregation, lynching, and general widespread discrimination in late nineteenth and early twentieth century continued to inhibit the black literary imagination. Langston Hughes states that:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too..if coloured people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. (36)

Many of the issues framed by the most recognized works of African American literature highlights the poverty regardless, they also have documented slavery for the examination of African diasporic identity. Both black people and poor people in the United States have faced throughout history grotesque discrimination that has hindered them from advancing toward any number of American dreams. The majority of African Americans historically belong to an underclass whose status is determined both by the colour of their skin and by the impoverished circumstances into which they were born. Thus the autobiographical writings of a number of prominent black writers like Booker T. Washington, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, emphasize the extreme poverty of their youth. The miserable economic circumstances that have affected African Americans throughout the history have caused a number of prominent black writers, such as Du Bois, Hughes, Wright and Baraka to turn from the way of understanding the plight of African American in economic terms.

African American satire has been alive at least since the first black slave made fun of their manners. The slave owners loved it; they mistook dance for a poor imitation rather than a dark mirror. The black satire made its way into the twentieth century through works like Langston Hughes *The Ways of White Folk.* George Schugles *Black no More* and much of the folk tales and tomfoolery recorded and recast by Zora Neale Hurston *The Harlem renaissance.* There were those who saw

this satire without the least bit of humour. Richard Wright's scathing attack on Hurston as a retrograde writer set a pattern not of discourse but of dismisses. It would take the 1960s the reckonings of the black arts movement and the efforts of Alice Walker to repatriate Hurston and to elevate satire as a form of protest. Cecil Brown took up Hurston's folk humour in fiction and nonfiction. Mel Walkins would go on to write a definitive book in black humour and Charles Wright, the author of the 1960s novel *The Wig* became the hero to those who like their racial romps. In the end it turned out that everyone just wanted to be Richard Pryor.

Like the beginning of the African American movement, current literature focuses on the themes of African American culture, racism and equality, and the role of African Americans in society. The writings often reflect the current struggles of the African American race. The history of contemporary writing begins after the Great Migration to the North, the time 1910 to 1930; six million African Americans migrated to north. Following this, a sense of independence grew among African American culture that led to the Harlem Renaissance and a movement of black activists and writers. These writers pushed for an end of segregation, confronted the issue of racism and helped shape a sense of pride and independence in the African American community. This sense of pride continued into the 1970s but also expanded into mainstream literature. African American writers began to reach a prominent place in American writing and were recognized through many awards, achievements and bestselling novels. Today, African American writers continue to address many of the same societal concerns but are accepted outside of their community, as well.

Will Alexander pushes language and philosophy till the seams fray, stretching old systems of sense into a quilted college of meanings. He is an alchemist who turns

leaden technical language into poetic platinum. His most recent book of poetry Above *The Human Nerve Domain*, constructs from the languages of astronomy, nuclear physics and cellular biology. The glossary provides the reader the handful of lexical footholds. Robert Allen, activist, social reformer and editor for the *Black Scholar*, not only records social change, but also facilities it. In an interview Allen commented on the way in which participating in sits-ins and demonstrations, that how social works and social movement development influenced his later works. He was very much interested in the system of segregation, society works, social change movements. He worked on with ideologies of Black power, Black Nationalism and corporate imperialism. In 1995 Robert Allen co edited with Herb Boyd, *Brotherman: The Odyssey of Black man in America* an anthology that includes nearly 150 writers discussing, reflecting and constructing the collective experiences of the black men.

Maya Angelou's writing is a public record of a private life. Poet, film maker, dancer who studied with Graham Martha, Angelou writes of her fierce all powerful grandmother as a kind of implacable warrior in *I Know Why the Caged Birds Sing*. The author of several plays and many children's books, she says of her work that she writes for the black voice and every ear will hear it. She was nominated for an Emmy in 1977 for her performance in *Roots*, she made her feature film directorial debut with *Down in the Delta* in 1998. Amiri Baraka, poet, play wright, critic and ideologue, has been consistently in motion. Since his first work Baraka's Black Nationalist period has been his most influential. His poetry, drama and cultural and political activity dominated African American letters during the 1960s and 70s defining the black arts movement and guiding the next generation of writers who came of age under its influence.

Into this tradition enters Paul Beatty. Satire is an inadequate label for Paul Beatty's fiction. His fiction is an out weird satire, one cannot close Paul Beatty's novel with a clear sense of who or what has been skewered. He mocks pieties of all kinds, easy narratives of progress, political righteousness, racial and ethnic solidarities, and spokesmanship itself. He calls every bluff and sometimes provokes. Beatty's novels are written within and against their own time.

Paul Beatty is a renowned author and the first American to be honoured with the Man Booker Prize. He was inclined towards writing from an early age and went on to pursue a course in creative writing from the Brooklyn College. Paul Beatty, 54, grew up in Los Angeles with his mother and two sisters. The figure of the absentee father, Beatty never knew him and this became a recurring theme in his work. He moved to the opposite side of the country for his university education, spending seven years in Boston studying psychology, first as an undergrad, and then for a PhD which he eventually abandoned. By that time, he had begun writing, he started to lose interest in teaching and had come to hate Boston. He likes to be called Black rather than an African American writer.

In the magazine *The Irish Times* Beatty says, "The thing we think is happening is very rarely the case" (2) because he wanted to be a psychologist. Even though he set it to one side, the lesson he had learned as a psychology student continues to mark his teaching and now he is giving tutorials in Columbia University and writes his work on the basis of psychology. Beatty moved to New York and enrolled in Brooklyn College. He jumbled a few poems together and it was accepted. He had an unbearable first year. His basement apartment was packed with rats and cockroaches, an experience which made him hate Brooklyn as he had been with Boston, and one of his lecturers took him aside and told him that he should probably

think about quitting and should do something else. In his third year, he studied under Allen Ginsberg, who was good at telling anecdotes but his students weren't all essentially the same, and they didn't share a single, universal experience. What Ginsberg gave Beatty was access to black poets. There were no black lecturers in the faculty so Ginsberg brought in the likes of Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Baraka and David Henderson.

Beatty wrote poetry exclusively at this time, delving into the world of spoken word performance and slam poetry. In 1990 he won a Grand Slam spoken-word contest in New York and from there he began to build up a reputation. He published two collections of poetry, *Big Bank Take Little Bank* and *Joker, Joker Deuce*. This was the era of the Nuyorican Poets Café, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a place which gained a reputation for zeitgeist poetry and multicultural audiences. As Beatty saw it, the Café started out as a place people went to read poems but it became a thing, with even MTV turning cameras in its direction there's a YouTube clip of a young Beatty reading his poem, "Old Yeller dreams of days when they wasn't just whistlin Dixie", that gives you a feel for the slam poetry and the café atmosphere of the time. When this all turned into a thing, it started to embarrass Beatty. The term spoken word poetry made him cringe, and he couldn't stand people bandying terms like integrity. It was around this time that poetry got boring and he began his first novel *The White Boy Shuffle*, which would be published in 1996.

The White Boy Shuffle is a coming-of-age novel, with a comic conceit, the black protagonist, Gunnar Kaufman, is street stupid, and has to wise up when he moves with his mother from cushy Santa Monica to *The Hood*. Kaufman will go on to be the fabulously successful author of a book of poetry called *Watermelanin*, and the stories framed as Kaufman's memoir. It was well-received, but frustratingly for

Beatty, just as he had been branded a hip-hop poet, now he was branded a hip-hop novelist. And so he left for New York for Berlin.

There, he began his second novel, Tuff, which he had worked on for three years and published in 2000. Beatty spent only a year in Berlin, but it was a long year, he said later that he was never comfortable and everything seemed force him. Berliners stared at him, surprised to see a black man in their city. Beatty says that during that time he was catatonic for the most part. *Tuff* is the story of Winston Tuffy Foshay, 22 year old young man from East Harlem who loves Japanese cinema, escapes being killed by Brooklyn drug-dealers, and pledges to turn his life around by running for office. When he puts up his election posters, people think he's a hip-hop artist with a group called City Council, and the press brands him a hip-hop populist. Each of Beatty's novels share a structural similarity: there is a well thought out plot, but it often takes a back seat to digressions, and ultimately its resolution is unimportant.

Hokum: An Anthology of African American Humour, is about the funniest writing of Black Americans. This book is less a comprehensive collection than it is a mix-tape narrative dubbed by a trusted friend-a sampler of underground classics, rare grooves, and timeless summer jams, poetry and prose juxtaposed with the blues, hip-hop, political speeches, and the world's funniest radio sermon. The subtle musings of Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Dumas, and Harryette Mullen are bracketed by the profane and often loud ruminations of Langston Hughes, Darius James, Wanda Coleman, Tish Benson, Steve Cannon, and Hattie Gossett. Some of the funniest writers don't write, so included are selections from well-known yet unpublished wits Lightnin' Hopkins, Mike Tyson, and the Reverend Al Sharpton. Selections also come from public figures and authors whose humour, although incisive and profound, is

often overlooked: Malcolm X, Suzan-Lori Parks, Zora Neale Hurston, Sojourner Truth, and W.E.B. Dubois. Groundbreaking, fierce, and hilarious, this is a necessary anthology for any fan or student of American writing, with a huge range and a smart, political grasp of the uses of humour.

Beatty says plot is very subjective. After writing the dazzling satire of the African American urban experience, Beatty wrote his third novel seeks to debunk such monolithic and monotonous racial myth-making.

> *Slumberland* is a novel of precisely this charade, a story of stereotypes abused and archetypes reclaimed which delights in racial essentialism even as it decries it and dismisses hipness using the hippest touchstones Beatty can lay his hands on. (2)

His protagonist and narrator, Ferguson, aka DJ Darky, an African-American beat junkie with a phonographic memory to create the sonic Mona Lisa: a song that will bring together every partygoer with an irresistible toe-tapping beat. He debuts his near-perfect beat to his music collective, the Beard Scratchers, and they all agree that the song is only missing one thing: a guest appearance by a man they call, the Schwa Charles Stone, a legendary jazz player who disappeared to Europe decades ago. DJ Darky has one clue to finding Stone: a pornographic videotape with an undeniably Schwa-like soundtrack. He traces the tape to a West Berlin bar called *Slumberland*, where he lands a job as a jukebox sommelier, collecting the most party-friendly tunes in the Western world. As soon as DJ Darky starts to adapt to Berlin's rhythms, the Berlin Wall comes down, inundating West Berlin with an array of Easterners eager for capitalist pleasures. A bedraggled, silent black man haunts the bar for donations to rebuild the wall as a mark of protest against Western commercialization. Without

even knowing it, Ferguson Sowell has stumbled upon the Schwa, the jazz legend himself. The two musicians, Charles Stone and DJ Darky, will collaborate to build the New Berlin Wall of Sound, in a single broadcast that just might change the sound of Berlin forever. Darky wants to move beyond the hip black narrative but finds himself locked in a series of vignettes unified by little but how black and hip they are.

The world of humanity has gone to pieces, again. This time the culprit holding the smoking gun is climate change, causing long, harsh winters and short summers. Francesca lives in the titular Heron Fleet, an idyllic farming commune, where all the residents live in peace and harmony and homosexual relationships. Beyond its borders, the world is a violent place of scavenger gangs and lawlessness, like in 90% of the SF films and video games of the last several decades. One of the book's heroes, Tobias, trades food and raw materials between these two communities, while trying to find out what happened to the planet and how to fix it.

Heron Fleet is the fourth novel which is a highly reflective novel set some time in the future when civilization has broken down. The cities are rampaged over by scavenger gangs who operate by unthinking violence and speak a primitive patois. But an alternative community has been founded by individuals who escaped the cities. It has agrarian values as well as strict rules, which set the community's needs above those of the individual. There are scenes of violent action and quiet reflection, suspense and hidden secrets finally revealed.

Throughout his career Beatty has cited Richard Pryor as an influence, and he has also cited the social historian Studs Terkel, from whom he learned the power that tonal quality and the arrangement of a story can bring to a novel. From Richard Pryor, Beatty learned not to be afraid to parody things that were important to him, and to

others. In *The Sellout*, for example, he criticizes, or teases "shit that I really like, that I really respect on some level"(41), like the Civil Rights Movement, and Martin Luther King's humourlessness. Beatty's influences range from Italo Calvino's to director Kenji Mizoguchi, with jazz, Voltaire, Chester Himes and Japanese literature all in the mix. He loves the details in Japanese literature, he says, and their movies which are much braver than theirs. There are no climaxes. Americans are so tied to happy endings, and people actually believe in the happy ending. For his entire career, Beatty has tried not to be branded one thing or the other.

The hip-hop references have receded, but other questions have taken their place. To his chagrin, Beatty is always, first and foremost, a black man who writes. "The New York Times" reviewed *The White Boy Shuffle* under the headline "Black Poet's Novel Aims the Joke Both Ways", and its review of *The Sellout* puts him in the company of Richard Pryor, Dave Chapelle and Chris Rock - not Kurt Vonnegut or Joseph Heller.

He quotes, admiringly, the New York novelist Colson Whitehead, who, asked in a TV interview what he was writing, answered: "I am just trying to give myself space to fail." Beatty says: "I was so envious when he said that. Damn, that was smart. He was giving himself the chance to change. To not meet what someone else wants him to do"(23). Certainly Beatty is utterly uninterested in meeting the expectations of the publishing industry: it looks like he is always nudging the boundaries of what it is possible or permissible. The poetry of the sentences, too, bounces with a vigour born of rigorous self-scrutiny. He teaches creative writing at Columbia University, and in his work with his students he draws, he says, on his early experience studying psychology in Boston. One skill he picked up was "how to listen to yourself. Not listen to yourself thinking, or listen to yourself speaking, but to listen to yourself

listening. To think about what gets in and what doesn't: what you missed, how you heard it. It's a way, he says, of reading one's own work critically". (24)

Beyond that, it helps him to interpret the world. In class, he doesn't like students to talk about other works. It doesn't do anyone any favours to compare them to Gabriel García Márquez who tell them, 'Try to be unique.'(32). Beatty admires artists like Kurt Vonnegut and Kenji Mizoguchi and talks about the moment of being thunderstruck by something. Influence, he says, is not about wanting to be like someone but that they charged something in him. He likes people who just don't care: who kind of go pedal to the metal. His mom always teases him that he liked films where nothing is going on. Sword-fight movies without any sword fighting. When nothing is going on, something is always going on. He liked awkward silence.

In African American literature, all aspects of hip-hop culture have inspired and galvanized such post soul authors as Lisa Jones, Greg Tate, Paul Beatty, Darius James, Trey Ellis and Danzy Senna all of whom are interested in locating the younger black generation the preceding one, with hip-hop and rap functioning as a major maker of difference. Hip hop arose out of the youth culture of the housing projects of the south Bronx in New York city in the early 1970s. Naturally an enormous amount of controversy had dogged rap from the beginning. The sine quo non of rap is aggressive, often hyperbolic braggadocio about the Mc's abilities in freetying or rapping extemporaneously. It is considered that these works of gangster rappers as a negative influence on the black youth. These issues parallel similar issues in contemporary African American fiction, where hip hop has found particular resonance among the post soul generation of authors, or those born since 1990. Many of younger artist grew up listening to rap music and made it part of their literary sound tracks or, in the cases of fiction writers Paul Beatty, Daruis James, Omar Tyre, Shenesta Jackson, Jake

Lamar, Eric Jerome incorporated it into the rhythms and referentiality of their texts. Paul Beatty's novels and poetry are especially adept at incorporating hip hop sensibilities and rhythms and the entire poetry slam movement in which poets use their best poems in competitive performance over part of its development and flavour if not its invention, to hip hop.

Sam Lipsyte the author of The Ask proudly comments about Paul Beatty that " Paul Beatty has always been one of the smartest, funniest, gutsiest writers in America, but *The Sellout* sets a new standard. It's spectacular explosion of comic daring, cultural provocation, brilliant, hilarious prose and genuine heart" and Olivia Williams who was the judge of Man Booker Judge says that, " An eccentric mix of swiftian satire and observational comedy.. I was banned from reading in bed because I was laughing so much"

Paul Beatty is among the funniest and most fearless writers in contemporary fiction. He has been called one of the shrewdest cultural commentators, and hilarious cutups, of his generation. In a voice both acerbic and expansive, Beatty creates unforgettable characters and haunting settings that strike at the very heart of race, pop culture, and language in America. With his most recent novel, *The Sellout*, Beatty became the first American author to win the Man Booker Prize for Fiction making him the first American to take that award home since 2014 when English Language novels became eligible. His satirical novel *The Sellout* is a magnificently absorbing story told by a nameless narrator who is referred to by his girlfriend as Bonbon.

Beatty's novel *The Sellout* was released to rave reviews. The book, which followed a farmer in modern times that attempts to bring slavery back, earned Beatty the title of funniest author in America. The satire, which took Beatty five years to

complete, earned him a Man Booker Prize. Beatty has admitted that he eventually chose to write the novel because he had run out of money, and the novel availed him an opportunity to resolve some financial issues. Beatty is very vocal about racial issues. Beatty has sparked debate for suggesting that Racism in the United States hasn't changed for the positive since the 1980s and that people have simply learned to adapt to new types of discrimination. Beatty has never been one to suggest ways of moving beyond the racial issue; instead, he simply works to highlight the issue whenever it arises.

The plot is wonderfully unusual, but also discomforting. Slavery was commonplace in the American colonies in the 17th and18th centuries. Beatty says that "The story was just me being curious, trying to render these supposedly antiquated elements of American history in a contemporary setting," (3). The novel opens with Bonbon in court not for a petty crime like stealing, but for encouraging racial segregation and slavery. The narrator has been born in the agrarian ghetto of Dickens, a suburb of Los Angeles. A work of contemporary fiction that revolves around histories of family, The Sellout comes with a twist. It covers only two generations father and son, and what happens next. Among other things, this includes the reintroduction of slavery and segregation. The father of the narrator is a single parent and a sociologist, who turns his only son into an on-going social experiment in childrearing methodologies. For instance, the father ties his four-year-old son's right hand behind his back so that he can grow to be left-handed, right-brained, and well-centered. Or, he tests the bystander effect as it applies to the Black community on his eight-year-old son by beating the boy in front of a throng of bystanders who don't stand around for too long. Sadly the father is killed in a police shoot out. The narrator is left bewildered.

> "You're supposed to cry when your dad dies. Curse the system because your father has died at the hands of the police. Bemoan being lower-middle-class and coloured in a police state that protects only rich white people and movie stars of all races, though I can't think of any Asian-American ones. But I didn't cry. I thought his death was a trick. Another one of his elaborate schemes to educate me on the plight of the black race and to inspire me to make something of myself, I half expected him to get up, brush himself off, and say, "See, nigger, if this could happen to the world's smartest black man, just imagine what could happen to your dumb ass. Just because racism is dead don't mean they don't shoot niggers on sight." (44)

The inheritance is downright bizarre: the son, like his father, becomes a nigger whisperer. It is one of these men he rescues, Hominy Jenkins, the last surviving member of the Little Rascals, who becomes a devoted slave to the narrator. Curiously enough, just as he was his father's little social experiment, the narrator turns his *The Sellout* by maintaining a mad pace of breathless storytelling that sometimes only works effectively if read out aloud. In an interview recorded in May 2015, Beatty pokes fun at racial politics but insist that the novel is about a ton of other things too. He refers to his work as a metaphorical tale wherein he has been thinking about segregation and how it will be in modern times. Acknowledging it also changes one's outlook. He adds, "I don't try to be satirical but I think in my head and on paper and it takes along, long time to be poetic and I have a little bit of agenda which is hard to pull off"(3).

The Man Booker winner says his approach Involves humour and personal experience. As a poet, writer, and a trained psychologist, Beatty has brought his vast

experience in writing and understanding human behavior to produce a magnificently raw, hard-hitting, fantastically honest, take-your-breath-away work of dark humour. *The Sellout* is satire at its finest. At times it is hard to believe this is fiction and not excellent reportage. Beatty has never sought to represent the whole experience of America, or of black America. This week, at one of the Booker press conferences, he said that he believes in simply having a bigger shelf, one happy to hold hundreds of individual stories, and not pining at the absence of all-encompassing Great American Novel. Beatty doesn't even want to be labeled a satirist. *The Sellout* has been billed as a satire, but that's just not a label he wants to apply. Embracing any label brings with it the fear that he will limit what he is able to write. So Beatty is simply writer and *The Sellout* is simply a novel, and if anyone have to call it a comedy, at least they should call it as tragic comedy. He continues to fascinate the world with his novels, thoughts, work, poetry and writings which justify his prominence in the literary world.

The sellout holds an important role in the tradition of visibility and invisibility which are long standing tropes in the African American literary tradition. The novel revisions the ongoing presence and function of racism in an America that has elected its first African American president, Barack Obama, and that now claims to be post racial, even as its spectral reproduction and commodification of blackness persist. *The Sellout* satirically confronts issues of race and racism with the African American literary and cultural counter discourses at a time when some Americans imagined the country to be post racial, and presents the perspective of achieving racial justice by reaffirming the ethnicity of the African Americans.

Chapter Two

Displaced Racism

The Sellout hearkens specifically to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and to Paul Beatty's earlier novel *The White Boy Shuffle*. Further, *The Sellout* exposes the ongoing presence and function of racism in a post racial America, and that now claims to be post-racial, even as its spectral reproduction and commodification of blackness persist. This chapter deals with the psychological downfall of the narrator's antagonist, Foy Cheshire, as the role of a 1990's-style 'Race Man' is now counterproductive to the racial discourse of the post-Obama era and also the role of Hominy Jenkins, mentor and erstwhile slave of the protagonist, who existentially rebukes the effacement of black identity.

Foy Cheshire is the primary antagonist in *The Sellout*. "…..never called me by my proper name but, simply yelled 'the sellout"(95). He is a false prophet who trades in an outdated and counterproductive mode of black activism. Where the narrator argues against spectral forms of blackness and in favour of Unmitigated Blackness, Foy attempts to erase and mitigate his own blackness and the authenticity of the unassimilated African-American community. His is an inauthentic mask of black radicalism: his political bravado protects a damaged inner psyche. His political activism is ultimately for personal gain, both politically and psychologically, and the narrator's ironic politics leave him devastated and denuded. Foy Cheshire trades in an outdated model of identity politics that helps him at the expense of the black community. Ironically, he uses his visible black identity as a justification for the indignity he feels emotionally. Although Ellis had posited that contemporary African-Americans "no longer need to deny or suppress any part of our complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural baggage" (235) and that they "aren't flinching

before they lift the hood on our collective psyches now that they have liberated themselves from both white envy and self-hate" (238). Foy does not behave as such. He flinches from, and revises, the history at the core of his American identity.

He promotes group assimilation at the expense of an erasure of black identity Foy's own assimilation includes a conversion to the American ideal of individual exceptionalism. His aggregation of personal wealth and fame justify all of his behaviours. He exemplifies the archetype of "the exception, different from the rest of the African- American people" that cultural critic Bell Hooks criticizes (235); his individual success as "the exception" proves the inferiority of the group. This is similar to Lewis R. Gordon's notion of "the black representative" (75) in that the acceptance by white society of individual African Americans assuages its sense of racism, even if those individuals are allegedly agitating for social equality. In the world of *The Sellout*, white society is happy to accept Foy: by erasing black history

Foy makes black identity spectral, thus the failure of any individual to assimilate and succeed is idiosyncratic, not racial. Effectively he is "espousing the norms and values of dominant whites," and he reaps rewards in both the white and the black communities (60) exclaim Cohen. Foy and individuals like him have achieved personal success in this post-racial world, but that success is despite their community, not because of it. As such, they have little interest in rallying a grassroots activism in African-American and non-white communities. The African-American satirical tradition. He is akin to the black politicians in George Schuyler's *Black No More*, especially those like Dr. Shakespeare Agamemnon Beard who personally benefit from the visibility but not the productivity or resolution of racial agitation (65) tells Schuyler. Foy also resembles Dr. Bledsoe in *Invisible Man*. As Dr. Bledsoe scolds and expels Invisible Man from his university, he removes his "mask," drops the

curtain, and reveals some of the gravest criticisms about the African-American "big man." Dr. Bledsoe asserts, "I don't owe anyone a thing, son. Who, Negroes? ... When you buck against me, you're bucking against power, rich white folk's power, the nation's power – which means government power!" (142) says Ellison; then he contends that he will hold onto the power he has carved out for himself by any means necessary.

Government power is especially pernicious: not only does it privilege whites, it legitimizes the exception. Even worse, though, is Foy's avaricious connection to Papa Zerignue in *Middle Passage* by Charles Johnson. Foy profits from the erasure of history, an erasure that hamstrings the political agency of the African-American community. Papa Zeringue literally enslaves Africans for personal gain. Papa Zeringue is a powerful black crime boss in antebellum New Orleans, and this position of stature, earned against obvious racist odds, earns him the admiration of the black community: to the casual observer, he is "a Race Man to be admired"(198) says Johnson in his *Middle Passage*. Papa Zeringue's admirable qualities appear to be his diverse holdings, his political savvy, his Afro centric business ethics, and his Black patronage.

Yet his desire for personal gain, his mistaken "equating of personal freedom and racial pride with fantastic wealth and power had gotten the blighter in over his head" (203), leads him to make "the greatest betrayal of all" – "Buying and selling slaves when he himself was black" (150). Papa Zeringue has prioritized his own wealth and ambition over those of his brethren in the black community, yet he has attempted to cloak those unforgiveable crimes in superficial acts of racial activism. The same will be said about Foy Cheshire. Foy, like Dr. Bledsoe or Papa Zeringue indulges in self-aggrandizement. He is not interested in social justice, only in personal

glory, which he achieves on the backs of race and racism. As his celebration on the inauguration of President Obama suggest, he operates in a hyper-local constituency: he is playing identity politics, where social justice is scored on exclusive terms, not social justice politics, where the interest is to defuse White racism and engender authentic inclusivity.

He steals narrator father's intellectual property for his own financial and political gain – whether that property is the idea for *The Black Cats 'n' Jammin' Kids* cartoon program or a leadership position in the Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals. He revises White literary texts to sell as his own self-beneficial *Fire the Canon!* book series. He ultimately protests the segregation of Chaff Middle School, not in the interest of Dickens' social equality but in his self-promotional notion of post-racial multiculturalism. Foy is a fake: his projection of blackness is inauthentic because he is ashamed of it. He code-switches to suit the occasion, yet for Foy and other "were niggers" (96) of his ilk, code-switching is but one strategy among many to legitimize and authenticate their identity politics. These characters must play to their audiences: their value to White America is derived from their authenticity in black America, and each is developed through their linguistic legerdemain.

Foy verifies his *bona fides* by bringing others like him to a meeting: "I know these great African American heroes are down with the cause" (218). In this particular meeting, Foy reveals his disdain for the true issues plaguing Dickens, although it is Foy's guest Jon McJones who delivers the hatchet job to America's contemporary African-American communities. Self-hatred is a key to these characters' revisionist agendas and conservative politics. Foy and these other characters effectively perform the role of *Mumbo Jumbo's* "Talking Android" to perpetuate the agenda of the dominant White *logos*. Foy's political correctness serves only himself and the racist

dominant discourse, not communities of colour like Dickens. Race and racism are his talking points, but he only pays them lip service: he effects no positive change, nor would he want to. Like Agamemnon Beard and Dr. Bledsoe, he already sits comfortably atop the status quo.

Foy's primary activism during the course of events in *The Sellout* is his revision of White literary texts. These revisions serve only to undercut Black identity by erasing its historical foundations. Foy becomes a "self-righteous guardian of blackness" (97), but one who insists on a Pollyannaish, revisionist version of blackness. Where *The Sellout* ultimately advertises the notion of "Unmitigated Blackness" to accept the contradictions in black identity and work forward from there, Foy fears those contradictions and works to cloak them. Foy's revisions will allegedly allow his grandchildren and other African- Americans to approach classic American white novels without fear of their racial discourse and will thus save them from miscomprehensions of the novel's literary aims. In short, he is dumbing-down complexity and patronizing African- American readers: he is excising, rather than unpacking, the contradictions of black identity.

His re-imaginations, his post-racial renderings, are as detrimental to the historical record as the romanticization of the Old South. Nonetheless he profits by the inclusion of his "politically respectful editions" (96) in schools. Foy's *modus operandi* pits him as a foil for the narrator. He criticizes him as a "sell out" even when he himself manipulates the concerns of the black community for his own personal gain. In this way Foy's own agenda is "faux," a fraud perpetuated upon individuals like the narrators father and community alike. Further, like the lingering grin of Lewis Carroll's disappearing Cheshire Cat, Foy dissolves blackness and black identity even as his own celebrity status remains. Foy's self-serving agenda emphasizes the

communitarian mindset of the protagonist, thus acting as a foil for *The Sellout*. His acts of revision are the opposite of the narrator's acts of remembering, and the reader must decipher which is the more efficacious between them.

When Foy reveals his ultimate revision in an effort to resist *The Sellout*'s phony Wheaton Academy, he also reveals his utter misunderstanding of Black counter discourse. For Foy, Wheaton Academy's visible segregation threatens his meal-tickets of racial revisionism and the politics of respectability; thus he unveils *The Adventures of Tom Soarer*, on the cover of which is "a preppy black boy … armed with a bucket of whitewash, standing bravely in front of a wall splashed in gang graffiti …" (217). At his press conference Foy shouts "the character of Tom Soarer will galvanize a nation to whitewash that fence!" (217), it reveals Foy's racial self- hatred and White envy. Foy sees the gang graffiti through a White lens; he fears such "Eruptions of Funk".

The climax of Foy's activism is his attempt to reintegrate Chaff Middle School. In this effort Foy further reveals his utter falseness. Although Wheaton Academy is revealed as a ruse, the functional Chaff Middle School is achieving newfound success despite its history as an underperforming inner-city school. Yet success brings publicity, and this publicity reveals the actual segregation of the school. Now that it is successful, Foy wants to integrate it with White students. This is the double-standard of racist logic: students of colour are systematically excluded from high-performing White schools unless they can show themselves to be exceptions, but White society cannot allow communities of colour to enjoy any successes by themselves. Effectively this is scholastic cultural appropriation, and Foy spearheads the effort. However, this episode pushes Foy over the psychological edge. As his protest spirals out of hand, he points his gun at his own temple, grabs a bucket

of white paint, and proceeds to dump "the pail of unstirred and semi-hardened stain over his head" (259). Our narrator intervenes with the "nigger-whispering" advice from earlier in the novel: "Foy … you have to ask yourself two questions: Who am I? and How may I become myself" (260). *The Sellout* draws upon his father's psychological wisdom to diagnose Foy's self-immolation:

> "I seen it a million times," my father used to say. "Professional niggers that just snap because the charade is over." The blackness that had consumed them suddenly evaporates like window grit washed away in the rain. All that's left is the transparency of the human condition, and everybody sees right through you. The lie on the resume has finally been discovered. (259)

The charade has been Foy's single-minded pretense that racism must be erased at all costs, especially from history. His revisionist tactics speak to the inferiority complex that he has internalized, while his celebrity performances re-enact racist stereotypes as much as does "whatever's on ESPN right now" (279). His "blackness" is the void of Hegel, not the self-empowering "blackness" of the African-American counter discourse: he works to "mitigate" his blackness to resolve the contradiction, when in this world only "Unmitigated Blackness" and its embrace of contradiction will vindicate black identity.

His activism to rewrite the canon speaks to his concern about how the dominant discourse stereotypes his people, and his protest of pro-minority bigotry reveals a concern that non- Blacks will see his success as a result of affirmative action and not of his own merit. When Foy dumps white paint over his head, he erases any claim to black identity just as he has been erasing African-American legacies. This exterior skin graft, this expression to be *Black No More*, reminds us of Optic White:

"If it's optic white, it's the right white" (Ellison 217). In some ways Foy is a victim of white racism, and his is a fragile ego that lacks the positive group identity that the narrator hopes to restore to Dickens.

The psychology of Foy's self-destruction is only made clear as the novel's Quest for the Holy Grail is resolved. When Hominy and friends are finally able to view the lost *Little Rascals* movies, the movies that Foy Cheshire had taken pains to remove from the public record, they are unimpressed by its casual racism until the last show on the reel – "Nigger in a Woodpil – Take #1" (280). After seeing "a nappy little black head pop up sporting a wide razzamatazz grin and shouting "It's black folk!," they hear "the director off screen yelling, 'We've got plenty of wood, but we need more nigger. C'mon, Foy, do it right this time. I know you're only five, but niggerize the hell out of this one" (280-281).

This traumatic evidence suggests that Foy's attempts to revise history emerge not for the benefit of the community but only for himself, out of his sense of shame for his role in this racist show. At the novel's diegetic end, its chapter entitled Closure, we also read about "the day after the black dude was inaugurated" (289). On this day "Foy Cheshire, proud as punch, was driving around town in his coupe, honking his horn and waving an American flag" (233).

When the narrator asks him why, Foy suggests that "the country, the United States of America, had finally paid off its debts." Ironically there is no closure here. For one, the events of the novel follow this "Closure" chronologically, so it is not what it claims to be. Second, the legacy of the Obama era is defined not by social equality but by the widening inequality of post-racialism. The narrator recognizes the limitations of one symbolic election, but Foy basks in it just like he basks in its limited, personal significance.

This is because Foy subscribes to the Great Man theory of leadership one that is sacrosanct within the white American dominant discourse, that a single person can change the destiny of the multitudes. Foy believes in The Exception, not the group. Although Foy imagines himself working for the improvement of the African-American psyche, although he tells Dickens that he has its interests at heart, he is ultimately working to claim fame and fortune for himself. His deposits are shallow and meaningless, though; he has denied his internal black identity to offset the shame of his experience in *Little Rascals*. Like Invisible Man's destruction of the coin bank, Foy has lost the use of that history. Instead he becomes a self-promotional public agitator, akin to a real-world celebrity like the conservative talk-show host and Race Man Tavis Smiley. It is ironic that Foy christens the novel's narrator as *The Sellout,* since Foy is the most selfish character at heart: Foy's politics sell out the black community for his own selfish gain. The second character is Hominy Jenkins.

Hominy Jenkins is simultaneously the mentor and slave of the author , and this is but one of the contradictions that defines his version of black identity . Hominy's many contradictions are instructional and inspirational for the novel's hero. In an era when black identity is increasingly diluted and commodified into inauthenticity and effaced into spectral forms of reproduction, Hominy plainly and proudly represents the un resolvable contradictions at the heart of black culture. He blurs performance and reality; he recognizes that the erasure of black history is an existential threat to himself; and, just as the narrator defends black identity in post-racial America via Unmitigated Blackness, so too does Hominy irreverently defend that most dehumanizing pantomime of racism, blackface. Similarly, Beatty's use of Hominy is an irreverent retort to Ellison's worries in *Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke* that the

"'darky' entertainer" is a reduction to the "grotesque and the unacceptable" that veils "the human ambiguities pushed behind the mask" of blackness (47-49).

Yet in *The Sellout* Hominy exposes those ambiguities not despite but because of his mask, and his fully-realized contradictory existence is catalytic for the narrrator's defense of Dickens and of blackness. Hominy makes clear that much of the contradiction that imbues black identity is a result of the performative masks that African Americans have to wear in a white public sphere. In many ways, Hominy is less a character and more a metonym throughout the novel. His individual quest serves as a proxy for the larger vision of cultural and historical redemption that the narrator enacts.

Although an older white America created Hominy, post-racial America hopes to efface him: just as Foy Cheshire and others would erase Jim from *Huckleberry Finn*. The erasure of uncomfortable black history – mostly by the dominant discourse to assuage its own guilt, but also sometimes by the African-American community to pacify its own traumas – is also the erasure of Hominy; thus, Hominy's persistent agitation to reclaim what has been lost is key to Dickens' resurrection. As a mentor to TS, Hominy invokes not only Jim but characters from *Invisible Man* and *The White Boy Shuffle*. From *Invisible Man* it is the Vet at the Golden Day, in all of his enigmatic wisdom, who prefigures Hominy. As a young college student IM encounters the Vet, but he is not ready to hear and digest the Vet's message when this "insane" man speaks to Mr. Norton about Invisible Man:

> "You see," he said turning to Mr. Norton, "he has eyes and ears and a good distended African nose, but he fails to understand the simple facts of life. *Understand*. Understand? It's worse than that. He registers with his sense but short-circuits his brain. Nothing has meaning. He takes it

> in but he doesn't digest it. Already he is – well, bless my soul! Behold! a walking zombie! Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative, the most perfect achievement of your dreams, sir! The mechanical man!" (94)

The Vet is expressing the ways in which Invisible man endures the racist taunts and demands of society without contemplating the deeper systemic resonances of his willing participation. The invisible man's only emotional response is the initial shame that he feels for having slaves as forebears. Further, in the terms of Michelle Wright, this Vet is also ventriloquizing the expectations of white society. His visage is a mask to white society: the mask is a trope that engages the Jeffersonian veil that covers black humanity and dehumanizes it. The Negative is the antithesis in the White racist dialectic that Hegel constructs out of Black faces. Lastly, the Vet's claim that nothing has meaning corresponds with narrator argument that "sometimes it's the nihilism that makes life worth living." In *The Sellout's* the context of the speech itself, the Vet is arguing that Invisible Man's lack of critical thinking deprives his sensory inputs of meaning. But in a greater context, this claim can be read with a different emphasis: nothingness the void has meaning to us. In this sense it connects to *The Sellout* conclusive rationale forUnmitigated Blackness. So too does Scoby, the plainspoken mentor in *The White Boy Shuffle* suggest a radical counter discourse like Unmitigated Blackness. He is a peer of the protagonist, unlike Hominy and the Vet, and he is more plainspoken than they. Scoby emboldens Gunnar Kaufman and guides him through the mysteries of black group identity.

Most significant here to this argument about the contradictions of racial identity is the moment in which Gunnar asks Scoby, "And what exactly does 'stay black'

mean, Nick?"; to which Scoby replies, "It means be yourself, what else could it possibly mean?" (155). Gunnar's question reveals his awareness of what Appiah (1996) calls ascriptive racial performances. Scoby's answer suggests his own deep understanding of identity, one that, per the Vet in the Golden Day, *Invisible Man* lacked. Scoby employs an important re-reading, one that Michelle Wright would call a counter discourse and praise for its universality and inclusivity. Scoby's "Stay black" does not imply a limited, masked stereotype: instead it is revised as a limitless individualism. Symbolically blackness is also the void, a nihilism that seemingly erases meaning.

Yet here Scoby, elsewhere TS, and earlier the veteran in *Invisible Man's* Golden Day redefine this nothingness as an all-important *raison d'etre*. For each of them, the thought of nothingness is not crippling but is instead inspiring. It is a *carte noire* that is free of the white negative. Gunnar articulates this notion himself: "The most important lesson I learned at El Campesino was that I wasn't in arrears to the white race … I owed them nothing" (155). In *The Sellout*, Hominy Jenkins understands that he owes nothing to white people. Existentially he must challenge their erasure of him and his authentic, albeit complicated, representations. In contrast to the plurality of his neighbours, Hominy does not willingly acquiesce to the assimilation of Dickens. Unlike Foy Cheshire, he does not opportunistically participate in post-racial America's destruction of black identity. As such, Hominy plays a significant role in the novel's discussion of the group foundation of individual identity and of the importance of home, history, and heritage to individual identity.

Hominy plays a critical role in this equation, both in his guidance of *The Sellout* and in his own redemptive quest. Too many residents of Dickens have become quick to discount their own hometown: "It saved them the embarrassment of having to

answer the small- talk 'Where are you from?' question with 'Dickens'" (58). These residents have digested the stories from the dominant discourse about their world, and they too have dismissed it. By contrast, Hominy is as open and honest about his subjectivity, as a black man in racist America, as he possibly can be. Hominy's honesty and authenticity begin with his name and proceed through to his career and sheer existence. Hominy – the dried and processed corn – is itself a symbol of the American South and the racist history epitomized there. Therefore Hominy the character functions in Dickens in similar ways to the racist totems in *Invisible Man*.

Hominy the character does not ever worry about either of these concerns, despite his descriptions as: "gray haired relic to Uncle Tom's past" (66); "last surviving member of the Little Rascals" (67); "uncle Remus" (69); "a sort of Little Rascals stunt coon" (71); "personification of American primitivism" (87); a "Living National Embarrassment. A mark of shame on the African-American legacy, something to be eradicated, stricken from the racial record, like the hambone, Amos 'n' Andy, Dave Chappelle's meltdown, and people who say 'Valentime's Day'" (76). While other characters and individuals consciously try to diminish their blackness, Hominy amplifies his. Where Foy Cheshire has redefined himself against the trauma of his childhood Hollywood acting, Hominy has defined himself as that stereotyped role. The satire is that Hominy's lifelong self-association with that *inauthentic* spectral reproduction has become an *authentic* identity of black positivism. He is proud to be himself, and he is a black man in racist America, and he is comfortable with any contradictions inherent in that subjectivity.

This contrasts with the character MC Panache, himself a contemporary stereotype of commodified blackness, a rapper-cum- actor, who is currently enduring the contradiction between authenticity and inauthenticity. Panache articulates the trap

for the working black actor: "I've had directors tell me, 'We need more black in this scene. Can you black it up?' Then you say, 'Fuck you, you racist motherfucker!' And they go, 'Exactly, don't lose that intensity!'" (282). Hollywood, a primary manufacturing centre of, and key distribution centre for, commodification and spectral reproduction, puts black identity in a particularly difficult bind. Working actors like Panache appear to be at the mercy of this reproduction, both in terms of identity and in terms of trade. Meanwhile Hominy, who is far removed from Hollywood as both labour and product, can embody the contradictions inherent in his subjectivity and perform them as a satiric ideology.

Though he himself is comfortable, Hominy is the embodiment of uncomfortable history. As *The Sellout* seeks to restore Dickens, he recognizes that he must restore its history. Although he chastises the African-American community for "wanting everything expunged from our record" (98), he recognizes the antithesis in Hominy:

> Feigned or not, sometimes I'm jealous of Hominy's obliviousness, because he, unlike America, has turned the page. That's the problem with history, we like to think it's a book -- that we can turn the page and move the fuck on. But history isn't the paper it's printed on. It's memory, and memory is time, emotions, and song. History is the things that stay with you. (115)

Whether it is obliviousness or a lack of self-consciousness, Hominy is an existential representation of racism, a Faulknerian homage to the power of the past.

America cannot simply wish racism away. African Americans must deal with the contradictions of their lives in contemporary America, and they must not ignore their past. Unlike the rest of America, Hominy has turned the page on righteous

indignation because he understands that both Dickens, as a bastion of African-American identity, and the lost Little Rascals tapes, as mementoes of racism past, are crucial to his self-being. Ironically, though Hominy himself has processed these memories, his existence is itself a disruption to everyone else's wishful thinking of post-racial egalitarianism. Hominy understands his dependence on Dickens. The dissolution of Dickens in *The Sellout* represents that effacement of black identity and a tacit assumption of assimilation, and Hominy senses that he disappears with it. Hominy is the incarnate vestige of racism, but racism is hidden and displaced in post-racial America. Until racism is unveiled – both in its structural disempowerment of Dickens and in its public transmission on film – then Hominy appears as an outlier rather than as the linchpin that he is. Hominy's holism depends on his blurring of performance and reality. The disappearance of Dickens, the dissolution of black group identity, and the dissimulation of the *Little Rascals* films conspire to push Hominy into an existential crisis. His response is to lean on *The Sellout*:

> Because when Dickens disappeared, I disappeared … I just want to feel relevant. … sometimes we just have to accept who we are and act accordingly. I'm a slave. That's who I am. It's the role I was born to play. A slave who just also happens to be an actor. But being black ain't method acting. Lee Strasberg could teach you how to be a tree, but he couldn't teach you how to be a nigger. This is the ultimate nexus between craft and purpose, and we won't be discussing this again. I'm your nigger for life, and that's it. (77)

Here in Hominy articulates the importance of place in the psychological construction of self. If black communities disappear and become invisible, then so too do black individuals. Certainly this speaks to the legacy of *Invisible Man* and its trope of

invisibility. For the narrator himself, his dark skin makes him conspicuous as Other in a white world, yet the Otherness of his black identity makes his individuality invisible, unreadable, and undesired in the white world. In this "post-racial" publication era of *The Sellout*, meanwhile, African-American identity is slowly effaced and lost. In this moment, the success of any one individual African American fulfills, at the very least, the need of what Gordon (1997) calls "hav[ing] blacks," whereby the inclusion of one black, "the black representative," denecessitates responsibility for the majority of black individuals who are still excluded (75). At worst, individual success proves to be the exception that proves the racist rule that African Americans are inferior. In effect, in either circumstance, over determination of African-American individuals still exists.

Now, however, the racism that formerly made individual African Americans invisible is now itself invisible. Dickens is a bastion of that institutionalized racism; its invisibility is a triumph for the "invisible hand" of racism. Hominy's speech echoes further. When he claims to seek relevance, he is speaking as a synecdoche for African-American history. The erasure of black history is a victory for historical white racism, contemporary white revisionism, and Foy Cheshire's opportunistic and counterproductive grandstanding. This erasure is also a commensurate loss for the generational identity of the African-American community.

As an embodiment of the most public and most lamentable collaboration with institutional racism, Hominy's insistence that his authenticity be recognized and recognizable speaks to a need to uncover and consider the miscarriages of the past, not least of which is the current trend toward more "spectral forms" of blackness. When Hominy continues that "... sometimes we just need to accept who we are and act accordingly. I'm a slave. That's who I am. It's the role I was born to play," the

double-voicedness, the authentic African-American Signifying in this excerpt reaches a fever pitch. To "act accordingly" operates on no fewer than four distinct levels. First is Hominy's indulgence of racist white doctrine. As an African American, his is a limited, disenfranchised, and essentially lesser existence and he would do well to operate in that stratum; acting a slave is the basest manifestation of this doctrine.

Second is Hominy's self-identity as an actor. He is an actor and must do what actors do: blur the lines between character and reality a blurring that is also shared by the novel format, hence Bakhtin's concerns with the "internally dialogized word" (330). Third is the African-American sensibility that black individuals have to be "twice as good" to achieve a similar level of success as a White peer. Fourth and foremost, though, is an intertextual exchange with *The White Boy Shuffle*. When Scoby defines staying black as being himself, he wants that to mean acting in an unself-conscious way. For most people, being an actor means being quite self-conscious of one's behaviour, but for the best actors it means losing oneself to the role. Yet it is Hominy's role that resonates most loudly.

As in the above interpretations of acting accordingly, role can suggest the pretense of acceptance of white superiority, the literal sense of character-acting, and the burden of being an African American trying to make it in this country. Further, "role" evokes a sense of the performative that supports each of those interpretations and further dehumanizes the actual individual. Hominy is not free to be himself, certainly not now that the borders of Dickens no longer shield him from the white world. His hope now is that "I'm your nigger for life, and that's it" (243). Affixing himself to the narrators affords Hominy a stability that otherwise dissolved with Dickens. He rose in Black Liberation Psychology, may feel temporarily lost, but he also has an internal compass to provide direction. Lastly, Hominy's use of "nigger"

digs deep. By playing a slave in real life, he achieves a self- deprecating role greater than any that Hollywood denied him in the past. Of course, slaves are also utterly nameless and without identity – the ultimate invisible African American, the faceless racial epithet. Gordon evaluates the ceaseless trope of invisibility by commenting,

> If a black is over determined, then to see that black is to see every black. The blacks' individual life ceases to function as an object of epistemological, aesthetic, or moral concern … The black becomes an opportune, economic entity. (75)

If a black individual's identity is reduced to, first, a generic black person and, second, a mere economic cog in the service of American industry, then he is left no choice but to function as either an economic actor in this world or as a rebel. Ever the contradiction, Hominy's "role" of slave operates as both simultaneously: the slave is the most dehumanized, mechanized form of humanity possible, but to be a slave in post- racial America is to rebel against the would-be ethos of this era. In the statement "I'm your nigger for life," Hominy also recognizes an equivalent sense of black identity within the narrator as he feels within himself.

As an extension, this particular version of black identity refuses to admit inferiority or to assimilate into white society. "… and that's it" is Hominy's ultimatum, his nomination of the narrator as an anti-leader for the African-American community and his acceptance of his own existential contradiction. Hominy's support, for his own identity and for the author's, encourages him to wage his campaign to redeem blackness in spite of racism. Hominy's participation in these machinations involves public melodramatic performances that unsettle those around him. The performative nature of his behaviours is utterly conspicuous and makes other self-conscious of their own public performances. In turn, onlookers become

aware that their performative masks are merely tropes and not true identities. When The Sellout replaces signs on the #125 bus with signs that read "PRIORITY SEATING FOR SENIORS, DISABLED, AND WHITES" (128), Hominy rides the bus with the hope of bequeathing his seat to a White rider in a gesture of racial subservience. This would be an ultimate act of masking, the dissimulation of one's own sense of self-worth as an African-American individual. Eventually Hominy is able to "sacrifice himself" and to have "relinquished his seat in a manner so obsequious, so unctuously Negro, that the act was less an offer of his place than a bequeathal," and in this act the narrator notes Hominy's expression:

> the look of contentment on Hominy's face as he shuffled to the back bus was a pout turned inside out. I think in part it's why no one protested his actions. We recognized the face he was wearing as a mask from our own collections. The happy mask we carry in our back pockets that subservient countenance inherent in all black lepidoptera and people. That autonomic eager-to-please response that's triggered anytime you're approached in a store and asked, "Do you work here?"(131 . The face worn every moment you're on the job and not in the bathroom stall, the face flashed to the white person who saunters by and patronizingly pats you on the shoulder and says, "You're doing a fine job. Keep up the good work." (132 .

The face that feigns acknowledgement that the better man got the promotion, even though deep down you and they both know that you really are the better man and that the best man is the woman on the second floor. Everything, every trope that is embodied in Hominy, resolves and results in this "mask" and this "face." Captured in this passage is the reminder that African Americans are expected by white society to

comport themselves in specific ways in public. While this comportment is not the dehumanization of blackface, it is the self-deprecation of minstrelsy and subservience. Despite the would-be dissolution of Jim Crow, despite the alleged acceptance of "post-racial" America, black Americans are not accepted as full-blooded people with fully rounded characters. At this late stage they are still expected to perform an appreciative, domesticated, unchallenging role. Yet Hominy and the narrator do everything in their power to note the inauthenticity of post-racialism and the reality of black life in Dickens. When they rebuild the highway sign for "DICKENS – NEXT EXIT," Hominy claims, "The whip feels good on the back, but the sign feels good in the heart" (88). This statement reveals the contradictions that Hominy embodies. Playing the slave and inviting masochism show the performative role of Black identity in relation to White society.

Meanwhile the emotional response to the re-incorporation of Dickens shows the real effect of communalism. Hominy's emotional wellbeing is tied not only to the restoration of Dickens but also to the redemption of his professional acting career. Acting a slave may be Hominy's way of reclaiming his professional niche. After commoditizing and profiting from the careers of Hominy and "the great pickaninnies that preceded him," Hollywood abandons them for more palatable forms of Black exploitation: it "had all the blackness it needed in the demi-whiteness of Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier, the brooding Negritude of James Dean, and the broad, gravity-defying, Venus hot-to-trot roundness of Marilyn Monroe's ass" (68). No longer is Hominy's role on *Little Rascals* in vogue, but not because Hollywood and America have found social equality.

Rather, Hollywood broadcasts an increasingly dissimulated versions of black identity. True blackness, truly black *logos* that is unashamed and unself-conscious of

itself, is unacceptable; "demi- whiteness," black identity diluted with Optic White values and aesthetics, is the extent of Hollywood's progressiveness. Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier are not threateningly violent versions of blackness, nor are they reckless caricatures of inferiority. Rather, Beatty says they are "paragons of good blackness"(105). They are "acceptable" versions of blackness, "demi-white" versions that suggest a total assimilation into white culture. They are following a script: both the one that Hollywood produces and the one that white culture demands. That these real-world men were politically active is irrelevant; on- screen they represent domestication and fealty to the dominant discourse. Their star power is bastardized by James Dean, visibly white but somehow capturing "Negritude" as will White entertainers in a variety of media.

Lastly, the physical attractiveness of Marilyn Monroe, defined by the narrator as the sexiness of her *gluteus maximi*, evokes a stereotypical quality of African-American women and starlets. Ultimately, black aesthetics are acceptable only in white packaging; so too are black actors in Hollywood's increasingly post-racial narrative. Although James Dean and Marilyn Monroe may devalue some aspects of an African-American aesthetic, blackface is the most virulent form of racist appropriation. Therefore Hominy, this African-American character who revels in racist stereotype, is a predictable candidate to discuss this trope. Hominy is a guest speaker at "the L.A. Festival of Forbidden Cinema and Unabashedly racist Animation." A pack of sorority girls stands to ask a question, but is booed by the audience for being in, as "a tall, bearded white boy" recognizes, "non-ironic blackface" (240). The audience is alarmed when Hominy asserts ignorance about the term and idea of "blackface," an ignorance that the narrator explains:

For Hominy blackface isn't racism. It's just common sense. Black skin looks better, looks healthier, looks prettier, looks powerful. Because if imitation is indeed the highest form of flattery, then white minstrelsy is a compliment, it's a reluctant acknowledgment that unless one happens to really be black, being black is the closest a person can get to true freedom. Hominy totally inverts the racist power of blackface in a way that can only occur in satire. Traditionally, blackface is a vehicle by which white racists dehumanize African Americans. Perhaps they even infantilize African Americans in that they achieve "true freedom" from adult, white concerns by donning the "happy mask" that Hominy reveals on Bus #125.

However, Hominy redefines the term, much like other Groups that experienced marginality but still claim as part of their identity that characteristic formerly used to justify their exclusion. Hominy is psychologically secure in his performative art of acting: Hominy even sounds like a dialectical harmony: he is at peace with himself, thus he perceives no threat from blackface. For racists, African-American identity is something that should be effaced in an effort to join the dominant discourse. For Hominy, African-American identity is something to which to aspire. Being black is the closest a person can get to true freedom is Hominy's way of exulting black identity: it is an escape from a debilitating white *logos* that impedes the progress of all involved. If, as Michelle Wright has argued about DuBois's critical writings, the prevailing White *logos* is one "that attempts to prevent or that resists synthesis" (78), then black identity might provide a productive escape. In this light, Hollywood's "demi-white" production of African-American culture is another "spectral form of reproduction": not cultural appropriation but instead a more palatable, but just as aspirational, version of blackface. The traditional view is that blackface dehumanizes African Americans to nothing more than a mask. Although

Hominy disputes this by reinterpreting blackface as a tribute to African-American ideals, the "mask" remains an important trope in African-American writing because it is more often a means by which African-American agents engage with, and disguise themselves against, the white community. DuBois speaks of this mask as a veils says Wright: "the veil that signifies both the Sein (being) and Schein (seeming) aspects of the Negro American subject's existence because it points both to the guise and the face that lies behind it" (83). The trope protects disempowered African Americans and their actual discontents from the scrutiny and backlash of the white dominant discourse.

A problem emerges, however, when the actors wearing the mask lose sight of its performative aspects and confuse it with their real identity. This is similar to Gordon's concern exclaims Kalich about African-American masochists people who cannot see themselves being seen as others, and it conjures questions about "popular culture representations" and whether they are "expressions of strength from a community" or "exploitations of the local tragedies" (83). Thus, being "masked against himself" is a product of the dissolution of the trope and of the blurring of performance and reality. As for the sorority girls in "non-ironic blackface," their African-American sister provides a seemingly practical and earnest evaluation of her situation – which, of course, Beatty is satirizing.

Before she speaks for herself, the narrator wonders "if she, too, was acting, if she felt free. If she was aware that the natural colour of her skin was actually blacker than 'blackface'" (241). As with Hominy's assertion that "It's the role I was born to play," there is a consideration that "being 'black is the closest a person can get to true freedom." The woman herself, Butterfly Davis , Dr. Topsy, recognizes the absurdity of her situation and anticipates narrator a question; to this implicit question she

replies, "I'm pre- med. And why? Because these white bitches got the hookup, that's why. The old girls' network exists, too, now, and it's no joke. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. That's what my mama says, because racism's everywhere" (243-244). She, too, sees the racism in post-racial America; her reaction is to ingratiate herself in the current racial climate, not out of a naïve post-racialism but out of a conscientious real politic. Her choice is not unlike the narrator's boyhood preference for the Barbie and Ken play set, itself seemingly practical not political, yet revealing the structural inequalities that belie its "practicality." Butterfly's cavalier attitude toward racism suggests that she is another character who is perhaps comfortable enough in her identity to ignore the racist implications in her surroundings – yet she violates the injunction of narrators father who is against of "breeding a false sense of familiarity" with white people (271).

On one hand, she seems to counteract the example of Black Masochism by Gordon, in that she recognizes her Otherness yet pretends not to; yet on the other, her tokenism assuages white guilt and legitimizes racist misbehavior. Not with standing, Butterfly redeems Hominy. She has researched the lost *Little Rascal* tapes, Hominy's Holy Grail, and has traced them to Foy Cheshire. Her binder includes spaces for those six missing films, and the narrator tries "to see through the redaction's blackness and back into time" (245). Those tapes are the most convincing evidence of the reality of America's racist past, near enough to have been filmed and curated by its greatest mythmaker, Hollywood.

America's white *logos* has manipulated the past to eradicate its complicity in a legacy of human rights violations; that the blackness of redaction obscures black *logos* is only a final *coup de grace* in revisionist history. The lost *Little Rascal* tapes are to Hominy what Hominy is to Dickens. They are evidence of an intentionally

forgotten past, but a past that must resurface if Hominy is to find closure and if the people of Dickens are to chart a path forward. Their disappearance is a mystery, whereas Dickens's disappearance is undisguised. Hominy believes "the widespread rumor that Foy Cheshire had ... purchase[d] the rights to the most racist shorts in the *Our Gang* oeuvre" (97). In this role Foy Cheshire continues his antagonism: first, by stealing ideas from the narrator's father; second, by mocking the narrator and his vision for Dickens; and third, by extending his revisionist history from the literary canon to the early days of film. These missing tapes are the most indemnifying and irrefutable documents of white racism; thus they are the key component in Hominy's quest to restore his identity, an identity based on those lowest performative debasements by African Americans for white pleasure. At first, the missing tapes seem anti-climactic, yet the final episode literally and figuratively sets Hominy free.

The first few episodes merely illustrate "racism is a rampant as usual, but no more virulent than a day trip to the Arizona state legislature" (280), the last episode raises the bar. The episode, "Oil Ty-Coons!," features an unnerving plot development: the three black characters, played by Buckwheat, Hominy, and – surprisingly – Foy Cheshire, become rich by using other black children to fill oil cans "with crude drop by black drop" (281). As *The Sellout* has made clear as a text, this plot twist is anything but, and it is in fact all too obvious. First is the crude sight gag: white *logos* expects black characters to have black blood, not red. This notion rationalizes acts of dehumanization.

Second is the idea of over determination: these characters are selfish and manipulative, and these characteristics validate white society's like treatment of them. Third is the spirit of commercialism: black people are merely commodities to be exploited. In sum, black Americans are barred from the dominant discourse pseudo-

biologically, psychologically, and economically. For Hominy, though, this episode is liberating. He frees himself with a kiss: "I quit ... Slavery. We'll talk reparations in the morning"(283). These documents of unbridled racism restore his sense of identity: they represent the foundational element that balances his individualism with his place in the group. This balance braces him against the contradictions of his existence. He is an actor who reads from a script and a free man who directs his own actions.

With a full accounting of the terrible and humiliating history that precedes him, he can assert his own agency and make his own social justice. Hominy has long been an example of contradiction: first, of how African- American people have been debased by white society; and second, of how African- American performance has fueled the racism of white audiences. Now he is also an example of how that history is but Brother Tarp's broken leg chain: a germination of identity but not a barrier to self-determination. Like Dickens, Hominy is a contradiction within post-racial America. He performs an early, inauthentic reproduction of blackness for so long that it becomes his authentic self, only now it is offensive to a Hollywood and an America that both erase their racist histories and efface blackness. Although Hominy locates his identity crisis in the dissolution of Dickens, Dickens has newfound value to white America, whereas white America would prefer to redact Hominy. Therefore Hominy plays an important role in both *The Sellout's* and the narrator's agenda: his ambiguously ironic role-playing makes him inscrutable and incomprehensible, two key ingredients in "Unmitigated Blackness."

Chapter Three

Reconstructing the African American 'Legacy

The Sellout makes an vigorous intervention into debates about the presence and future of racism. This novel by Paul Beatty started with an unfriendly behaviour. In every chapter, Beatty evokes, not only the pain of the African-American community, but also that of the various other cultures which society has enmeshed in the institution of racism.The novel is set against backdrop of Barrack Obama presidency and it raises a question about the election of first black president. Paul Beatty mentions gorilla which describes both Obama and writer Baraka, the two important figures in black arts movement. "Some of my best friends are monkeys" (5) says a women at zoo. The woman's words points to racist stereotypes equating all black people are monkeys. The narrator declares that he hasn't participated in any criminal activity but now he finds himself in Supreme Court. When the narrator was in the Supreme Court he was smoking marijuana which reflects the absurdity of American legal system.

Due to racial discrimination there is no such rule as "Equal Justice under the law"(7) instead the existence of black people is criminalized. But the narrator feels that now he has got freedom as he has been chargedin theSupreme Court. The narrator's case depends upon racism including Dred Scott V. Sanford, who ruled the descendants of slaves in the United States and Plessy V. Ferguson, who upheld racial segregation. He shouts "equal Justice under the law"(9). The narrator challenges the assumption that Supreme Court rulings have gradually moved in progressive direction. Both the cases in which the narrator has been involved have the entrenchment of racism. When the narrator was younger, he thought that the problems of African American community would be solved if the community had a good

enough motto. He says that other communities have mottos from Chickasaw nation to the police force. He tries to invent many mottos and finally using his little Latin knowledge, he invented mottos. His states his first idea thus:

> Black America; Veni, vidi, vici- Fried Chicken! Peeled back fun sine ears.... "Simper fi, Semper Funky" and then "Unum çorpus, unamens, unacor, unumam or One body, one mind, one mind, one heart, one love.(11)

The narrator was pleased with his attempt on inventing a motto. But he secretly thought that "every black person thinks they're better than every other black person" (12). None of the mottos he invents seems to have much potential to instigate politicalprogress; the usefulness of motto is rooted in the importance of having a sense of a purpose and direction. *The Sellout* uses irony, humour to challenge any simple understanding of right and wrong and as human it is good to be both guilty and innocent inappropriate emotions are one of the main sources of humour in the novel. The narrator feels that he has to be considered both guilty and innocent. Although most people would like their emotions to line up with their circumstances and principles in an appropriate manner, this often does not turn out to be the case.

The fact is that the narrator has been charged with slave holding which is found as absurdity but this absurdity is juxtaposed with the absurdity of black Justice's lavish lifestyle and extremely informal way of speaking. The narrator's lawyer Hampton takes his pipe from his hands and sprays some air freshener to cover the smell of pot. Hampton is "an old school criminal defense attorney" (14) who prefers to present only the most desperate people, those he calls "The wretched of the earth"(14). When the crime of which narrator was accused was first read in district court, he struggled to understand and why he couldn't consider both guilty and

innocent. Back in DC, a black woman in the front row of court berates the narrator, she discusses the history of black people in America. Then she slaps him in the face, the narrator knows that she wants him to feel guilty and he keeps expecting a black guilty, but instead nothing came. The Supreme Court Justice enters and Hampton drags the narrator to his feet. His case is named Me.V. the united states of America. While Hampton speaks, the black Justice fidgets uncomfortably in his seat. He blurts out "Nigger are you crazy?"(23) He asks how it's possible that a black man can own a slave. The Justice wants to believe in progress, but the narrator himself rejects saying "since when did little slavery and segregation hurt anybody"(23). The black Justice stands up, looking like he wants to fight. He shouts that the narrator's parents must have raised him better than to embrace segregation and slavery.

There is a connection between the hypocrisy of Justice earning a high presidinglegal system that discriminates against black people. Here the novel again challenges any easy mode of distinction between right and wrong by presenting two mistaken points of view side by side. The narrator thought is comically false, but the Justice's belief in the system and progress is misguided. The narrator's father was a social scientist, and sole practitioner of what he called Liberation psychology. "My father was (Carl Jung, rest his soul) a social scientist of some renown"(27). The phrase Liberation Psychology is an adaptation of Liberation Psychology, a movement of Christian theology that uses Christian doctrine to advocate the empowerment of the poor and oppressed through radical changes to the structure of society. The narrator's father spent twenty years as the interim dean in the psychology department of west riverside community college. Although he loved living on farm, he was a far better psychologist than he was a steward of animals. The application of this idea to

psychology suggests that the narrator's father uses his scientific research in order to fight against racism.

When he was a baby his father placed objects representing whiteness into his cot. While firing gun and shouting racist insults, in order to teach the narrator to associate these symbols of whiteness with racism. This desire of narrator's father to fight racism through scientific experiments ironically abused his own black son. When the narrator was eight, his father used him to test how the bystander effect works within the black community. He dressed the narrator in stereotypical clothing and then beat him in the middle of a busy intersection. Rather the standing by strangers got involved and started beating the narrator also. The bystander effect is that when people witness a crime being committed or someone being hurt and do nothing, assuming that someone else already has intervened. After this experiment was over, the narrator's father apologized for not accounting for the bandwagon effect.

> So he made me to stand on the busiest intersection in the intersection in the neighborhood, dollar bills bursting from my pockets, the latest and shiniest electronic gadgetry jammed into ear canals, a hip hop heavy gold chain hanging from my neck and inexplicably a set of custom made carpeted Honda Civic floor mats draped over my forearm like a waiters towel and as tears streamed from my eyes, my own father mugged me. (30)

The bandwagon effect shows that black people not only have to deal with the cruel indifference of strangers, but an extra level of violent hatred. During another experiment the narrator's father donned a Ronald Regan mask posing as a white authority figure. He then asks about black history, when the narrator was slow to

answer or go wrong, his father gave him an electric shock. The narrator was bleeding but he fantasized about bat man saving him. This is one of the moments in the novel where satire is blended with genuinely disturbing content. While the narrator's father's experiment is comically absurd, it also points to very serious and real issues surrounding parental abuse on thier children.

When the narrator was twelve, notably Batman is another kind of white authority figure, whom the narrators father replicates as a famous study of racial consciousness in black children using black dolls and white dolls. The narrator'sfather asks him to pick between two entire doll worlds. One featured Ken and Malibu Barbie and the other featured Martin Lurther .Jr., Malcolm X. Harriet. He made Harriot Tubman by painting a Barbie black, turning her into a plantation Barbie. Throughout the novel many serious moments and figures from black history are made ridiculous. This challenges the idea that such moments need to be treated with solemnity. But here the author doesn't give importance to the brilliant figure; this suggests that sometimes their legacy can be regarded with humour rather than any somberness. The narrator picked the white doll world because the white doll has better accessories. So the father burned his findings. Later he began to teach his son about farming. The narrator feels all his memories about his father in a bad way. Narrator's father is known as a nigger whisperer.

The phrase nigger whisperer is a deliberately scandalous reframing of horse whispering a practice of communicating with horses through knowledge of horse psychology. When Dickens resident was in a bad way he would approach the person and embrace them like an old friend. His father has a talent for approaching the unapproachable. The narrator claims that when he was six he witnessed the birth of gangster rap. The rapper Kilo.G began reciting Alfred Lord Tennyson verses while

firing his gun. A SWAT team arrived but couldn't stop laughing and failed to shoot him. The narrator's father whispered something to Kilo. G and he handed over his gun. The whisper was "Who am I? And how may I become myself?" (39). Kilo. G was a real rapper signed to cash money records in the early 1990s. While the story about Kilo. G isn't real, it compares the true history of how gangster rap evolved as a genre and the hostile reaction of authorities. The narrator assumes that he would stay in Dickens and live a happy life. He hoped to marry Marpessa Delissa Dawson, his childhood sweetheart. He felt the question who he was and how he can become himself. The narrator was a product of his father and Dickens but one day both disappeared leaving no sense. The search for a lost home is one of the most important themes of the book. It takes on literal significance in the plot through the disappearance of narrator's father and of Dickens. Due to the legacy of slavery much of the black literary tradition addresses the loss of origins and home.

*The Sellout*may be an absurd and surreal comic novel, but it addresses many of the most important and serious issues of contemporary America. After a life spent fighting racism, the narrator's father is killed in an act of police brutality. Before his death, he has warned the police officers, "I'm warning you, you anal- retentive, authoritarian archetypes, you don't know who my son is" (43). However the narrator tells the officer "I'm no one special"(43). The fact that he lies dead with his hand fist shows that until the very end, the narrators father stood up to racist authority on behalf of himself and other black people. The narrator's father's efforts to teach his son about black identity, race and racism seem to have backfired. Rather than inheriting his father's passion for Justice, the narrator feels ambivalent about his race. His eventual decision to write coward as part of his racial identity on the census shows that, unlike his father, he is rather meek and avoids having to assert himself when he can.

The narrator'sfather's decision to begin giving academic presentations inside a donut shop shows that his scientific research was inextricably rooted in the community in which he lived. Far from the stereotype of the academic who remains within the ivory tower, the narrator's father chose to spread his knowledge to the people of Dickens, even if this meant giving presentations to unsuspecting patrons of Dum Dum Donuts. Foy Cheshire is the main villain of the novel. Foy is a hypocrite; although he, like the narrator's father, conducts research on urban black communities, rather than giving back to the community he revels in his own wealth and acclaim. Foy steals ideas from the narrator's father, and then relies on the narrator's father to rescue him from suicide. The narrator's father's willingness to do so while preserving Foy's dignity and reputation shows that, despite his flaws, he is a far better man. The idea of the Nigger Whisperer at first appears ridiculous and offensive, since it implies that black people are like animals that need a special kind of human to understand them. However, the narrator's father's role is actually deeply valued and needed within the community, in part due to the problem of police brutality.

Given that police are killing black people without consequences and leaders like Foy are self-interested and hypocritical, the ordinary people of Dickens desperately need an alternative to help them deal with difficulty and trauma. This role used to be filled by the narrator's father, but is now vacant. While the narrator's father often performed heroic deeds within the community, he was far from a hero in any straightforward sense. Not only did he abuse the narrator, but he also harassed women and slept with his students. Men who are seemingly heroic can nonetheless mistreat women and children in private. The narrator's reference to Reconstruction is significant. The novel consistently undermines the idea of linear progress, and the history Reconstruction and its aftermath dramatically disrupt the idea that racial progress in America has been linear. During Reconstruction, efforts were made to

provide rights and opportunities to newly freed slaves, including the Forty acres and a mule policy which the narrator refers to here. However, many of these were not delivered, and the backlash against Reconstruction was so intense that it overshadows any progress made in the first place.

The sudden disappearance of Dickens takes literally the idea that governmental authorities would rather ignore or even erase black communities than attempt to support and assist them. The stigma against Dickens is so strong that residents would rather be from nowhere than from the city, showing that a sense of home is not something everyone necessarily wants, when that home is explicitly seen as negative. Starting with his own father, the narrator has always been surrounded by people who place particular expectations on him expectations that he either can't or doesn't want to meet. Now that his father is dead, the narrator is being compelled to assume his place, but the two men have little in common. Whereas the narrator's father had a robust and enthusiastic knowledge of human psychology, the narrator is more drawn to working with animals than people. It shows of another strange skill the narrator possesses alongside his knowledge of Latin: the ability to grow insanely delicious fruit. The reaction of the community to his watermelons exaggerates the racist stereotype about black people's love of watermelons to a point of surreal absurdity.

The character of Hominy shows that the reality is more disturbing. Although Hominy is a fictional character, there are many real black child actors whose roles in movies like this were racist caricatures. Throughout the novel, the narrator tries to create a normal life for himself within the surreal chaos of Dickens. For example, he has a lifelong, devoted crush on Marpessa his childhood sweetheart, who is literally the girl next door but does not see a woman naked until one of his father's teaching assistants sits on his bed uninvited. It states that what the narrator suggests that such an event should not be analyzed through Freudian

hermeneutics, meaning Freud's theory of how sexuality develops through the family beforeadjusting to something more normal.

Having spent his life playing caricatures that are placed at the receiving end of racist jokes, Hominy has internalized racist ideology such that he now enacts it on himself. This is taken to a comic and disturbing extreme when he attempts to hang himself. While Hominy's actions are darkly funny, they also point to the profound and unsolvable difficulty of dealing with racial trauma and the legacy of anti-black violence. His way of dealing with these things may be ridiculous, but perhaps there is no easy or right way. The moment when Hominy decides to voluntarily enslave himself to the narrator is one of the most extreme and comic examples of racial regress in the novel. Through its absurdity, it calls into question what obligations we have towards people who voluntarily surrender their freedom, inflict pain on them and assert their own inferiority compared to others. The challenge of bringing back Dickens forms the central plot of the novel, with many other subplots woven in to this main story. In a way, the narrator's mission is comparable to traditional narratives in which a hero returns home. This quest takes on a strange new form in *The Sellout*, however, as in order to "find" home, the narrator must also resurrect it.

In some ways, Hominy's situation resembles that of a sexual submissive someone who derives pleasure from behaving in a servile, slave-like manner. This pleasure is often sexual, but does not have to be. In Hominy's case, the satisfaction he gets from being a slave does not appear to be erotic. Rather, he believes that being a slave will help him be relevantand exercise his true freedom. Although his behaviour is bizarre, from a philosophical perspective his argument about freedom is compelling. The idea that the Little Rascals are cursed is perhaps outlandish, but it is related to the well-known phenomenon of child stars facing difficulties later in life, whether in the form of mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, or other issues. In Hominy's case, his problems are compounded by the racist nature of

the roles he played as a child. The link between Hominy's two desires to be a slave and to see Dickens come back is not immediately obvious. Yet as the narrator's homemade signs reveal, Dickens represents many negative stereotypes about black people and communities. Perhaps Hominy's embrace of slavery is therefore related to his embrace of these negative stereotypes, and thus to his desire for Dickens to return.

Foy's relationship to race, racism, and American history is the polar opposite of Hominy's. While Hominy embraces the ugly reality of racial oppression to the point that he literally enslaves himself, Foy goes to the other extreme by trying to deny that this history ever took place. He also represents a kind of extreme of political correctness avoiding the language of offense without actually doing anything about the lived in Justices that are the source of such offense. Thenarrator's identity is not mentioned throughout the novel, except his last name Mee and other nicknames. Foy's dismissive labeling of the narrator as *The Sellout* suggests that he believes the narrator is betraying his father's legacy. Throughout the novel the narrator's father name is not mentioned, this made the narrator inherit his lack of identity from his father.

The narrator often presents himself as unintelligent and unassuming; recall when he told the officer he was nobody special. On the other hand, in moments like this it is evident that he is more clear-sighted than most of the other characters in the novel. The group of men at Dum Dum Donuts may style themselves as intellectuals, but the narrator's reasoning in this passage is obviously superior to theirs. Much of the humour in the novel comes from playing around with names and titles. On one level this is simple wordplay connecting the town of Dickens to the writer Charles Dickens, and the famous first lines of his novel *A Tale of Two Cities* but on another level it is a way of exploring the power and meaning of language. The narrator's thoughts about finding words that end in "-ess" more insulting than the n-word, for example, raises questions about why particular words related to particular targeted groups are

considered more offensive than others. Foy and the other Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals seem to believe that the narrator is dishonouring his father by seeking to bring back Dickens.

Yet considering the amount of time the narrator's father devoted to the community, it seems like that he would want his son to bring it back. Again this shows Foy's difference to the narrator and his father Foy wants to avoid or erase anything negative associated with blackness in America. King Cuz's comments about the narrator needs to get some pussy suggests that the narrator is out of place in a hypermasculine, sexualized world. While Foy may claim that pussy is overrated, it recalls that he originally blew his fortune on drugs and women, suggesting he does not actually believe his own advice. The narrator, meanwhile, has thus far expressed little interest in sex, or in any woman except Marpessa. Drawing a line around Dickens may seem like a simplistic and even childish way to begin bringing the city back, but as contemporary political debates around immigration show, many people believe that in order for a place to exist, it must have a clear and strictly enforced border. Later the narrator feels ambivalent about borders. He understands that the border he has drawn around Dickens is arbitrary and artificial however, rather than worrying about this, he actually likes it. Perhaps this is because having artificial and arbitrary borders is a trait shared by real cities, which makes Dickens seem like one of them. Hominy and the narrator's relationship is constructed on a pattern of mutual wish-fulfillment. While Hominy may not be a good worker, he does occasionally bring the narrator things that make him happy, such as cold lemonade or hash. Similarly, the narrator seeks to fulfill Hominy's desires, even if this means paying for him to be whipped at over $200 an hour. Needless to say, this is also a comically absurd inversion of the usual master/slave dynamic. While there may be an overall stigma attached to riding the bus in Los Angeles, the narrator does not seem to care about this very much personally. Rather, his love for Marpessa means that he enthusiastically takes her bus, even if this means facing stigma from the public and getting cussed out by her.

The narrator's scientific paper raises an interesting point about the way the oppression of women, including black women differs from the oppression of black men. Women are subjected to intrusive and disrespectful invasions of their personal space, but black men are more likely to be feared and stigmatized. Although they are very different, both are harmful. Much of the novel is vulgar, bizarre, and shocking, but in contrast, the narrator's relationship with Marpessa is rather sweet and innocent. The narrator finds respite from the strange and hectic nature of the rest of his life through his devotion to Marpessa, which has endured since he was a child and retained its childish purity. The humourous image of a prom with only one attendee is also a joke about the stereotype of young black people dropping out of high school. This passage continues to emphasize the innocence and sweetness of the narrator and Marpessa's relationship, in contrast to their surrounding context including the vulgar behaviour of the narrator's father. Rather than inheriting his father's womanizing ways, the narrator has a more respectful attitude. The fact that he and Marpessa share a love of books, art, and silent movies shows that he respects her as an intellectual equal. The word Bonbon means candy in French and other European languages. It comes from the repetition of the word bon, meaning good. The fact that this was the narrator's childhood nickname suggests that others thought of him as sweet and cute and perhaps still do. The humourous exchange here also undercuts the stereotype of black people as drug dealers.

Hominy's wish for some racism is obviously ridiculous, even in the context of his seemingly masochistic personality. At the same time, the narrator's desire to give him whatever he wants even if it is something as absurd as a sign on the bus demanding racial discrimination is somewhat sweet. It points to the remarkable depth of the narrator's love for Hominy. The man's accusation that Hominy is a race pervert strengthens the association between Hominy's desires for racism and erotic masochism. This association raises the question of which desires are considered acceptable and which aren't. Part of the problem in

this instance is that Hominy's desire for racism isn't just affecting himself, but other members of public. Rodney King was a black man who was brutally beaten by LA police in 1991, sparking many riots in response. Although it is not made explicit why Marpessa is so suspicious of the white woman, it may have something to do with the fact that the woman is riding the bus in Dickens when she is white. This highlights the dramatic extent of racial segregation in the city, and calls into question whether things really have advanced that much since the Jim Crow era as wells as whether the narrator's re-segregating idea might not be so absurd after all. Laura Jane voices many of the misguided views white people typically hold about race. For example, she mistakenly believes that being black would provide her with an advantage, rather than cause her to face further discrimination in most other areas of life. She also disingenuously diminishes the significance of race who just happens to be black and believes that focus on race distracts from the more important goal of focusing on class. People accuse the narrator of being a sellout for different reasons.

However, each time the accusation is made it is based on the idea that the narrator is somehow betraying his race. Foy makes the accusation because the narrator does not subscribe to Foy's own views about blackness, whereas Marpessa calls him a sellout because he defends Laura Jane against her, thereby betraying her. Marpessa criticizes the narrator for being weak-willed, and he loves her for being the opposite standing up for herself and being unafraid to voice her opinion even when she is in the minority. This reverses the stereotypical idea that men find strong-minded women off-putting, and that men are themselves naturally more dominant. Despite her complaints, perhaps Marpessa does like how the narrator is humbler and more unassuming than other men. The idea of sitting facing the door is a tradition of chivalry that the man should be watchful to keep the woman safe but also of suspicion and paranoia, which plays into stereotypes of black men leading violent lives.

The book's satirical take on the concept of sister cities lampoons the somewhat childish nature of international relations. The idea that cities would have a matchmaking service shows that relations between different cities and countries can be no less petty than the relationships between individual people looking to go on first dates. The fact that Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of the Congo rejects Dickens for being too black may at first appear little more than an ironic joke. "No they think Dickens is too black. I believe 'Them backward American niggers ain't ready!' is how they put it" (147). However, it also relates to a theory that blackness as a concept rather than, for example, being of African descent emerged from slavery. This is supported by the fact that descendants of slaves can face stigma even from other black/African people, and that blackness as a concept was only invented in the context of a contrast to whiteness. Hominy certainly gives the experience of being enslaved a different twist. Rather than being forcefully subjected to the narrator's whims, Hominy himself sets the terms of his enslavement and seems to believe that the narrator needs to deserve the privilege of having him as a slave, a perversely empowering gesture. The Lost City of White Male Privilege highlights the ways that race is or is not considered real. Race is considered as a human construct, although people point to biological factors including skin color as part of what constitutes race, the categorization of people into different racial groups is a social system invented by humans. The Lost City of White Male Privilege is thus arguably only as real as people think it is.

The characters have been making unexpected, perverse statements about race from Hominy's love of racism and slavery to Charisma's claim that there are "Too many Mexican" (153). While funny, these statements also convey the insidious and alarming nature of internalized racism. This passage subtly mocks the figure of the sentimental, self-righteous white teacher who works at a school with a largely black and Latin student population. Although Marpessa's 'Fast and Furious style' Careers Day presentation may be cool, it is not

particularly instructive. However, the teacher's sentimentality causes him to shed a tear anyway. It shows the shocking speed with which major societal change can be accepted. While the narrator and many other Dickensians think about Dickens all the time, the younger generation who assumedly grew up in a world where Dickens already didn't exist never knew it was there in the first place. Just as a new reality can quickly become the norm, so too can history be forgotten. Throughout the novel, expectations are upended when things do not progress in the way that they are supposed to; meaning that they fall outside of, or even reverse, accepted logic. This is particularly true when it comes to race. Here, Charisma suggests that rather than making life harder for people in Dickens, segregation has actually created a safe and peaceful environment in the microcosm of the bus. At the beginning of the novel, Foy Cheshire seemed extremely powerful and influential. However, it is now revealed that his ideas are not as popular as it first appeared. In fact, Charisma resents Foy's fire the Canon!initiative so much that she stages a book burning, which recalls the burnings that historically take place under repressive, totalitarian governments. A central paradox of the book appears in this passage: in order to achieve the progress of restoring Dickens, the narrator decides to employ a tactic of regress by bringing back segregation. Of course, the narrator's goal in the first place is a confusion of progress and regress, as resurrecting Dickens is a mission of bringing back something that once already existed.

To some extent, what the narrator calls "Ku Klux Influx" (170) is actually just gentrification. The two concepts are slightly different, however rather than being instigated by segregation, gentrification normally causesit. At the same time, gentrification could convincingly be described as the precise opposite of white flight and so Beatty's brutal renaming of the phenomenon strips away any comfortable euphemisms about what is really going on when communities of colour are displaced by wealthy whites. The idea of re-segregation in order to improve life for black students may sound ridiculous particularly given

the failure of separate but equal policies and the failure to provide adequate education for black children under Jim Crow. However, some studies have in fact shown that black students perform better in segregated schools, so long as those schools have an adequate resource which historically was obviously not the case.

Again, the narrator's father is not afraid to expose his son to danger in order to teach him a lesson. The book is critical of this kind of parenting model, suggesting that it is more traumatizing than enlightening. On the other hand, the book also criticizes the overly protective, delusional practices of Foy, who literally attempts to edit the racism out of the world for his grandchildren. The narrator's father's recklessness in this scene is extreme. Reckless eyeballing led to the gruesome deaths of many black men through lynching, including the prominent case of Emmett Till. In many of these instances, it wasn't true eyeballing, but merely the suspicion or false accusation that led to lynching occurring. Again, the expectations of what will happen in this scene are violated in an extreme and comic way. Not only does the narrator's father's lesson to his son fail, but the whole trip ends up turning into little more than an excuse for the narrator's father to have sex with another woman. Furthermore, rather than reacting angrily, the white men seem to have a neutral or even positive regard for these interracial relations. In the end, the narrator's experience of "direct" racial discrimination has nothing to do with interracial sex at all. It is rather the very thing that he is now trying to bring back in Dickens: segregation of public facilities. It is significant that the narrator takes the Whites Only sign seriously despite the fact that the bus stop is abandoned in the first place. This points out the power of official, authoritative language and signs.

The narrator's love for Marpessa is so intense that he is happy to sit in his car outside her house just to be near to her. Depending on one's interpretation, this is either romantic or creepy. Indeed, during this time of stress over his plans to re-segregate Dickens, a link forms

between the narrator's two, seemingly impossible goals: bringing back Dickens and getting back together with Marpessa two ways of coming home. Compared to Stevie, King Cuz, and MC Panache all gangbangers, some of whom have spent time in prison the narrator is remarkably innocent. This innocence is emphasized by his supposed desire to show Marpessa a picture of his Satsuma tree. Indeed, the Satsuma's themselves seem to represent the sweetness of the narrator and of his love for Marpessa.

Although it at first seemed unlikely, the narrator is now having a more and more positive impact on the community. Not only has the segregation of the bus created a peaceful environment that may now be replicated at the school, but his Satsuma tree helps local children escape the Stank, and symbolizes hope, nourishment, and opportunity. In the end, the narrator realizes he does not even need to bring real white people to Dickens in order to re-segregate Chaff and the rest of the city. Simply the thought of this new, wealthy, white school arriving in the community will he assumes be enough. Again, this points to the somewhat artificial nature of race while also emphasizing the powerful impact that ideas of race have on society. White students do not actually 'have to come to Dickens the point is that people thinkthey are coming. It might be surprising that simply eating the narrator's Satsuma's should have such a transformative impact on Marpessa. The fact that she has Satsuma juice all over her face conveys the erotic undertones of this exchange, yet it is also clear that there is something deeper going on.Now that the tide has turned against him, the reader might be inclined to feel sympathy for Foy. Indeed, the narrator appears moved by this sympathy, which is why he offers to help Foy. Foy's rejection of this help shows that his ego trumps any other consideration. It is even suggested that he only cares about the re-segregation plans because he thinks they are part of a conspiracy against him.

The narrator's frigidity, even now that he has finally won Marpessa back, is difficult to explain. Considering he loves her so much, the fact that he would suddenly become

motionless when they have sex, suggests a continued sense of anxiety or insecurity. The mysteriousness of the narrator's behaviour helps emphasize that Marpessa is the only person to truly understand him.Marpessa and the narrator may be back together, but the challenge of winning her over is not done. Indeed, Marpessa makes the narrator prove himself through certain tasks, again highlighting the parallel between the narrator's love for her and his desire to bring back Dickens. Both goals create a kind of quest that requires the narrator to use his skills and prove his worth. One of the reasons the Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals are so funny is that they take themselves deeply seriously. Even their attempt to put on a stand-up comedy night turns into an overly serious, protracted account of the talents of the race. The ultimate effect is that the Dum Dums are funny, but not in the way they intend to be. As the novel draws to a close, a happy ending appears to be in sight. The narrator's ability to tell a funny joke is not only a personal triumph that allows him to finally have sex with Marpessa again it also represents a way that he breaks with the legacy of his father. Whereas the narrator's father was incapable of telling a joke effectively, after some trial and error his son ultimately succeeds, thereby exceeding his father's precedent in this case.

The narrator has an experience similar to writer's block, which affects his plans for segregation. This is amusing because it suggests that segregation is a process requiring creative and innovative thinking rather than a straightforward or natural process of separating the races. It assumes that racist acts are a matter of almost instinctual cruelty and hate, but implementing them into policy actually requires concentration and innovation. At this point the meaning of this part of the novel, Apples and Oranges, becomes clear. The phrase Apples and Oranges is often used to denote things that are fundamentally different and therefore incompatible and even incomparable. Just as the narrator separates his fruit crops, so will he attempt to racially separate humans. The narrator's aim of bringing back Dickens through

segregation is working, with the added bonus that the city is becoming more prosperous and successful.

The conversation about slavery at the Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals meeting again brings up complex questions surrounding progress versus regress. The Intellectuals' argument that although slavery was awful, they would rather have been born in the United States than Africa, suggests that slavery was, in some perverse sense, part of a broader narrative of progress an idea the narrator finds abhorrent. The Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals claim to fight on behalf of black people, yet in reality they are classist and disdainful of much of the black population as is revealed by the comment comparing Dickens to a hellhole. It is now clear that Foy's nicknaming of the narrator is deeply ironic, since it is actually Foy himself who is the sellout. Bringing back Dickens might be progress, but it is a rather unexciting kind: returning to the way things already were in the first place. At the same time, the narrator will achieve his ongoing goal of making Hominy happy.

At first it seems completely strange and perverse that the narrator should find re-segregating Dickens empowering. However, the key difference between his acts here are historical practice of segregation in the America, the segregation policies are being instituted by and remain under the control of black people. It draws attention to the fact that the internet does not make a substantial appearance in the book. Indeed, there is an absence of many forms of technology; in the span of the book, there is hardly a single instance in which a character writes an email, sends a text message, or even makes a phone call. This gives a sense of time collapsing or going backwards, which contributes to the progress versus regress theme. The chapter ends on a darkly optimistic note. The narrator and Hominy are successful insofar as patients are demanding more of their doctors, but there is no indication that the doctors do indeed give a serious thought.

Again, a joke emerges through thwarted expectations, as we expect MC Panache to react furiously toward the narrator. Throughout the novel, moments like these recur, when what we have been led to believe will be a climactic moment fails to materialize. With little fanfare, the final obstacle to the narrator and Marpessa being together has been removed. Panache's comment about the narrator's pineapples reemphasizes the narrator's increasingly high standing in the community. Just through its name alone, the LA Festival of Forbidden Cinema and Unabashedly Racist Animation challenges ideas about linear progress in new ways. As is well known, making something forbidden often increases its appeal, which helps explain why racism can increase in societies where it is seen as taboo. Furthermore, some people are nostalgic and sentimental about old art forms, even if they are connected to racist ideas.

Again, it is disturbingly unclear where Hominy's performance ends and his real personality begins. If blackface used to just be called acting, then is Hominy's voluntarily enslavement a kind of performance art? This question points to the insidious complexity of internalized racism and self-hatred. It explores the powerful but tragic connection between black identity, racism, and comedy. For many black people in the past, humour was a survival mechanism. This adds another layer of guilt to the experience of watching racist cartoons; not only are they offensive, but they capitalize on the way black people have been forced to use humour to escape abuse. Again, past and present seem to be completely confused. The characters have just spent the past two hours watching old racist cartoons, there are women in blackface, and a white man is using the n-word with abandon. However, perhaps this only seems strange if one accepts the narrative of linear progress that the book opposes. As Butterfly semi-seriously suggests, there may have only been one single moment in history without racism. This explores a new side to the issue of racial stereotypes perhaps stereotypes themselves wouldn't be such a problem if people weren't fixated on such a small number of

them. If there were a vast proliferation of stereotypes rather than only a handful, the books suggests, they might be less harmful. One of Foy's villainous traits is the fact that he has no shame. It might be expected that, an academic who made his name through scholarship on the poor black community to try and hide his wealth. However, Foy flaunts his money and fame, and is even unashamed about his unoriginality. He seems to possess no moral compass, only a desire for power. The ending might seem like a happy one in which the narrator has achieved his goals, found home, and defeated his enemy. However, these achievements do not seem to make much of a difference to the narrator, making the novel's conclusion more ambivalent than triumphant.

The fact that white parents are now demanding their children are admitted to Chaff Middle School highlights how segregation and personal advantage are intertwined. When white people originally opposed integration during the Civil Rights era, it wasn't just racial mixing they were rejecting it was the idea that their children would no longer receive better opportunities than others. The "Dickens Five" is a reference to the "Little Rock Nine," the nine black students enrolled at a formerly all-white school in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957, following the ruling of Brown vs. Board of Education. The fact that Foy sides with the Dickens Five shows that his view of racial politics is flimsy and misguided. He acts as though integration is an inherent good, even when this means siding with white students whose behaviour is entirely self-interested. It is now clear that the narrator's suspicion of the idea of linear progress originates with his father. The narrator's father was correct in asserting that nothing ever ends on a simple note of lasting progress. Instead, as the narrator indicates, it never ends. At first it seems as if the narrator is doomed to repeat his father's interaction with Foy, wherein the narrator would choose to be the bigger person and help Foy despite Foy's ingratitude. However, Foy appears to have reached some kind of breaking point; where he could tolerate the narrator's father. Foy hates the narrator himself so much that he shoots him.

This is the moment when the narrator first gets into trouble with the law for slaveholding. Hominy's comment about being "closer than family" recalls the perverse arguments some slaveholders gave about the supposedly loving bond between themselves and their slaves. Once again, the narrator is saved by his fruit. Like drugs, the fruit the narrator grows is so enticing and addictive that people behave in strange ways in hopes of securing more. On the other hand, as Hampton's argument demonstrates, the narrator's ability to grow such delicious fruit also symbolizes his contributions to the community.

The narrator's experience at the Supreme Court is one of the most surreal parts of a remarkably surreal book. This scene is a jumbled mess of stereotypes and reversed stereotypes, in which both the narrator and the reader's expectations for what the court should be like are completely unraveled. One might expect Hampton's speech to be another climactic moment, perhaps similar to the courtroom speech Atticus Finch gives at the end of *To Kill a Mockingbird.* However, the narrator leaves instead, and thus once again the sense of climax evaporates. In its place the readers are left with the quiet, contemplative scene of the narrator on the steps. The extent to which *The Sellout* embraces total nihilism the belief that life is totally meaningless is ambiguous. There are certainly points throughout the novel wherein a nihilistic approach is presented as more appealing or logical particularly in comparison to moralizing self-righteousness. Yet the absurdity of the book is also arguably not full-fledged nihilism, but instead pointing towards some kind of distant ideal.

The narrator's Welcome Home party not only welcomes him back to his house and to Dickens, but also to his childhood. At this point, it appears as if time has reversed and plunged the narrator back into his happy memories of watching the Little Rascals movies with Hominy and the other neighborhood kids. The novel's happy ending is thus a scene of reversal a final challenge to ideas about linear progress. It establishes a connection between the narrator achieving his goals of bringing back Dickens and winning over Marpessa and Hominy's

decision to quit slavery. Perhaps now that the narrator has fulfilled his deepest desires, his and Hominy's dynamic of mutual wish-fulfillment must end. The idea of Hominy's reparations that is, payment to former slaves, or the descendants of slaves is another darkly comic nod to issues that still plague American society today.

The novel may end on a happy note plot-wise, but the narrator's father's favorite two questions remain unanswered: Who am I? and How may I become myself? The narrator is still unsure about whomhe is, and as the question he wanted to ask the comedian reveals what blackness is. As someone who suffers from chronic uncertainty, the narrator envies the comedian's conviction when he talks about our thing.This passage reemphasizes the narrator's uncertainty, but through the contrasting depiction of Foy's jingoism, particularly with what we know of Foy's approach to race suggests that uncertainty is perhaps the superior approach.

Chapter Four

Redeeming Black Identity

Race, for the nation and so for sociology, is the problem that will not go away, the problem the policy-makers cannot solve. After the Civil War, when the emancipation of the slaves raised basic issues about the future of the black population in the United States, people spoke about the race problem. But the sociological concept of a social problem only emerged in the 1940's as a replacement for the outmoded concepts of social pathology and social disorganization. Sociologists have treated race as a social problem, that is, a social condition that some people define as undesirable and in need of remedy, like automobile safety, teen-age pregnancy, campaign financing, and the like, which then became the object of social policy. But race relations are not a social problem readily subject to change by social policy. Rather, it is a long, protracted struggle, carried out over generations, lasting decades, even over centuries. It rears up into open, even violent action, then ebbs away into sullen resistance, into small gains and losses, into a long simmering that finally bursts again into open conflict.

The history of African Americans is a centuries long one of struggle against oppression and discrimination. Between sixteenth and seventeenth century probably nine and a half million Africans were forcibly removed from their homes, the families and their cultures and taken to the new world. In the United States they were used as slave labours in order to build up the society and economy of a new country. When finally freed in 1863 they were subjected to horrendous violence, discrimination and economic exploration. By the twentieth century a system of segrargation and discrimination so rigid

and pervasive had been set up in the south that the average white would not come across a black person unless he was his servant.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the institution of slavery was a necessary fundamental part of the developing American economic system. In 1664 in Maryland, inherited slave status was recognized and union between the races was prohibited. The ideology of racism was further strengthened by the use of slave codes, instituted to deter rebellion and to get the most work possible from slaves they also helped to underline continuously as inferior, not allowed to learn to read or write or better themselves in anyway blacks were castigated for being naturally inferior for centuries African American families have lived in a racial system that made life difficult for them.

Even today 150 years end of slavery and with economic, educational and other advances for many African Americans racism remains a reality. It may be more often than in the past disguised and covert but it is still today a reality. There is substantial evidence that African Americans are disadvantaged compared to European Americans on such indices of wellbeing as life expectancy infant survival rate, quality of health care, housing quality earnings and accumulated assests on indicators that things that are not good, African American have, for example higher levels of unemployment incarnation, experience of discrimination in hiring experience of police profiling and attendance in poorer quality schools. But in all the richness of documentation about the influence of the racial system on African Americans there is surprisingly little social science research on how racism affects every day family interaction. The most substantial literature in the area is about African Americans raising children to face a racist world. Other than this there is scattering of research on how racism might intrude into everyday interaction in

African American families propounded by Sanks Wallace and Parks, Hughes and Chen, Rosenblatt and Wallace, St. Jean and Feagin. While thousands of social science writings are about the influence family members have about an experience of racism. Many African American authored novels contain rich depictions of African American family life and many of those novels depict the influence of racism on African American family life. Some of the novelists wrote about life in a racist society.

Novelists who focused on struggles with racism could hope that their writings might help change things. They might well have lived with strong emotions and vivid images that they wanted to put to paper. Besides the stories that novelists tell often come from their experience and the experiences of others in their lives, it is not at all strange that African American novelists would write stories that included experience with racism. Two basic assumptions undergirded that perspective. The first was modernization which is in the social processes of industrialism, urbanization and secularism gradually transform the United States into a modern society. Modernization is that the people of the south i.e. isolated blacks have to become master of modern civilization. The second assumption is that even though the blacks were not biologically inferior slavery and then by racial segregation. By 1920, blacks were given opportunities to learn the attributes of American culture, because they could no longer sustain any scientific claims about the inherent inferiority of one race to another. All of this occurred in the 1920's and 1930's in the United States a time that provide social context for the development of sociology. It was last two decades that white people refused that any nonwhite should be assimilated which is post slavery segregation. But the contemporary embedded race relations are very difficult to handle. The color line has been broken the black people have grown in

numbers and voice their protest and segregation is no longer legal. Race has become sacrosanct in America, like religion once was. Everyone even an African American has to exercise extreme caution upon entering that territory.

Paul Beatty's novel *The Sellout* is known as laugh out loud hilarious. It also satirizes race, life in Los Angeles and United States and range of humans in ways that might not be accessible to all audience. Beatty utilizes and plays up racial stereotypes with racist language using racially degrogatory terms for people throughout the book. He makes fun of popular culture both historic and contemporary. This novel centers race and nobody is left unscathed. White, Black, Asian, Latino, Mexican, Beatty satirizes each of these communities of how each deals with race; and how racial identities influence the life choices and behaviour. This book is the funniest book ever written about slavery. In many ways *The Sellout*, both the novel and the character, predicts and engages with the ideas and attitudes of current events and current discussions of race in America. The reaction to Barack Obama's presidency, the reactive election of Donald Trump, and the widespread examples of "White people regularly calling the police on black people who are doing nothing wrong not only because of misplaced fear, but as a method of regulating access to shared space" (5) states Mohdin: these all question the post-racial motives and operations of white America in the post-Obama era. The novel *The Sellout* now holds an important role in this tradition. Specifically, *The Sellout* hearkens specifically to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and to Paul Beatty's earlier novel *The White Boy Shuffle*. Further, *The Sellout* exposes the ongoing presence and function of racism in an America that has elected its first African-American president, Barack Obama, and that now claims to be post-racial, even as its spectral reproduction and commodification of

blackness persist. Predicting this latter-day political climate, *The Sellout* self-consciously seeks to redeem black identity and awaken the black community during the Obama years but before their aftermath.

The African-American life and character in fact, identity crisis has been a concern for African-Americans writers, in almost all the literary genres in the long sweep of African American history. Furthermore, one focuses attention on the twenty-first century, it is also the time to examine just how far one has come close to dissolving the African American identity crisis since the historical sociologist W.E. B. Du Bois made his famous prediction that the twentieth century would be the century of the colour line. There have already been many such assessments, and there are undoubtedly many more to come but the paradoxical ways in which ethnic identities are differentially perceived throughout history explains the growing need to revisit the struggles and attempts of African American writers throughout ages to overturn the identity politics through their writing. The concept of identity and its multiple associations with race makes it that it cannot be taken for granted.

To speak of African American or black identity in this century we need to examine all that gave voice to and authenticate black existence. These include slave narratives, personal histories, and spiritual or secular autobiographical texts. These narratives bring us close to conditions of physical and mental bondage or despair associated historically with the political, social, and economic environment surrounding of the African American and hinders the attainment of their spiritual as well as physical freedom. A casual observer of the development of African American literary traditions, therefore, will certainly see autobiography, among other genres,

standing out as a major component in the vast array of cultural productions that deal with the issue of this identity politics. From Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* (1845) to the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1964), and from Langston Hughes' *Big Sea* (1940) to Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and many more, autobiographical discursive practices are at the critical crossroads of the theoretical, cultural, and historic implications of the writings. At the core of each of these writings, especially the autobiographies, is the question of the subject and the first person speaking position. This stance offers any reader a first hand or personal account of experiences and as a vehicle to uncover multiple dimensions of the complex depth of African-American identity concerns in selected works/texts.

According to Sevigny, the task of the qualitative methodologist is to capture what people say and do (orally or written) as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world. Strauss and Corbin also claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon with multiple dimensions and about which much is yet to be known or written. This method, in the end, will help others gain new perspectives about what is known, and more an in-depth information on things one can hardly convey quantitatively. An abolitionist is said to record in his memoir his asking a slave about the slave's self. The slave responded, "I ain't got no self" Without hesitation, the abolitionist responded to the black man, "Slave are you", "That's what I is" the slave replied (7) exclaims Gates in his autobiography. The encounter between the abolitionist and the slave can be summed up as, what Anthony Appiah refers to as "the lack of a positive account of black identity" (68). Appiah goes on to explain that if one follows the labels, "Africans" to "Negroes," "Blacks" to "Colored Race" to "Afro Americans"

born to "African American" something DuBois calls the "badge of color" (68) it proves the case that there is never a consensus on what black identity is (68-69). Apart from the social effects of his crisis, it is imperative that a people denied. The characters in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* dwell within their homes provides much insight into how race, identity, and history impact dwelling in a global age.

The novel recounts its narrator's rethinking and seemingly discarding notions of metaphysical essence surrounding historical identity, through his efforts to reinstate segregation and slavery in his hometown. At the start of the novel the narrator stands before the Supreme Court of the United States regarding case number 09-2606, Me v. the United States of America. The case is highly controversial as it accuses the narrator (named Me) of reinstating slavery. The narrator makes his case directly to readers, as if he were addressing the Justices, starting with the novel's opening sentence: "this may be hard to believe, coming from a black man, but I've never stolen anything" (3). Such a statement assumes that the reader is white. Yet, the narrator quickly reconfigures his outsider status in relation to all races, far from the Other's ability to solidify identity and place: the ethos of an identity. The search for the ethos of his identity, a uniting a prior definition of race, was a priority since Me's childhood, as he explains that he used to think all of black America's problems could be solved if they only had a motto. The redemption in unity, in uniformity, as a result not of exclusion but of ontology, is the default concept of social and cultural advancement, one that transcends economies, histories, and cultures, that serves as a benchmark for measuring progress.

The narrator invests in this belief, stating that "every race has a motto," (26) but he quickly grows frustrated in his attempts to find a motto that can encompass

everything, one that fits neatly into an either/or definition. Yet at the opening of the book, Me stands before the law, where one has to be either/or, one or the other: "dumfounded, I stood before the court, trying to figure out if there was a state of being between 'guilty' and 'innocent'. Why are those my only alternatives? I thought. Why couldn't I be 'neither' or 'both'?"(27). Indeed, standing accused of reinstituting slavery, he struggles to be on trial for my life, and for the first time ever not feel guilty.... I understand now that the only time black people don't feel guilty is when we've actually done something wrong, because that relieves us of the cognitive dissonance of being black and innocent...."(28). As Me faces the Justices one of whom is African-American, and the censure of the African-Americans in attendance, he tries to cultivate his historical identity, as someone who should regret his crime: "uncomfortable with being so comfortable, I make one last attempt to be at one with my people"(29).

He tries to focus on the civil rights movement, the violence it imposed and other major historical milestones in African-American history, but can only envision the participants in these events as zombies, with "the head zombie" looking "exhausted from being raised from the dead every time someone wants to make a point about what black people should and shouldn't do, can and cannot have"(30). Here the disconnect between the narrator and history embodies the lateral notion of the space of the subject, one who is not unaware of history, but feels fundamentally unattached from it, from a history that lacks ethos a zombie-like apparition where the arbitrariness of the Other stands front and center. Me continues his case with an explanation of his childhood, and how he learned to be black. He recounts how he was raised by a father the sole practitioner of "liberation psychology" who utilized techniques to socialize and imprint a Pavlovian sense of black

identity on him. His father would put "toy police cars, cold cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon, Richard Nixon campaign buttons, and a copy of The Economist in my bassinet [...] I learned to be afraid of the presented stimuli because they were accompanied by him taking out the family" (38). Special and firing several window-rattling rounds into the ceiling, while shouting "Nigerer, go back to Africa!"(31).

Through similar techniques, the narrator's father inscribes "blackness" into his psyche. Symbols of identity (blackness) are imprinted solely in a historically lateral sense, as lynch-pins of identity, devoid of the historical culmination of social relationships. What results is not a socialized individual, but rather a detachment and exclusionary basis of identity that the subject cannot grasp. As the (unofficial) neighborhood psychologist, his father's central question was "Who am I? and how may I become myself?"(33). This question reappears throughout the novel as the narrator's own defining struggle, as he tries to answer this question: "so introspective questions like 'Who am I? And how can I be that person?' didn't pertain to me then, because I already knew the answer. Like the entire town of Dickens, I was my father's child, a product of my environment, and nothing more. [....] Problem is, they both disappeared from my life [...] and suddenly, I had no idea who I was, and no clue how to become myself" (34).Here is the radical separation of being and self, as it exists outside of its foundational environment. Even with the main signifiers of the Other erased (despite the subject's relationship with them) the subject itself does not disappear, but remains restricted in limbo, without a central referent to ground it. And the inability to answer the question "Who am I?" in the absence of central referents is the subject's exposure to this marginal "space." (33) However, the subject cannot dwell in this space, as it relies by definition

manifesting another, even its inverse. However, this marginal space resists the postmodern onslaught of the proliferation of labels to define and give voice to it. It is this contradiction that leaves the narrator unfulfilled with by the search for a motto, but then cannot answer the question "Who am I?"(33) again, an example of the failure of an categorization required before the law. After the death of his father and the disappearance of the city of Dickens, the narrator goes to extreme measures to put his city back on the map. This mission ultimately leads to Dickens resident Hominy Jenkins, the last Little Rascal alive and the only African-American among the Rascals. The elderly Hominy was the product of a stereotypical and racist media industry as a Little Rascal, often portrayed in demeaning and humiliating racist situations.

However, Hominy embraced that identity with such enthusiasm, both as a child and as a resident of Dickens, that he was generally regarded as "a mark of shame on the African-American legacy, something to be eradicated, stricken from the racial record, like the hambone, Amos 'n' Andy, Dave Chappelle's meltdown, and people who say "Valentime's Day"(35). In fact, Hominy took the city's disappearance so hard he tried to commit suicide, because he felt so irrelevant and fans no longer visited. When narrator Me saved his life by foiling a suicide attempt, Hominy pledges himself as a slave to the narrator. Hominy tells the narrator, "sometimes we just have to accept who we are and act accordingly. I'm a slave. That's who I am. It's the role I was born to play. A slave who just also happens to be an actor"(36). Me is, in a sense, stuck with Hominy, after trying repeatedly to rid himself of Hominy's 'service': "I tried to "free" Hominy countless times. Simply telling him he was free had no effect,"(37) as Hominy would simply use his freedom to choose slavery. Here Hominy, unable to resist the Other, or

exist outside if it, must, by any means, have an answer to the question "Who am I?" (33)

With Hominy under his proprietorship, the narrator goes about reestablishing his city.

In the most forthright way, he starts to draw a line of white spray-paint around the city's former border. The narrator also is assisted by the other residents: "sometimes, after retiring for the day, I'd return the next morning, only to find that someone else had taken up where I'd left off. Extended my line with a line of their own, often in a different color. Sometimes the line wouldn't be a line at all but drops of blood, or an uninterrupted string graffiti signing off on my efforts"(38). The arbitrary nature of the line was not lost on any of the residents, including the narrator, but once the line was drawn, the residents immediately "saw" the city manifest and with "puzzled looks on their faces from asking themselves why they felt so strongly about Dickens side of the line as opposed to the other side....When it was just a line"(39). With Hominy as his slave, and the city lines literally redrawn, Me decides to segregate Dickens as a way to save it from disappearing into irrelevance. Central to this endeavour is that the city is primarily occupied by racial and ethnic minorities, primarily African-Americans and Chicanos. De facto segregation already existed in Dickens, economically and racially, but much like the line the narrator draws around the city, by posting a white's only sign on the bus, segregation becomes manifest and emerges from a web of Foucauldean relationships not as anontic reveal, but as a manifest reality relying on legal and perceptive power structures. The city's racial demographics presented an obstacle to Me's mission of imposing segregation in all facets of daily life in Dickens, when he had to ask himself "how do you racially segregate an already racially segregated school?"(40)

The ultimate irony in Me's posting of the white's only sign is that it became central to the new Dickens's experience: "It's the signs. People grouse at first, but the racism takes them back. Makes them humble. Makes them realize how far we've come, and, more important, how far we have to go. On that bus it's like the specter of segregation has brought Dickens together"(41). Similar to the city lines marked with white spray paint, the realities of pre- and post-segregation Dickens (as defined by the "white's only" sign) are by objective standards the same if defined by poverty, demographic segregation, and disenfranchisement. However, outlining segregation as a thing of the past defines both the loss of progress, by realizing that nothing has empirically changed, and the feeling that so much progress has occurred. This again is a sentiment that does not fit into a categorization, as the narrator alludes in his opening statement regarding the not guilty verdict. The notion of race, primarily whiteness, is of prime significance in a community essentially already segregated along demographic lines. The narrator expands the notion of whiteness beyond mere biology:

"Even the ones who are biologically white aren't white. Laguna Beach volleyball white. Bel Air white.... Three first names white. Valet parking white. Brag about your Native American, Argentinian, Portuguese ancestry white...."(42). Here again we see the literal definition of the Other in Foucault's notion of history. The narrator expands the definition of blackness's own historical and biological determinations: "everyone in Dickens, regardless of race, was black and you determined someone's degree of blackness not by skin color or hair texture but by whether they said 'For all intents and purposes' or 'For all intensive purposes"(43).

This statement displaces black and white as racial categorizations, instead relying on structural positions of the marginalized and the privileged. It is the ambiguous dual movement of freeing the signifier 'blackness' from a necessary signified of deprivation and disenfranchisement, at the same time ignoring empirical socio-economic realities and the inherited history of African-American social and economic marginalization in the U.S. This is the price the narrator pays for confronting the other, by refusing to manifest its power regime. This movement does not result in a loss of unity or disfigurement, but rather a loss of self, of ground in short, homelessness. The quest for segregation concludes toward the end of the novel, as the narrator is arrested for owning a slave. Shortly before Me's arrest, Hominy quits slavery, remarking to the narrator that "we'll talk reparations in the morning"(44). After his arrest Me again stands before the law as the judge states:

> The irony is not lost on me that we sit here in the courtroom a female state's attorney general of black and Asian lineage, a black defendant, a black defense counselor, a Latina bailiff, and me, a Vietnamese-American district judge setting the parameters for what is essentially a judicial argument about the applicability, the efficacy, and the very existence of white supremacy as expressed through our system of law. And while no one in this room would deny the basic premise of 'civil rights', we'd argue forever and a day about what constitutes 'equal treatment under the law'.(45)

Here is where the disappearance of the authoritarian figurehead casts the structure it is meant to anchor into disarray.

In a diverse, multicultural court of Law, where does the power of the Other
ide? In a free society, where does segregation reside when all the data clearly marks
presence of segregation? Me confronts this question as he listens to his father's
mprehensive theory on "Quintessential Blackness." It is a theory based on linear
velopment rather than a metaphysical clearing of black identity. This theory develops
ough three stages, from a precociousness state toward a "race transcendentalism"
minating in a "collective consciousness that fights oppression and seeks serenity"(46).
is third stage includes such historical figures as Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Sitting
ull, Cesar Chavez, Ichiro Suzuki, and people "who believe in beauty for beauty's
ke"(47). The final stage also conflates race and structural resistance to oppression into a
iversal consciousness forged in resistance no longer based on race.

In evaluating his father's theory, Me posits his own additional stage he says there
ould be a Stage IV of black identity, Unmitigated Blackness. It's the realization that
ere are no absolutes, expect when there are. It's the acceptance of contradiction not
eing a sin and a crime but a human frailty like split ends and libertarianism. Unmitigated
lackness is coming to the realization that as made up and meaningless as it all is,
metimes it's the nihilism that makes life worth living.(48) This passage recognizes the
ntradictory nature of postcolonial identity that there are no absolutes except when there
e: that there is no either/or once the Other is exposed, but instead an ability to detach
om identity in the hope that one is free to respond (or not) as an individual, and not as a
ategory. Me does not see the culmination of black identity as his father did, as a
anscendentalism based on a reactionary struggle, a self defined in opposition. For the
arrator, his final stage would be one of not giving up. The self breathes life into the

orical structures of identity, so it is both historically determined and irrefutably ssential.

Here is the sin that is not a crime as described in the narrator's final stage of ity abandoning the historical identity of Stage III blackness, as his father posited, resurrecting the subject's reign over the Other. This movement does not forsake the ory behind such an identity, but suggests the prioritizing of the individual over the finer of historical identity, while also recognizing the real and very empirical nature concepts and how they manifest and shape the Other (thus "there are no absolutes, ect when there are"). The narrator captures this idea in his understanding of history: t's the problem with history, we like to think it's a book—that we can turn the page move on. But history isn't the paper it's printed on. It's memory, and memory is e, emotions, and song. History is the things that stay with you"(49). History is that ich remains, its memory stemming from the subject, not from the external locus of at one was (or is) through the Other. The novel's conclusion portrays the narrator at local donut shop where his father used to lead meetings with community intellectuals.

During an open mike night at the shop a white couple is in attendance. The rican American comic stops in the mid-routine and kicks out the whites, not because y are unwelcome but because this is "our thing," an event only for Dickens's African- merican community. After the incident Me agrees with the comic's action, but wonders o what exactly is our thing?"(50). He is no closer to answering the question "Who am " Rather than succumb to a fatalistic nihilism, the narrator abandons his search for a otto, and instead formulates his Stage IV of black identity Unmitigated Blackness as the prioritization of the individual. The individual (the other) who, while historically

termined, claims the freedom the "nihilism" of Stage 4 that opens an emancipating ace. Beyond the infinite dialogue with the Other as exemplified by the judges' mments at the close of the trial.

The United States, makes clear that Me's fight comes from the locus of an dividual, not a clearing space for the Other. This individuality allows one to exist tside oneself as a historical subject in a manner of speaking, or, put another way, to be sellout. The contractionary nature of identity, in the locus of a subject that shapes the orld and is shaped by it, clears a space for accountability in the culturally relativist ndscape of a globalized world. Far from a moral directive, the recognition that to act utside oneself, even in annihilation of the subject, can be a radical refusal to manifest e Other, is a fundamental aspect of modern dwelling. This does not preclude the ability actively represent oneself within a political space. The Other is not a passive idea waiting to become; it is active, it forces itself through the subject both intellectually, by raming perception, and through the social mechanisms of law and political economy which at their core are the Other working through subjects. It is thus an Other, a historical yranny of identity and systemic power, pitted against an other who resists as an active space" that constitutes the heart of modern dwelling. This struggle against the Other, in a lateral sense in *The Sellout* historically , is not fighting for one's home, or expelling the other from it, but of willfully reappropriating the terms that the Other has imposed in the very act of building, and thus of dwelling itself.

In conclusion, it is important to observe that slave and ex-slave narratives are important not only for what they tell us about African American history and literature, but also because they reveal to us the complexities of the dialogue between whites and

...ks in the last two centuries, particularly for African Americans. This dialogue is ...olicit in the very structure of the antebellum slave narrative, which generally centres on ... African American's narrative but is prefaced by a white-authored text and often is ...ceeded by white authenticating documents, such as letters of reference attesting to ... character and reliability of the slave narrator himself or herself. Modern black ...obiographies such as Richard Wright's *Black Boy* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm* among others testify to the influence of the slave narrative on the first-person writing ...post-World War II African Americans. Beginning with Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* ...d extending through such contemporary novels as Ernest J. Gaines's *The* ...tobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, Sherley Ann Williams's *Dessa Rose*, Toni ...rrison's *Beloved*, and Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage*, the "neo-slave narrative" ...s become one of the most widely read and discussed forms of African American ...erature. According to Du Bois, "one ever feels his twoness - an American, a Negro; two ...uls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, ...ose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder"(33).

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to ...ain self-conscious manhood (identity), to merge his double self into a better and truer ...f". Fish mentions among other things that interpretive strategies guide all forms ...perception and interpretation and a reader's interpretive strategies give texts their ...ape. He further affirms readers as the ones that make meaning, but maintains that, ...eaning, in the form of culturally derived interpretive categories, make readers. To this ...nd, meaning is impacted upon by the sociopolitical and cultural background of the ...ader as well as how the text is read. Beatty shows through this novel that part of the

contradiction of the multicultural ideal is that race continues to operate on a hierarchy that privileges whiteness and that also reduces the spectrum of race and ethnicity to the binary of blackness and whiteness.

The sellout articulates a more active counter discourse to the racism encountered by the African Americans in the post racial America. The Sellout is able to contend that African American community must produce its own identity, ontology and epistemology its own logos because the white society and its white logos have no interest in changing their racist practices. But the novel only arrives at this conclusion because of the critical eye developed by previous generations of African American agitators.

Chapter Five

Summation

Paul Beatty's novel *The Sellout* satirizes race, life in Los Angeles and United States and range of humans in ways that might not be accessible to all audience. Beatty satirizes and plays up racial stereotypes with racist language using racially degrogatory terms for people throughout the book. He makes fun of popular culture both historic and contemporary. This novel centres on race and nobody is left unscathed. White, Black, Asian, Latino, Mexican, Beatty satirizes each of these communities of how each deals with race; and how racial identities influence the life choices and behaviour.

In many ways *The Sellout*, both the novel and the character, predicts and engages with the ideas and attitudes of current events and current discussions of race in America. Even now, white people regularly call the police on black people who are doing nothing wrong not only because of misplaced fear, but as a method of regulating access to shared space these all question the post-racial motives and operations of white America in the post-Obama era. The novel *The Sellout* now holds an important role in this tradition. Further, *The Sellout* exposes the ongoing presence and function of racism in an America that has elected its first African-American president, Barack Obama, and that now claims to be "post-racial," even as its spectral reproduction and commodification of blackness persist. Predicting this latter-day political climate, *The Sellout* self-consciously seeks to redeem black identity and awaken the black community during the Obama years but before their aftermath.

The novel firmly, trenchantly, and satirically confronts issues of race and racism at a time when some Americans imagined the country to be "post-racial," despite recent American history has demonstrated a fundamental and ongoing contradiction in the nation's arc towards racial justice. Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* makes a vigorous intervention into debates about the presence and future of racism in America. It does so as a literary text whose cultural politics are ever liminal. As a literary text, it builds upon the satiric tradition in which Beatty has operated since his first novel *The White Boy Shuffle*. As a cultural and political production, it engages further with the legacy "New Black Aesthetic" and a putative post- racialism. As a plot-driven novel, *The Sellout* relays the adventure of an unnamed protagonist to put his hometown Dickens back on the map; this adventure ultimately lands him in front of the Supreme Court of the United States because he dares to "whisper 'Racism' in a post-racial world" by way of his irreverent and satirical abuse of the Civil Rights Act (262). Beyond its mere plot, *The Sellout* contributes to a racial counter discourse that resists the intractable nature of white racism in America.

In many ways *The Sellout* updates Beatty's concerns about race and racism that he published in his first novel, *The White Boy Shuffle*. Many critics focus on the "commodified blackness" in that novel, and *The Sellout* will confront the inherent erasure of black identity that results from that commodification. Notably, the tense interplay between simulation and communal identity" leaves individual characters in agitated states of alienation, while readers "cannot read these texts exclusively as indexes of a crisis in belonging, for they begin with the premise that whatever made older forms of communion possible now only exists as a spectral reproduction" (231). These critics all

to the individual character crises that emerge in the wake of the commodification of culture. Meanwhile other critics of *The White Boy Shuffle* focus on its satirical comment of contemporary black politics, and *The Sellout*, as its name alone suggests, will produce a similar critique. There is gap between the idealistic desire for racial unity and the complexity of the contemporary African American experience which Beatty precisely comprehends in *The Sellout*. *The Sellout* seeks to redeem contradictoriness in principle, and it more clearly inflames black political consciousness. The novel accomplishes both by wading into the trope of invisibility. *The Sellout* seeks to make those "spectral forms of blackness" the significance more concrete and visible, and it does so by utilizing the effaced histories of segregation, Hollywood minstrelsy, and slavery. Criticism of that novel has long argued that the novel gives abstract themes and ideas a concreteness which indicates that they can only be valid if felt as part of an experience which has been lived through *The Sellout* reveals the living histories of discriminations that are all-too-often imagined as theoretical pasts.

In *The Sellout* the progressive disillusionment is of the townsfolk of Dickens. It argues that masks are inevitable and necessary despite their inherent contradiction and ambiguity. *The Sellout* foregrounds that same inevitability of contradiction and it activates the agency of its characters to determine their own reality. *The Sellout* reveals the machinations of racism in it's respective worlds, and copes with the fallout of that racism. Further, critical conversations have long emphasized the ever present tragicomic sensibility in *The Sellout*'s satiric manipulation of racial injustice. Beatty's satire strums similar melodies.

Here is a convention where *The Sellout* not only nods to its intergenerational totem but also revises that mark, for *The Sellout* more bluntly claims that the simple recognition of those "institutional and economic barriers" is enough to enliven the community and restore its individuals. In fact, *The Sellout* attempts psychic change on a much broader scale the entire community of Dickens benefits from a comparable enlightenment. Beatty's utilization of the tragic comic sensibilities same launches the satiric iconoclasm and communal resurrection of *The Sellout*. It reveals Beatty's hyper-awareness of the African- American literary tradition. This engagement is liminal in its ideological discourse.

The white American has charged the Negro American with being without past or tradition, a sentiment that Beatty identifies as a core problem for the characters in his fourth novel. In *The World and the Jug*, Ellison considers what it means to be an African American. He argues first that "American Negro life" is a "discipline" (112); second that "Being a Negro American has to do with the memory of slavery and the hope of emancipation and the betrayal by allies and the revenge and contempt inflicted by our former masters after the Reconstruction, and the myths … which are propagated in justification of that betrayal" (131); and third that "being a Negro American involves *willed* … affirmation of self as against all outside pressures – an identification with the group" that will not end until "social and political justice" is achieved (132).

All three of these definitions find a place in *The Sellout*: through the lead of the actor Hominy; through the conspicuous reincarnation of segregation; and through the reformation of Dickens as a marginalized community. Beatty's text comes after the

election of the first African- American president concern with black identity and its reliance on a shared cultural past signifies, however, how little institutional racism has been changed by legal revision and selective ascension. While critics of Beatty's first novel have argued that it is a defeatist reading of the contradiction inherent in contemporary African-American identity. *The Sellout* affirms the importance of contradiction and designates that, ironically, only the acceptance of contradiction provides a clear path forward. *The Sellout* confronts the invisibility of racism in the world of highly conspicuous individuals, and *The Sellout* seeks enlightenment for the broader group.

Thus, though satirical, *The Sellout* is resurrecting the importance of African-American group identity in the current political zeitgeist a *The Sellout's* efforts to make racism visible again serve multiple purposes. First, it exposes the disingenuous nature of "post-racialism" and the racist core of white *logos*. Second, it mobilizes the community of Dickens and heals the cognitive dissonances that arise from its citizens' a historical sense of contradiction. Third, it creates space for his counter discourse, his black *logos*: "Unmitigated Blackness." Not only do these efforts reveal the ongoing marginalization, commodification, and spectral reproduction by white America of black communities like Dickens, but they also incentivize a real politic that enables black America – and potentially other non-white communities – to define for itself its own identity and its own agency. Nowhere is this revelation clearer than in the courtroom scene with Judge Nguyen.

Although *The Sellout* ends with the ironic chapter "Closure," the first [illegible]ological courtroom scene may be the most illuminating for its overall theme. Judge [illegible]uyen clearly interprets the crucial consideration in the narrator's practical jokes. The [illegible]ffice, presiding over his grand jury hearing in a pleasingly and conspicuously [illegible]ulticultural courtroom, closes with an articulation of these concerns that he has "pointed [illegible] a fundamental flaw in how we as Americans claim we see equality. 'I don't care if [illegible]ou're black, white, brown, yellow, red, green, or purple.' We've all said it. Posited as [illegible]proof of our non prejudicial ways, but if you painted any one of us purple or green, we'd [illegible]e mad as hell. And that's what he's doing. He's painting everybody over, painting this [illegible]community purple and green, and seeing who still believes in equality." (266) Judge Nguyen – aptly named to satirize the "model minority" stereotype – makes clear that the narrator has revealed a racist hierarchy. No matter Americans' declarations of colour blind equality for *others*, no American wants to be perceived as different and *Other*. Purple and green are conspicuous and unsettled and unsettling – they are Other – even when other racial proxies are post-racial and passive.

Despite America's claim of multicultural acceptance, its historical racist *logos* demands assimilation or rejection. Not only he has exposed the dominant discourse's rejection of the African-American community as Other, he has also provided a counter discourse of black *logos* that affirms unassimilated, non-white identity and that rejects the homogeneity and coherence of the dominant discourse as Other. The multi-hued cast of this grand jury hearing, who charge the narrator with "racially discriminating against every race all at the same time" and who must consider "the very existence of white supremacy as expressed through our system of law" (265), are especially sensitive to the

...plications of assimilation and the gestures of inauthenticity – the "selling out" – that ...company it. Similarly, narrator's philosophy of "Unmitigated Blackness" is itself ...radictory, because it de-emphasizes blackness as a racial identifier yet also ...knowledges the importance of historical racism. Contradiction is at its core: "It's the ...ilization that there are no absolutes, except when there are" (277). The list of ...hblazers of "Unmitigated Blackness" is as multi-hued as Judge Nguyen's courtroom; ...h member is distinguished by his or her artful reimagining of social boundaries.

In a sense, narrator's philosophy and practice maintain Kwame Anthony Appiah's ...guments that no individual should be constrained by the racial scripts imposed by ...ciety and that each individual should instead "live with fractured identities" (62). But, ...s Judge Nguyen has espoused, the narrator has also called the bluff on color-blind, ...nprejudicial ways and revealed that racial identity remains a very real and very ...bstantial factor in any individual's subjectivity. Any pretense to the contrary, "post-...acialism," leaves individuals and their communities in a neurotic vacuum of spectral ...dentity. The narrator's reinstitution of guileless segregation invites Dickensians and ...Americans to consider the balance of personal agency and environmental limitation in ...ny individual's, and especially any African-American individual's, subjectivity. ...The narrator's antics have also identified the role of communities in responding to the ...xistential crises of their members. The involvement of the legal system, white-...dominated as it may be, shows that the dominant discourse of American society has been ...awakened and must redefine the boundaries of its community.

Now, however, is a moment for black America, or minority non-white America, or simply socially disenfranchised America, to define its collectivity on its own terms. This collective identity has political purposes. Taylor claims that identities are not just chosen or played with but used in struggles for dignity and survival and also argues that social location is a significant contributor to, and measurement of, this practical racial identity. Hence, Dickens is a determinant for the identities of its residents, and the author recognizes that. By painting the community purple and green, he has colour-coded the inequalities that they suffer. Now they themselves recognize those inequalities and can respond; so too must white society process the cognitive dissonance of its alleged post-racialism and its practically-enforced racism. During the Civil Rights era, there was political traction within and without the African- American community for positive change, in no small part due to the visible, concrete documentation of racism.

Ever since, increasing entropy, via commodified blackness and spectral forms of reproduction, has diminished communal gains and emphasized individual success – the onset of advanced marginalization. This, perhaps, was the mistake that Trey Ellis made in "New Black Aesthetic" when he argued that "… a cultural mulatto … can also navigate easily in the white world" (235): he inadvertently but quite aptly limited this navigation to an individual level. White society is eager to welcome the black "Exception" to assuage its own conscience, but it is unwilling to accept "Unmitigated Blackness" because truly heterogeneous multiculturalism would dismantle white *logos*. The post-Obama era has limited cross-cultural success to a limited few. TS recognizes that his community – Dickens specifically, African Americans generally – will certainly not

...ive and possibly not survive this nominal multiculturalism. Neither Batman nor ...esident Obama is coming to save Dickens.

As the son of a "Liberation Psychologist," he has the foundations in both Afro...ntric ideology and in psychological therapy to address Dickens' existential crisis. In ...answer to the questions, "Who am I? And how may I become myself?" (39) and "So ...what exactly is *our thing*?" (288), in answer to critical concerns about the ...commodification of blackness and spectral forms of reproduction, TS responds clearly: I ...am a black man in a marginalized black community in an institutionally racist, but ...nominally post-racial, white America, and my practice of "Unmitigated Blacknsess" is ...the solution to that contradiction. In his call for people to "a more recreational conception ...of racial identity," Appiah (1996) had encouraged his ascriptive individuals to "practice ...irony" (62); *The Sellout* certainly obliges a means for individual and collective ...self-affirmation. Beatty's text uses satire to show how audience and performance are ...necessary in maintaining both racial categories and race writing. By infusing the text with ...Japanese literary references and uncomfortable images of suicide, the novel unsettles our ...notions of race, suggesting that identities instead should be based on shared cultural ...allegiances.

Because of Beatty's condemnation of the racial dichotomy and his disparaging ...critique of a sacrosanct African American literary tradition, this novel confronts the ...meaning of race more radically than the other novels examined of the contemporary era. ...Beatty mocks time-honoured African American literary protocols, like the trope of ...double consciousness and the representation of the protest movement. As such, the novel

conveys a broader conception of the African American literary tradition, one that includes a wide range of historical, cultural, and literary references.

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Horrors of Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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Slavery has been widespread in Africa and still continues today in some countries. Slavery has always been known as a relationship of one person entirely under the domination of another person. One of the horrific instances of slavery took place in the America between 15th and 16th century. During the 15th and 16th century Europeans, enslaved Blacks and ill-treated them. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* makes the reader aware of the physical and psychological damage done to the African people by the brutal inhumanity of Americans. *Beloved* can be considered as a slave narrative of 20th century. Morison explores madness, slavery, rape, seduction, regret, tyranny, infanticide, passion, wisdom, and alienation. Through this novel she unveils the interior life of the slave. The novelist dedicates this novel to sixty million and more blacks who died of slavery. The novel *Beloved* defines the slavery of two persons, Sethe and Paul.D.

Sethe, a black woman of extraordinary power, is the heroine of this novel who is willing to sacrifice not only to gain her own liberation but also to prevent her children from falling under the forced servitude. Sethe 13 year old child, of an unnamed slave parents, arrives at Sweet Home, an idyllic plantation in Kentucky operated by Garner and his wife Lillion. Sethe mentions the fact about her mother who was a slave who worked in Indigo field from dawn to dusk. In fa her mother and that Nan, one armed black governess, took the role of parent and taught Sethe her mothers' native dialect. Sethe selected Halle Suggs to be her husband and bore him three children: Haword, Bulgar and Denver. The slaves Paul D, Paul A , Sethe and Sixo lived in a farm ruled by Garners childless couple. After the death of the Garner, his wife turns control to her brother in law a school master, who was brutal overseer. The situation has been described by the writer to reveal the agonizing case of her lives. She expresses, "There had been four of them who belonged to the farm. Sethe the only female. Mrs. Garner crying like a baby, had sold his brother to pay of his debts that surfaced the minute she was widowed. But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect fire light" (9).

The inhumane behaviour of the school teacher forced the slaves to desperate measures of flight and rebellion. Hence, Sethe tries to reveal the situation of torture, horror and bad memories and tries to escape Sethe and her daughter, Denver, reside in a haunted two storey house at 124, Bluestone Road outside Ohio. In that house, Denver is a reclusive 18 year old daughter who once lived with her brother: Bulgar, Howard and their infant sister, Beloved. They are all under slavery. Denver in that house says that she can not withstand anymore: "I can't no more. I can't no more... I can't live here. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I can't live here. Nobody speaks, comes by. Boys don't like me, girls don't either"(14).

Thus, Sethe and Denver lived in an isolated place and they felt ruptured by the unexpected arrival of Paul.D from Sweet Home where Sethe and her family were also enslaved. Sethe explained to Paul.D about the events in Sweet Home and the way she ran away from there and she also tells about how she surrendered her children to a woman in wagon because she was worried about the school master's reign. She told Paul.D about the roughnes and cruelty of those white people especially about the tw white boys, the school masters nephews, while she w pregnant with Denver injuring her so badly that her b skin had been dead for a year, she refuses,"Those b came in there and took my milk, that's what they c in there for. Held me down and took it... school tea made one open, up my back, And they took my milk"

Moreover they sucked out her breast and lashed with whips. She used the words "they took my milk" repeatedly to describe her violation. Sethe, suffers physical scars of slavery, than any other character in the novel. According to her death is kinder, she killed her own child with a handsaw. The foursome wounded Bulgar and Howard threatened to bash Denver's brain. A mother killing her own child is an act that subverts the natural order of the world. The mother is expected to create life, not destroy it, but in this case, Sethe was insane and out of control at that moment, because she thought her child might also face the same torture in future. Thus, she wants to put an end to this situation. Sethe is very anxious about her murdered child, Beloved. She says, "Do you forgive me? will you stay? You safe here now" (175). Later, she justifies by saying if she had not killed the child, she could have died on her own.

Being a victim slavery, she often thought about her daughter and lives with her daughter's ghost for years. She thinks that killing Beloved is the best way to save her from the horrors of slavery, and from being treated like animal. She is unable to protect her child from the phantom of slavery so she took this action. News about black people does not appear normally in white newspaper unless it has captured their interest. But Sethe's picture has come in white newspaper. It is not natural for the white community to acknowledge black. The black community slaves find no means to protect themselves from the white. This happens when Sethe kills her child. Sethe gets severe beatings for freeing her child; the lash opens the skin on her back. She recalls how she was treated by the school master and his nephews. She congratulated herself for saving her children from slavery, wiping, lynching, starvation and sale. She managed to escape from Sweet home, when she was pregnant with her fourth child to 124, Bluestone Road. Sethe's activities repressed the rape and infanticide rather than remember, mourn and there by heal. She was trapped by memories, loaded with past and hunger, it left her no room to imagine. Due to her outrageous act, her neighbor took sympathy on her and exiled her. Sethe was also mistreated by her husband. He was supposed to be her protector but he let the schoolmaster's nephew to steal her breastmilk.

The plight of slavery shifts from Sethe to Paul D, a former slave from Sweet Home who survived the horrors of slavery and had become a reflective man. Paul.D has undergone many terrible issues, dehumanization experiences which made him rough and really made him unreceptive to hardship and pain. Morrison tells about his toughness when she describes his working conditions at the house. She tells about the ill-treatment and the dehumanizations of those black people, especially the savage treatment that of Paul D, who has endured white shackled to ten slaves and went to brutal prison for the crime of threatening to kill Brandy wine, the man who bought Paul D from school master. Paul D and other prisoners were chained together and threatened with suffocation under mud slide. The prisoners escaped to a Cherokee camp, where the Americans fed them mush and released them from leg irons. Paul D suffered from sad memories of his experience that he was stuffed by iron, as he waited for transportation to camp in Alfred Georgia. Paul.D says to Sethe that the worst of his humiliation, confession of pain and degradation was that he was stripped of his human dignity and treated like an animal.

He questioned the reason for human suffering and the extent to which a man must bear the burden. The brutality of school master is unbelievable in the sense that he would sell Paul.D for $900 and replaced him with 2 young male slaves so that Sweet home would be worth the trouble it was causing him. Both of them, Seth and Paul D were dehumanized during their slave experiences; their response to the experience of slavery differed due to their different roles. She suffered a lot, her separation from her husband and the trauma of a severe lashing caused her to be a miserable woman. The arrival of Paul. D offered a serious challenge to Sethe's suspended life, his presence had inspired Sethe to mourn her past. Beloved herself is the traumatic past. She not only referred to the murdered baby but also to the other experiences of trauma that Sethe as well as the community members lived through slavery. Morrison has portrayed *Beloved* as a multifaceted character. She is the ghost of a child the ghost of nameless slaves, the ghost of terrible inescapable past. Throughout the past, slavery has caused mental and spiritual wounds which was very fresh. They endured severe iniquities, dehumanization and suffering under law and were victims of prejudice from American Society.

Sethe, the heroine cannot overcome the sense of violation from her Sweet Home experience. Sethe and Paul.D are both dehumanized during their slavery experience by the white people but their response differs due to their role. Sethe managed to create her own family with Paul.D. She turns into a new leaf and a different women. Thus Sethe's process of healing, sprouts out from her process of learning to live with her past has become a model to the readers. On the other hand Paul.D initially prepares to be a normalizing force in Sethe's and Denver's

...His entrance proves to be a healthy signal for ...e and Denver. Here, Toni Morrison posits that black ...mmunity as a whole, must attempt to heal from the ...ma of slavery. The end of the novel also emphasizes ...t happiness may be found in looking towards the future, ...ther remaining in the past.

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Department of English (SF)
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CERTIFICATE

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

A NATIONAL SEMINAR ON
TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM: LITERATURE, THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The Art of the Incredibly Serious: Richard Wright's *Native Son* as a Study of Social Demarcation

A Dissertation submitted to

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **The Art of the Incredibly Serious: Richard Wright's *Native Son* as a Study of Social Demarcation** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Rosy Agneshia 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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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **The Art of the Incredibly Serious: Richard Wright's *Native Son* as a Study of Social Demarcation** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is my original work and that, it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar title.

A. Rosy Agneshia

THOOTHUKUDI

JUNE 2019

ROSY AGNESHIA A.

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PREFACE

Richard Wright undoubtedly occupies an indisputable position among the writers in the African American literature. This dissertation entitled **The Art of Incredibly Serious: Richard Wright's *Native Son* as a Study of Social Demarcation** analyses how the transformation of the protagonist brings a great reform in the minds of the racial group.

The first chapter **Introduction** throws light on the origin of the African American literature, the distinct characteristics of the twentieth century African American novels, the biography of Richard Wright and his unique contribution in the field of African American Literature.

The second chapter **Racial Divide and Conditions of Intolerance** focusses on the racist environment which altogether resists the life of the protagonist thereby making him passive and submissive.

The third Chapter **Black Crime: Gain of Power and Identity** highlights the protagonist's courageous step against the oppressor for a positive change in the dominant white society.

The fourth chapter **Violence: An Instrument of Liberation** deals with the importance of violence in the life of the African Americans which is justified using Fanon's theory of violence.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the key premises dealt with in the preceding chapters. It instils hope, courage and moral consciousness in the hearts of the people in order to frame a harmonious world.

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

Chapter One

Introduction

The origins of African American literature lay in a dynamic set of process involving questions of exclusion and inclusion, authority and autonomy, national identity and democracy. It portrays an inevitable part of the American culture and literature. The firm roots of African American literature has illuminated the emergence of Native American, Asian American and Chicano American streams of literature. African American literature was moulded up by the writings of the people of African descent living in United States. This literature brings out the role of African Americans within the frame of American society. All African American study travels through the deeper meaning of the African American presence in this nation. It starts its journey with the works of the late eighteenth century writers as Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglas, Langston Hughes etc. Before the rise of the slave narratives, African American literature was overshadowed by autobiographical spiritual narratives. African American literature has toured from the mid-18th century with slave narratives to the recent times with all its socio literary exuberance introducing a literary and cultural transformation in the fabric American society. As the position of African American in the American society has been altered over centuries, so, has been the focus of African American literature.

African American history provided a great platform and was highly influential in the development of African American literature. Miller states that, "African American history begins with the importation of African slaves by European colonizers into the New World beginning in the seventeenth century" (3-4). It continues through the abolition of slavery into an unstable period towards the end of

depictions of slave life gave rise to a new genre in American literature, the slave narrative. No greater example of the power and influence of these narratives can be found than the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). Douglass's narrative presented an unequivocal indictment of the dehumanizing impact of slavery on slave and slave holders alike. Such a perfect depiction of slavery was due to his experience as a slave and by witnessing the pain and suffering endured by the slaves. His whole family was shattered due to the impact of slavery. Douglass in his *Autobiographies*, details the extremity of his mother's suffering as a slave:

> She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave has special permission from his or her master to the contrary- a permission which they seldom get, and one that gives to him that gives it the proud name of being a kind master. (16)

Throughout his life, he was about to pass through the blood stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery. Such a life made him to work for his people through his works, thereby trying to liberate them. For example, his narrative revealed the liberating power of education power of words - by which African Americans could effectively confront and refuse their oppressors. Douglass's influence was felt among the numerous black writers who emerged prior to the following Civil War. The works of such authors as Henry Walton Bibb, Harriet E. Wilson, William Cooper Nell, Victor Sejour and James Monroe Whitfield continued to address the needs of the black community in its early years of freedom and further extended the narrative and thematic scope of African American literature. While fighting for their literal freedom, the earliest African American writers were hampered by a lack of creative freedom. Toward the end of the era of slavery, black writers started to branch out into

imaginative forms of literature, and by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a handful of black writers who made a living from writing.

Black writers arrived at a new level of artistic freedom in the early decades of the twentieth century, especially in the 1920s when the Harlem Renaissance marked an outpouring of creative expression and a flourishing of artistic spirit that had not occurred earlier. Daylanne K. English states that, " the Harlem Renaissance seems, for many critics, to represent a ready culture and historical parallel to todays' abundant African American cultural production" (808). It was a time of tremendous positive energy, and the sheer number of enduring novels, poems, plays and works of non-fiction by African Americans from the 1920s is astounding. The diversity and depth of these works are even more important than their number, and the achievements of this period laid the groundwork for many works that came after. Some of the famous writers during this period are W. E. B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston etc. Claude Mckay's militant sonnet "If We Must Die" (1919), became popular and is considered a landmark of Harlem Renaissance. Without expressing the life and works of W. E. B DuBois, the loaded essence of this period cannot be tasted to fullest.

At the turn of the 20th century, W. E. B. DuBois emerged as one of the first writers to locate African American life within a broader historical context. The most eminent American intellectual of this century, W. E. B DuBois philosophized, historized, organized and polemicized brilliantly during his long career. Roediger in his work *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to Be White* explains that:

> Often a trenchant critic of 'race talk,' who saw the need to confront all assumptions of white supremacy, DuBois also embraced a version of Black nationalism. Nowhere is his ability to see race as both a fanciful conceit and a consequential reality more apparent than in these pages

from *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), the second of his three major autobiographical works. (29)

DuBois's landmark work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and the numerous sociological studies that followed, provided the philosophical foundation for what came to be known as the New Negro Movement. It revealed a cultural heritage independent of slavery and linked to the grandeur of Africa's ancient and storied past. DuBois in his works expresses his human loneliness and existential torture, which resulted from the traumatic historical event - in the form of blues, work songs, and folk tales all of which have their roots in America. W. E. B. DuBois's *The Soul of Black Folk* is, for many writers and critics throughout the African Diaspora, an instituting text for twentieth century black literature written in English. As W. E. B. DuBois is crowned as a critic of the race talk, there are several great successors, who followed the same stream.

While literary works by black writers found wide critical and popular support, particularly during the Harlem Renaissance, racial discrimination remained an essential aspect of American life. In the 1940s and 1950s the works of such authors as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Adrienne Kennedy, and Lorraine Hansberry portrayed the uncertainty and alienation that characterized the lives of many African Americans in the segregated Jim Crow South and in the urban slums of the North. Wright's *Native Son* (1940), Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (1953), and Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), addressed the intolerable social and physical conditions under which many African American suffered and inspired numerous works of social protest fiction. Like the slave narratives of the previous century, protest works focused attention on the dehumanizing and schizophrenic nature of American racism.

These writers suffered under the kind of psychological restrains that they so explicitly ried to throw off, both in themselves and their people. Since breaking down the estrictive stereotype was one of their main objects, they became bound to it, and were losed off from more various fictional possibilities. The works of these writers also ueled the growing and largely nonviolent Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th entury. As a credit, the works belonging to this period express existential thought nd actions that were necessary to affirm their humanity and dignity against white acism, oppression, dehumanization and violence.

As riots erupted on the streets in 1960s America, there was also a riot going on n the literary world. Against a background of political assassinations, large scale rban rioting, and seemingly ineradicable racial division, a group of writers belonging o the Black Arts Movement, began to think publicly about a politically engaged art hat would meet the expectations of an African American, working class audience. he Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that lienates him from his community. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, ritique and iconology. Because of internal differences - Baraka and his Congress of frican people saw Marxism as the solution to oppression and inequality. The Black rts Movement though relatively short lived, "... had a great and far reaching nfluence on African American writing, especially that of African American women the late 1960s and 1970s" (Berten 223). This decade debuted at an amazing rate ith high quality novels, collections of poetry, and plays, adding feminist perspective the empowering awareness that the movement had fostered.

During the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, many African American writer's reative focus became more ethnocentric. The original meaning of the term hnocentrism was introduced by W.G. Sumner in 1906. It is the view of things in

which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and related with reference to it. In short it is a term to describe feelings of group centrality and superiority. The characteristic features of ethnocentrism in this sense include: strong identification with one's own group and its culture, the tendency to see one's own group as the centre of the universe, the tendency to prefer one's own way of life over all others, bias against other groups and their ways of acting and a general suspicion of foreigners, the white Americans who always show their dominant hand against the foreign groups. These white Americans consider their culture as most superior and they oppress the blacks, fixing them as inferior.

Authors such as Baraka, Le Roi Jones, Larry Neal, Hoyt Fuller, Addison Gayle, Jr., Carolyn M. Rodgers, and other early architects of the Black Arts Movement began to articulate a new literary aesthetic - a black aesthetic that more accurately reflected the social and political realities of modern African American life. Closely aligned politically and ideologically with the Black Power movement and had galvanized by the murders of social activist Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, Black Arts authors such as Don L Lee, Ed Bullins, Alice Childress, Charles Fuller, Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez and Mari Evans decried racial injustice and often demonstrated in their writing an open hostility toward white society and its power structures. The Black Arts Movement was community based, highly political, and reaffirmed in new ways the cultural traditions preserved by previous generations of authors during the Harlem Renaissance.

Despite its considerable influence, many judged the Black Arts Movement to be too narrow in its artistic focus. This was particularly true among women, whose writings increasingly addressed gender as well as racial discrimination. Ntozake Shange's play *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow*

is Enuy (1974) and Alice Walker's epistolary novel *The Color Purple* (1982) generated some controversy among male authors for what was perceived as negative literary portraits of African American men. One of the most celebrated authors in modern American and African American literature, Toni Morrison popularized what has come to be known as the neo-slave narrative. Morrison's book joins a body of work, evolving over the last century, that has effectively argued for the indelible nature of white racism. The novels of Toni Morrison, contains allegorical or magical realist qualities or as with Langston Hughes writings in which snow, cold and tornadoes may be symbols of racism. These novels are highly serious consisting of the impact of racism on the African Americans. The descriptions of events and characters in these novels are arguably close to what authors remember or otherwise believe to be true about their personal life and the lives of people around them.

"The record of the Negro's efforts in literature goes back a long way, covering a period of more than a century and a half, but it is only within the past ten years that America as a whole has been made consciously aware of the Negro as a literary artist" (Warren 6). The role of the black writer was to use art to represent blacks in a fresh light, a new 'racial utterance' functioning not only as myth smasher but also, and more important, as a means by which to fathom how positive self-identity could be developed and regulated. The racial representation in African American literary history has consistently endeavoured to overthrow racial injustice. African American writers have long been committed to expose the white supremacy, discrimination, prejudice, segregation, preponderance of crime and poverty in black communities, particularly urban ones and inequitable degradation of African Americans on the basis of race. African American literature has been a tool of social change, addressing or redressing the attitudes of readers and stimulating social action, by balancing the

actual and virtual modes of racial representation. The earliest writings by African Americans, written and published during the colonial era, introduced many of the themes, issues and theories that would preoccupy succeeding generations: the right to live in freedom, under the same law and with the same opportunities as other Americans. Throughout history, black authors have consistently explored the political dimensions of literature and its ability to effect social change. African American writers have also provided an essential framework for shaping cultural identity and solidarity. Through the various eras and movements of the African American literary tradition, including the early nationalist and antislavery movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, the cultural awakening in Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, the rise of protest and black nationalist literature during the mid-20th century, and the considerable critical and popular success, particularly by women, in the late 20th century and early 21st century, black authors have returned to the roots of their cultural heritage, preserved in the songs and stories of their ancestors. There is more than the usual amount of pressure on these works to frame and comment on social issues. Overtime, some black authors have argued that black literature need not be solely a grim catalog of oppression. It calls for a celebration of black life and its expressions. "Artists such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, and Richard Bruce Nugent refused to have their art confined to what they saw as the limited criteria requiring that African American literature function only on behalf of 'the race' " (King 3).

In African American literature a prominent position is occupied by Richard Wright one of America's greatest black writers and the first African American writer to achieve literary fame and fortune. Richard Wright belongs to the Harlem Renaissance and his works are the perfect example of that period. Harlem

Renaissance were not uniformly optimistic. There remained serious issues of racial inequality during the 1920s, as well as nagging self-doubt or even racial self-loathing. Black writers in the following decades, explored some of the contradictions, discontentment, and rage that might have been buried below the surface of some Renaissance works. Richard Wright in the 1930s and 1940s expressed that rage in no uncertain terms, and his works along with those of Ralph Ellison, Ann Petry, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker and Lorraine Hansberry made the 1940s and 1950s a time of intense literary examination of the psychology as well as the sociology of black life in America.

Richard Wright revolutionized American and African American literature because of his courage and insistence in attacking taboos and hypocrisy that previous writers never dared to address. He portrayed bold and true images of black American experiences, which continue to inspire and disturb readers. Born to Ella and Nathan Roxie, Mississippi, Wright was raised in a world of stark poverty and systematic discrimination. He lived in a society that was rigidly segregated and was designed by those in power.

His early life was spent shifting back and forth between a bewildering number of locations in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee as his family sought suitable work that would provide them with some degree of security and stability. His father Nathan Wright, an illiterate sharecropper and mill worker, abandoned his wife and children in 1915. Shortly thereafter, at a very young age Richard Wright was placed for a while in a Memphis orphanage, an experience that terrified him and left in him an enduring sense of his own loneliness and a tendency he notes in *Black Boy* to "distrust everything and everybody" (Wright 26).

Wright's childhood thus was characterized by family disorganization, emotional anxiety, and physical deprivation, which often took the form of severe hunger. It is reasonable to say that 'hunger' became the dominant metaphor of his writing. All of these problems were compounded by the racism he was forced to endure as a young black person living in the Deep South during one of the worst periods of racial discrimination and violence in American history. The intricately fashioned Jim Crow laws of Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee ensured racial segregation of all aspects of public life and many aspects of private life, harshly regulating black people to martial existence stripped of civil rights, economic opportunities and social equality. Jim Crow laws enforced the racial segregation in the southern parts of America by which Wright was much influenced even at his early age. Jim Crow laws, moreover, strictly forbade marriage and sexual activity between the races.

Richard Wright experienced what he called the 'horror' of southern racism in his own personal life, and it left an incredible mark on his consciousness and shaped his works in all of its phases. As many critics and biographers have pointed out, Wright's southern experience remained at the core of his personality, and even though he travelled widely as an adult and lived in a great variety of places outside of the South, he was never able to shake the alienation, fear and anger which the segregated South induced in him as a child and young man. Ward states that, "South, therefore, was to Wright not only a naturalistic trap depriving him of economic opportunities and social development but also a Dantean hell which threatened his very soul" (2). Wright eventually used his extraordinary talent and will to overcome this repressive environment which would have crushed lesser writers. In the process, he became a seminal writer who changed the course of American and African American literatures.

During his experience in Memphis, Wright was highly influenced by H. L. Mencken's *A Book of Prefaces* (1917) and *Prejudices* (1919). He was impressed by Mencken's iconoclastic mind and was especially intrigued by Mencken's sharp criticisms of the American South as a backward society crippled by irrational prejudice and an equally irrational fear of modern freedom and individualism. Wright found in *A Book of Prefaces* a reading list of modern master works, which became for him a program of self-education. These books provided Wright a sense of freedom which he needed to liberate himself from southern darkness. Wright had an appreciation not only on those writers whose influence on his work is most obvious, Dostoyevski and Dreiser and later on it is Camus and Sartre - but also of Gertrude Stein, Henry James, T.S Eliot, Turgenev and Proust. Such reading provided him with new ways of looking and seeing and a sense of life itself helping him to understand and artistically shape his own experience in vital coherent ways.

Richard Wright was the first African American author to get substantial revenues from his writings and the first to gain international reputation. He is not only a powerful writer in the liberal - racial, black, male, American tradition, but that his artistic territory ranges far more extensively, that he is a writer of great general human importance. "He is certainly a writer," Bloom states that, "who illustrates his liberal-radicalness, his blackness, his maleness, his Americanness in nearly all that he has written" (5). Wright's published works include: seven novels, one collection of essays, two collections of short fiction, an autobiography, the dramatized version of *Native Son*, more than 250 newspaper articles, book reviews, and occasional essays; 817 haiku verses, a documentary photography and three travel books.

Wright's volume of early works include; *Lawd Today!* which was published posthumously and was written prior to *Black Boy* and *Native son. Lawd Today!* was

clearly influenced by James Joyce's *Ulysses* and it presents one day events in the life of Jake Jackson in Chicago. It is rich with high spirits, and is so appealingly natural despite its Depression background, and it is well thought out by some readers as the best novel and least slanted. Wright's first published book *Uncle Tom's Children,* is a collection of novellas. It was first published in 1938, consisting of only four novellas: "Big Boy Leaves Home," "Down by the Riverside," "Long Black Song," and "Fire and Cloud." The other two "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" and "Bright and Morning Star," were added when the book was republished in 1940. This collection of novellas illuminate the miserable social and economic conditions that ensnared most African American lives in the middle part of the twentieth century. *Uncle Tom's Children* evoke both pity and sympathy from its white readership. Its title was derived from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* an anti-slavery novel published in 1852. His later works include; *Black Boy,* which is the first part of Wright's autobiography, about his attempt to escape poverty, ignorance, fear and bigotry in the South. "And in *Black Boy*," Davis claims that, "we are asked to accept Richard's cultural isolation as well as his vulnerability to all forms of deprivation - physical, emotional, social, and intellectual" (84). This autobiography, even today, performs an ethical function by serving as a social testament.

American Hunger published in 1977 is the second part of his autobiography which describes his escape to North just before Depression. *American Hunger* serves as one of the clearest reflections of Wright's alienation and estrangement from the rhythm and tempo of the black community. Even though this book offers a penetrating analysis of the psychological dilemma caused by oppression, Wright is nevertheless naïve in his tendency to place too much faith in the white liberal establishment and its radical allies. The novel *The Outsider* published in 1953, looks

fundamentalism. This novel appeared during the height of McCarthyism in the United States and the advent of the Cold War in Europe, these two events had a significant bearing on its initial reception. Early critics saw *The Outside* as Wright's attempt to become 'universal,' to move outside the racial paradigm.

The Harlem Renaissance otherwise known as 'The New Negro Movement,' (covering the time period of the late 1930s through the 1950s) was decorated not only by Richard Wright but also by his contemporaries like Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and Gwendolyn Brooks, entirely dominating the African American literary scene. Ralph Ellison, a renowned African American novelist, was named after the celebrated poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. His move to New York in 1936 provided a platform in his career. Ellison met Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, which led to his first attempts at fiction. The turning point had been his triumph in 1952 with his novel *Invisible Man.* That success had led to a cascading flow of honours such as no other African-American writer had ever enjoyed. In 1953, he won the National Book Award, besting *The Old Man and the Sea*, by Ernest Hemingway, one of his idols. Ellison and Wright saw their work as a response to the contemporary experiences of the African Americans.

James Baldwin is widely considered to be the most notable African American author of his time, particularly during the Civil Rights Movement covering the period of 1950s and 1960s. His literary output is marked by restlessness and has constantly experimented with new forms, new subjects and new perspectives. His autobiographies portray the United States as a 'house of bondage' for the blacks as well as for the whites, probing the nation's psychosexual, political, social, cultural, and historical dependence on intersectionalities of race, gender, class, and religion. He

is best known for his semi-autobiographical novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, published in 1953 and his first collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son* which appeared two years later. His role in literature placed him at a highest throne for he continued to experiment with literary forms throughout his career, published poetry and plays as well as the fiction and essays for which he was known.

A prominent figure next in this contemporary line is occupied by Gwendolyn Brooks, one of the influential, highly regarded and widely read poets of the twentieth century American poetry. She was the first African American who won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. Brooks received many more honours and awards, throughout her writing career. She was appointed as Poet Laureate of Illinois. Apart from the individual poems, essays, and reviews that have appeared in numerous publications, various other books in rapid succession includes *Maud Martha* (1953), *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* (1956), and *In the Mecca* (1968). Gwendolyn Brooks influenced many African American writers and her prize-winning works also helped other black Americans to develop their own sense of identity and culture. Even though holding firmly on this contemporary line, Richard Wright stands unique in his depiction of the African American society.

The greatest sculptor, Richard Wright perfectly carves out a reputation for himself within the frame of African American literature. This he achieved through his ground breaking works by stripping out dryness (racism) from African American literature. Central to Wright's success was the publication in 1940 of *Native Son*, the novel that would establish him as a major figure in American literature and as the first African American writer to produce a number one best seller. The wide success of *Native Son* was largely due to an auspicious historical situation, since other black writers had through their action and writings, done the same thing before him with

and Pre-World War II America, bringing the entire US radical history of violence and crime to the forefront and also determining the course of African American literature of decades. In order to convey the enormous impact of the novel, Irving Howes states that, "the day *Native Son* appeared, American culture was changed forever" (32). While seeking for the most influential shaping force in modern Black literary history, it is right and just to point to Wright and his publication of *Native Son*.

Richard Wright became active in the Communist Party who were, at that time, one of the few groups of people who seemed to have the interest of African Americans at heart. *Native Son* was written while Wright was under the influence of these communists. It has been widely regarded as a social protest novel. Moreover, in the thirties it was the ideology of Communism that captured the young writer's imagination. "*Native Son* would be written with the controversial shadow of the 'red' brotherhood cast broadly across his desk" (Phillips xii). It was the first novel by a black author to be chosen for the Book-of-the-Month Club. Levy states that, "*Native Son* became the March 1940 Book of the Month. It was the first novel by a black author to achieve that distinction" (76). Special focus on *Native Son* was enhanced by the publications of certain influential works like: Keneth Kinnamon's *New Essays on Native Son* (1990), Robert Butler's *Native Son: The Emergence of a New Black Hero* (1991) etc. The novel's influence has been impossible to elude or ignore, forcing later black writers either to adhere to or to contest Wright's aesthetics and ideology. Richard Wright's thematic and stylistic concerns compound a particularly powerful mixture of seemingly contradictory elements, elements that accommodate the Modernism of his lyrical symbolism, Freudianism, universalism and existentialism while still residing within the frame of a large array of genres, trends and political and

aspirations and black nationalism.

Wright's mastery in this novel has been highlighted by a steady flow of criticism from diverse perspectives. Primarily a self-educated and self-trained artist, Wright, in his early work *Native Son*, depends heavily upon the grammatical aspects of the craft of fiction - emphasis through repetition and traditional sentence structure. Ann Joyce claims that,

> ...Wright gives more attention to content than form by illuminating the intensity achieved through the interrelationship between Wright's subject matter and its expression of it. Two of *Native Son's* most distinguishing qualities are its emotive use alliteration and rhythm. (112-113)

Further illuminating the mutual relationship between form and meaning, Wright uses a series of stark compound sentences not only to punctuate the aberration of a caste system based on race, but also to explain the universal abstractions separating all individuals.

Richard Wright's creation of the protagonist, Bigger Thomas plays an immense role in revolutionizing American culture. The Bigger known from the novel is a combination of at least five Bigger Thomases. The birth of Bigger Thomas goes back to his childhood and there was not just one Bigger, but many of them, these Bigger Thomases are pictured out in Wright's essay, "How Bigger' Was Born." In this essay, Wright closely examines his own modes of creation. Through his analysis, Wright offers a fairly extensive view of the creation of the character and the book itself. He also outlines many of the themes and structures of the book, giving readers insight into the story behind the story.

The plot of the *Native Son* provides a vivid picture of its protagonist. Richard Wright's *Native Son* is divided into three books: 'Fear,' 'Flight' and 'Fate' which are designed in such a manner to portray the perfect picture of social ills, psychologically affecting the protagonist. The central character in *Native Son* is a twenty-year old black man named Bigger Thomas. He lives in a single cramped apartment on the South side of Chicago with his mother, sister and brother. Bigger's character is totally defined by the external force (i.e. environment). The rat infected room, money is tight, no allowances for privacy, arguments are rife, and the rent is high. The violence exerted in the pool hall scene against one of his best friend expresses his fear in robbing a white man. Then he is forced to work as a chauffeur under a white landlord named Mr. Henry Dalton. The following scene depicts the murder of Mary Dalton which takes place accidentally out of Bigger's shame, fear and frustration. It would appear that resorting to violence is the only way in which Bigger is able to articulate his despair. He also murders his black girlfriend Bessie fearing that his secrets would be revealed. Bigger gains a sense of power through these two murders. At his trial, his lawyer, enters a plea of guilty but makes a passionate speech to the judge imploring him to save Bigger's life. Failing, he attempts to console Bigger who, in an evolution of conscience, rationalize his actions and confronts the death penalty.

Richard Wright's ability to have the readers empathize with this man in his loneliness, and Wright's skill in enabling these readers to understand what has motivated his brutality, is the greatest achievement of the novel. *Native Son*, which is sketched about the outlaw, undoubtedly drives some degree of pleasure and relief from killing, yet the reader gradually learns to recognize some glimmer of truth to the cliché society's to blame.

The novel's first section 'Fear,' and the second section 'Flight'

with the speed and compulsion of a thriller. The final section 'Fate' is riddled with unlikely set pieces behind which one can clearly hear the voices of the author. The immediate and enduring power of *Native Son* is obviously tied both then and now, to the drama of race in America. In the pages of *Native Son*, Richard Wright reminds the readers that the dominated group will continue to seize upon the moral authority of violence as the only means of true expression unless both group begin to voluntarily overhaul this lamentable system. Wright's novel is a plea for the system to be dismantled by the kind of 'mature' communication that Bigger and Max eventually achieve, black and white fighting together for the same and against an unjust system. One thing that nobody seems to disagree about is the novel's extraordinary narrative power. This is what attracted readers back in 1940 and transformed *Native Son* into one of the greatest literary bestsellers of all time.

The life of Richard Wright has been a source of interest ever since the publication of *Native Son* in 1940. It also launched Wright as a wealthiest black writer of his time and established him as a spokesperson for African American problems, and the father of Black American literature. His disturbing depictions of African Americans profoundly affected his white American audience because he embodied the meaning of 'being black' to them. The way he became constructed as a representative black people advanced his message far beyond his expectations. The great African American writer Richard Wright endured much difficulty and unspeakable humiliation trying to live and write as a free man in the country of his birth. Wright's uncalculated success was brought on by his audiences' identification with him. Wright's significance as an African American writer will be his heroism in expressing the entrenched national mindset that victimized black Americans and the

fortuitous impact he had on his audience by symbolizing a step toward recognizing racial justice.

Race is one of the important issues in African American history. Its role is dynamic for it raises the African American literature to the position of much seriousness, as this literature is unique in mirroring the racial society. The seriousness in the works belonging to this literature not only focus on the trauma triggered by racial segregation but it also focusses on the ways of draining such sufferings out of African Americans and the hope of establishing racial justice all over. In this sense, the next chapter gives a detailed account of race and its influence especially in the lives of African Americans. Before understanding the influence of racism in *Native Son,* it is necessary to have a vivid idea about the racial experience of its author, Richard Wright, and the impact of racial prejudice in his works through which he endeavours to revolutionize the Americans attitude towards the blacks. The focal point is to disclose the psychological trauma of the black protagonist of *Native Son,* who is entirely affected by the punch of racial oppression. The psychological aspects in Bigger's life can be divided into two parts; life before and after the murder of Mary Dalton. His life before the murder of Mary Dalton describes his existence in a segregated, cramped apartment and the continuous insistence to take over a menial job; which on the whole explains his submissiveness and complete surrender to the white world. The next chapter brings out the circumstances of oppressions that transforms the protagonist into a criminal.

Chapter Two

Racial Divide and Conditions of Intolerance

In many parts of the world, including the most developed, societies are torn by enmities that originate in racial, ethnic, tribal, national, class and religious differences. Some of these enmities have reached the highest pitch of barbarity. Social exclusion and oppression, segregation, adverse discrimination, derogatory personal attitudes and conduct are the brutal expressions in a society which is overflowing with such enmities. Racism and its kin - ethnic or cultural contempt, religious intolerance, class hatred, and so on are complex and problematic phenomena. It is not surprising that their understanding remains partial and controversial despite the considerable attention that social scientists, psychologists, historians, and to a lesser extent, philosophers have given it in the decades since the Second World War.

Racism is an important aspect of the social environment that is increasingly being discussed at both national and international levels. Racism is a system, it is not an individual character flaw, nor a personal moral failing nor a psychiatric illness. It is a system (consisting of structures, policies, practices and norms) that structures opportunity and assigns value based on phenotype, or the way people look. Firstly, the idea of race contains both biological and cultural elements, for example skin colour, religion and behaviour. Secondly, the biological and cultural appear to combine in variable proportions in any definition of a racial group, depending upon the group and the historical period in question. Some people argue that racism is, in fact, a phenomenon unique in modern society, in the last four or five hundred years. They point out that the word 'race' is modern and the ideas of racial inferiority were first

produced systematically in European and North American thought in the nineteenth century.

Race, as a social construct is ambiguous and changeable. The social construct of a hierarchical racial grouping had reached a, critical mass by the end of the eighteenth century. 'Race' became a potentially comprehensive worldview emanating from and compatible with the existing reality of the power relationship, the goals of European countries as they expanded their control through worldwide conquest. Thus, the racial sorting becomes a convenient political connivance employed by Europeans who were at that time conquering Africa and Asia and subjugating their people. It provided a scientific justification for the exploitation of inhabitants of conquered countries by using skin colouring and other physical attributes as a method for supporting white skin domination. Better claims that, "Racism is a western invention coming out of a need to explain the huge gap in the power, wealth, and influence of European countries over the rest of the world" (4). Racism has existed throughout the world for centuries and has been at the root of innumerable conflicts and human tragedies, including war, genocide, slavery, bigotry, and discrimination. Defined broadly, racism has many forms and effects, from caste prejudice in India and mass extermination in Tasmania to slavery in America and the Holocaust in Europe. Racism has been one of the overriding forces in world history. Racism, however, is not monolithic: It has taken away different shapes and has varied widely from place to place and era to era.

Although the United States is a nation where multiethnicity and cultural diversity are integral attributes of its character, recent data and racial incidents show that people of colour, especially African American men, continue to experience racial

discrimination in many sectors of society. Gary in his article "African American men's perceptions of racial discrimination: A sociocultural analysis," points out that:

> Institutional cases, manifestation, and consequences of racial exploitation have existed historically since 17th century colonial America. It has been argued that the entire edifice of the social, cultural, judicial - legal, and economic structures of U.S society was built on the key reality of racial discrimination. (207)

In recent years, considerable attention has been given to the high risk status of African American men. Government statistics on income, health, education, employment, and criminal justice suggest that, compared with white men, African American men are not coping well in this society. African Americans believe that they suffer from discrimination economically and socially. For example, African Americans have higher morbidity and mortality rates, experience greater unemployment and under employment, earn less, more likely to become victims of homicide, spend more time outside of marriage and family life, and have higher rates of incarceration and criminal victimization than whites. In other words it can be said that, African Americans believe that they receive less justice than other groups.

On the other hand, white Americans attribute African Americans' status to problematic values and excessive reliance on government. Further, they indicate that discrimination against African American does not exist, or any discrimination that may exist is minuscule. Moreover, many white Americans believe that African Americans' charges of racism are disingenuous and are attempts to excuse failure or to extract undeserved rewards. In fact, white Americans have coined a phrase to describe this view, calling it 'playing the race card' a term made more popular in the criticisms of attorney Johnny Cochran and his defense of O. J Simpson. Since then,

whenever many African Americans contend that they have been impacted by racism, it is described as 'playing the race card.'

White Americans frequently imply that something is wrong with African Americans, pointing out how other groups have prospered in this country without protective legislation, such as Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Jewish Americans and Asian Americans. While discrimination did exist at one time against these groups, and some discrimination and prejudice still exist, such as anti-Semitism, the quality of this discrimination is different from what African Americans have experienced and are now experiencing. Principally, these groups did not have Jim Crow laws to fight, and they were not subjected to the degree of violence and oppression that African Americans experienced. These groups tended to settle on the northeastern coast when they came to America. There is no record of these groups being legally denied education, voting, and becoming naturalized citizens, being lynched; or having to contend with the Ku Klux Klan with no protection from legal authorities.

Among the minority groups in the United States, African Americans occupy the most unique position of all groups. African Americans were the only group to be brought to America involuntarily and enslaved for hundreds of years. Shortly after the end of slavery, the Black codes were passed, which were a series of laws to control African Americans. Later, other laws were also passed to prevent them from voting, serving on juries, or moving into certain neighborhoods. Other laws restricted their means of livelihood. In some places, ex slaves could not own property. Blacks had to make long-term contracts with employers, and any black without a job could be either jailed or indentured to an employer. Still other laws infringed on blacks' freedom of assembly and movement. If several blacks got together for any purpose, there had to be a white 'monitor' present. This history suggest that whites feared and disliked

African Americans more than any other minority group. The U.S Supreme Court, approved the segregation of private colleges, stated laws forbidding intermarriages, prevented the offspring of interracial parents from inheriting, separate races in educational institutions and separate races on public transportation. The laws such as Black codes and Jim Crow were established to preserve racial identity, the parity of blood and on the whole prevent an amalgamation. Hazen in his work *The Civil War to the Jim Crow Laws: American Black History* claims that:

> ...these laws made it illegal for blacks to speak disrespectfully to whites or to speak out of turn in any conversation. Blacks were required to remove their hats stand attention when whites passed. If a black person met a white woman on a sidewalk, he or she was expected to step aside and allow the white woman pass. (30)

The disturbing plight of African Americans has deteriorated to the point that they are now called an 'endangered species.' Some social indicators suggest that despite racial oppression, African Americans have made social progress in a number of areas. But black people and white people have different perception of the significance of racism in American society. From an institutional perspective, there is considerable evidence that racial discrimination is a most significant factor in the degraded status of African Americans. Such discrimination and prejudice not only affected the common black people but also the black writers, which they expressed through their writings.

Racial segregation in America has taken two forms, separation of the race by law (de jure) in the South and the separation of the races by custom (de facto) in the North. Both are strategies designed to preserve white supremacy by structuring society in ways that prevent black people from fully participating in the opportunities

and possibilities of American life. Both forms of segregation are powerfully represented in Richard Wright's works. His works include the history of segregation in the South which dates back to the latter part of the nineteenth century, the developed systems of Jim Crow laws which separated the races in all aspects of public and many forms of private life. His works were also influenced by the segregation in the North which took a subtler but no less debilitating form. 'Great Migration' occupied a large space, it is the segregation encountered by the black people as they left the South for a better life in northern cities.

From birth, Richard Wright seems to have been possessed of a highly sensitive nature, which was intensified by the domestic circumstances under which he was brought up and by his experience in learning what he called "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee - areas long distinguished by the worst kind of racism. His writings examine southern and northern forms of segregation better than any precious American writer.

The wound of racial oppression and all traumatic experiences endowed Richard Wright with a special insight, the double vision of belonging to two cultures (African and Afro-American). This sketches out DuBois concept of double consciousness. Politically and ideologically framed by what DuBois perceived as a problem of twentieth century - the problem of colour line, it posits a founding concept, double consciousness for an ontology of blackness upon which is grounded the black American literary tradition. Portraying the sense of twoness within a Negro, W. E. B. DuBois wrote in 1903:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a

> Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (7)

This concept describes the identity of the blacks which is divided into several parts thereby making it difficult to have one unified identity. Richard Wright was able to convey this in a forceful and understandable language, even if rapid historical and social change sometimes prevented him from creating the most adequate symbols for it. Wright gave his opinion about these two cultures which he knew from inside out, and tried to define, if not resolve, their problems. From his revolutionary poem, "I Am Nobody," to his appeal in *White Man, Listen!* he sought, with noble impartiality, to unite them.

Wright had to carve for himself not only his own identity through rebellion but seek a chosen place - a place of freedom versus servitude, knowledge versus cultural void, action versus apathy. Throughout his life he attempted to reject what the South stood for in his mind but he also kept reaffirming, repeatedly what it had meant for him and how he had been moulded by it. His grandmother's Adventism and the severity of his family toward his rebellion against the southern way of life forced him very early to question the rules of his environment. Ward in his work *The Richard Wright Encyclopaedia* states that:

> As he revealed in "Memories of My Grandmother," his religious training as a boy, while scarring him emotionally, often lifted him imaginatively. It enabled him to envision life as much more than submitting to the grinding poverty and the galling racism of the segregated South.... (348)

The South at that time thus was the place where the Negro, through racial oppression, was reduced to a body, that body being doomed to wither quickly because of economic exploitation. Wright obviously blotted out all the spiritual and cultural traditions, religious and secular, which allowed the black community to endure. White exploitation and racism reduced blacks to 'creatures of the earth.' Richard Wright as a black youth could not find food for intellectual development and spiritual flowering. If he had not left the South, the famous novelist would have become a sharecropper.

The whites claimed that life in the South was idyllic even for slaves and that it is represented as a pastoral heaven. Wright refused to define the South as the new Eden of the 'plantation tradition.' These plantation slaves were entirely exploited by their white land owners. While refusing to define the 'plantation tradition,' he responded to the black tradition in which integrity and freedom must be won through flight to the North and acquisition of literacy. Freedom thus became defined as the power to write one's own story, *Black Boy* and the history of one's people, *Twelve Million Black Voices.*

Wright's novel *The Long Dream,* as a whole could be seen as a fictional elaboration of the inability to escape the culture of white supremacy from which the protagonist, Fishbelly could not even free himself after residing in France. The theme of the South as a prison thus coincided in all his fiction and non-fiction. Wright through his characters, Tyree Tucker and Fishbelly, illustrates that, the life of a black man is a 'long dream.'

Wright's creative imagination was stimulated by his childhood environment. It sometimes brought him compulsively back to early experiences such as pain, racial oppression and familial deprivation. Going over the many occasions, Wright used the South as a theme or locale in most cases. Wright's first recorded piece of writing,

"The Voodoo of Hell's Half-Acre," was set in Jackson, Mississippi, and his first published short story, "Superstition," treated black folk beliefs in a small Southern town. Much of his early poetry, such as "Between the World and Me" and "Obsession," used lynching as a theme. "Between the World and Me" describes its traumatized narrator imagining a black man burned alive in a graphically depicted lynching. Other poems were southern in topic and form; "Ah Feels It in Mah Bones" and, especially, "Red Clay Blues" employ black dialect and stress the emotional link of the ghetto immigrant to his Deep South home and his complaints of the lack of human warmth.

Wright's major fiction dealing with the South would deserve special treatment not only the novellas in *Uncle Tom's Children* but also "Almos' a Man" which is taken from the still unpublished novel *Tarbaby's Dawn* describes the routine life and frustrations of the farmers in the South. During this period, several books dealing with the South attracted Wright's attention as a reviewer: Erskine Caldwell's *Trouble in July* (1940), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937), Waters E. Turpin's *These Low Grounds* (1937), as well as Harry Harrison Kroll's *I was a Sharecropper* (1937).

Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* which is a collection of novellas, sketches out the lives of black people and explores their resistance to white racism and oppression. The stories include: "Big Boy Leaves Home," "Down by the Riverside," "Long Black Song," and "Fire and Cloud" which in theme and style, form a consistent whole. Like "The Man Who Saw the Flood," "Down by the Riverside" is a flood story based on Wright's experiences with floods in Mississippi. Both stories, written in the thirties, reflect the hard times black farmers faced in the South. Although "Down by the Riverside," like "Man Who Saw the Flood," is concerned with an economic issue,

Wright's main focus is on the racial oppression black people faced in the southern community dominated by white people. From one point of view, "Down by the Riverside," in contrast to "Big Boy Leaves Home," seems to suggest the futility of a man's struggle against chance and fate, which undermine his perseverance and will to survive. From another point of view, however, this story serves as a charge against southern racism: "man is not merely a victim of chance and fate; man is a victim of racial prejudice" (Hakutani 232).

The enlarged edition of *Uncle Tom's Children* was published in 1940 and was subtitled as "Five Long Stories." It also contained a short autobiographical piece, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" which was penned by Richard Wright in 1936 and a polemical short story, "Bright and Morning Star." White racism and black tragedy in the South was sketched out in "The Ethics of Jim Crow." Through an episode included in "The Ethics of Jim Crow," Wright describes the dreadful consequences of a Negro being caught alone upon the streets in white neighbourhood after sunset.

In his most famous autobiographical works *Black Boy* and *American Hunger*, Wright describes his father as a black peasant whose life had been crushed by sharecropping, a man whose soul was imprisoned and life totally chained by the ways of slavery in the South. Wright saw his own escape to the northern city as essential to his breaking the patterns of his father's life. In short, it depicts Wright's turning away from a hellish old life in the South to new life of increased possibility in the North. Bloom states that, "what survives best in *Black Boy*, for me, is Wright's gentle account of his human rebirth, as a writer" (5). In *Black Boy* he has used his own life to probe what qualities of will, imagination, and intellect are required of a southern Negro in order to possess the meaning of his life in the United States. Black Boy is filled with the names southern towns and cities, estrangement, fights and flights,

deaths and disappointments, charged with physical and spiritual hunger and pain. The most important thing to notice is that, stories from *Uncle Tom's Children*, especially "Fire and Cloud," describe terrible fire and use fire in a nearly biblical manner as a way of dramatizing a world literally being consumed with hatred, fear and racism. *Black Boy* begins with young Wright setting fire to the curtain of his house and then hiding under the porch to escape detection and the fire ravages. Such a symbol also takes a significant role in Wright's *Native Son*. In all of these works, fire is a revelation of deep-rooted psychological forces or a demonic social environment which can flash out in any moment in destructive hatred and violence.

Richard Wright flawlessly constructs the psychological theory thereby bringing out the emotional fracture of a black individual due to racial oppression. Wright is a perfect writer who sees the individual damage among African Americans as a psychological fracturing of identity. Richard Wright therefore makes the best use of Freudian theory, for his novels important motifs is the characters' deep psychological internalization of the racist environment and the ways in which such internalization perpetuates a harmful cycle of racism and negative behaviour.

The works of Richard Wright therefore brilliantly analyze the physical limitation and psychological costs of southern segregation. His works prove to be highly serious discussing the issues such as identity crisis, racial injustice, psychological problems, dehumanization, race riots etc. Wright's *Native Son* occupies a huge space to be explained in terms of race and racial discrimination. For it can be fixed as an epitome, presenting in detail the divided self of the African Americans through his character Bigger Thomas.

Within this radical frame Richard Wright's *Native Son* brought a new depth to this issue of racism and black life in America. By travelling deep into the

consciousness of a single, suppressed and confused urban youth, Wright has brought out the buried complicity of white America in every anti-social black crime. He has explored the psychological impact of oppression on the human individual. Claudia Tate in his work, *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race* indicates that, "Wright read widely in psychoanalysis, and he used his understanding of its tenets in his writing" (94). By exposing his protagonist's psychological suffering and using the worst of crimes - murder - at its extreme, he has ensured there was no anti-social African American behaviour that could be freed from malevolent racist influence. Lynching, murder, violent struggles and death are the common themes that tie his novels together into a coherent body of work. Wright was wholly obsessed with death and lynching. His central characters, especially his black male characters are threatened by the noose at every turn, baptized into violence and constricted by the haunting spectre of their own pending deaths, an apt description for Bigger Thomas, *Native Son's* protagonist.

Native Son dramatizes the life experience of a young black man, whose lack of opportunity in a racist 1930s Chicago sets him upon a destructive path. Richard Wright in *Native Son* shows the working of such a racist society at the level of personal interaction. This he portrays through the conversation between Gus and Bigger. It is by which the readers get to know about Bigger's suppressed dreams and vision. Wright emphasizes the psychological outcome of race logic on African Americans for he opens up the situations as they are, the hatred, fear, frustration and violence that have entirely crippled and destroyed the culture. *Native Son* which is set in 1930s, a time when whites celebrated several socioeconomic advantages over blacks also shows how race logic harms white American society. In tracing the physical as well as the psychological journey of the protagonist, Bigger Thomas,

Wright shows that although Bigger is of an oppressed race and the whites he encounters are figures of an oppressing race, both live in fear and frustration. Robert Guthries insists that the whites are forced to undergo 'guilt-hate-fear complex' and the Blacks 'fear-hate-fear' complex. This can be seen at the very end of the novel, where Max pours out his defensive argument, accusing the white folks that it is their guilt that has moulded a young black man (Bigger) into a criminal: "Their feeling of guilt is as deep as that of the boy who sits here on trial today. Fear and hate and guilt are the keynotes of this drama" (415). Viewed from a different perspective *Native Son* pictures out racism as a destructive force for both the whites and the blacks.

In the 20th century American urban landscapes, white power structures often relegated African Americans to peripheral slums, garbage, constrictive spaces, and dilapidated structures replaced the green parks, tree-lined avenues, and picturesque skylines of buildings and skyscrapers. Richard Wright in his work *Twelve Million Black Voices*. brings out the living conditions of his Black folk: "Each day you see us black folk upon the dusty land of the farms or upon the hard pavement of the city streets. you usually take us for granted and think you know us, but our history is far stranger than you suspect, and we are not what we seems" (10). In order to establish the slum as their natural habitat, whites frequently compared African Americans to animals ranging from violent beast and despised pests to comic primates. When white urban power structures used images of threatening or comic animals to construct and support racial hierarchies, African American authors during the 1930s and 40s, like Richard Wright, began appropriating and inverting these images to contest their use. In this popular and controversial novel *Native Son*, Wright uses such animals in his depiction of the African American experience in cities during the 1930s in order to critique racism and unfair housing conditions. His introduction of the rat in the very

first scene of the novel, is of central importance, acting as a symbol for both the impoverished conditions and potential transgressive abilities of African Americans living in cities. The rat in the novel critiques racial and biological categories rooted in cultural attitudes that deem African Americans less than human.

The novel opens with the annoying sound of the alarm waking up the entire family of Bigger Thomas. This symbolically wakes up America to witness the fear and frustration that centuries of racism have wrought on a young black man and his whole race. The sudden eruption of the rat in the room and Bigger's exasperating chase of the rodent before he kills it with an iron skillet foreshadows a later scene in the novel when Bigger himself is cornered and arrested by the police. The scene also highlights Bigger's psychology: he eventually kills the rat dangles its dead body in front of this sister, who faints, which prompts the mother's intervention to scold Bigger for his action. Bigger Thomas's uncaring act is an expression of his frustration over his family's poverty and his inability to do anything about it. It even goes to the extent that his mother tells him she sometimes wonder why she gave birth to him and blames him for the family's poverty: "We wouldn't have to live in this garbage dump if you had any manhood in you" (38). She defines 'manhood' as the ability to earn money and support the family; however because of racial oppression, Bigger can get only menial jobs that do not pay enough to let him occupy the traditional male role of breadwinner. Mrs. Thomas's failure to understand his difficulty end in creating a sense of guilt in Bigger. This sense of guilt blooms at the point of his inability to function as a man, his inability to support his family and out of his wrong deeds in the company of his gang. In such a chaos his mother foretells, getting irritated of his carefree attitude: "If you don't stop running with that gang of yours and do right you'll end up where you never thought you would. You think I don't know what you

boys is doing, but I do. And the gallows is at the end of the road you traveling, boy" (39).

In the early history of American psychoanalysis a particular version of psychoanalysis was formulated in which economics, politics, gender and race were accorded a determining role in personality development and this had always dominated Freud's thinking. Such an idea could be framed within the concept known as 'interpersonal psychoanalysis.' This concept was dominated originally by the idea of two of its founders Harry Stack Sullivan and Erich, both of whom were acutely aware of the ways in which conscious and unconscious psychological process are shaped by the social networks in which the individual lives. These psychoanalysts studied and wrote about issues of class-based disadvantage, racial prejudice and discrimination within a psychoanalytic framework. Within this perspective the individual mind is seen as inextricably linked to the social, political, and cultural context. Sullivan explicitly extended his observations and theorizing from the hospital and clinic into the larger world, and was among the first in the psychoanalytic world to address the psychoanalytic impact of poverty, racism, and class discrimination. His goal was to understand the psychological legacy of slavery and of decades of poverty, discrimination, brutality and vulnerability.

Sullivan concluded that any intellectual, emotional, psychological, or social limitations or deviations that might be observed in this population were due to dismal, disenfranchised social conditions in which southern African Americans long had been forced to live. He believed that all persons, regardless of race, gender, or class, were exposed potentially to some forms of injustice and discrimination, whether it occurred in the schoolyard, within the context of the nuclear family, in the workplace, or the neighbourhood. This is how Bigger is constructed in a racist society. Important to

Bigger's struggle towards manhood is the killing of his father in a riot in Mississippi when he was a child. His father was murdered by the whites, and Bigger was in a situation to realize that his father's death led to the family's predicament. This burdened him both physically and psychologically. Bigger's living condition can be explained in simple terms: cramped apartment, a room with no chance for privacy, place of insecurity and violence, family burden and responsibility. At the very beginning of the novel, these factors shape Bigger Thomas as a man of fear, hate and frustration. These factors perform the role of a catalyst in order to boost the essence of thrill and suspense in the second and third part of the novel, thereby making the readers mesmerized till the very end of the plot.

Much of the first book, fittingly titled "Fear," familiarizes the reader with the life of Bigger Thomas and the historical, economic, political forces that have shaped and will continue to shape him. Like other blacks, Bigger also develops his own dream and is highly imaginative. He shares with his friend Gus, his desire of becoming a pilot. Gus explains the reason for his shattered dream: "if you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to aviation school, you could fly a plane" (47). Heeding to such opinion, Bigger begins to satirize himself and the situation in which he is living. He transforms his anger and pain into satire which could be understood by both. Such a conversation between Gus and Bigger, vividly reflects Bigger's thoughts and hints on his forthcoming violent action. His is a world that tells him that as a black man, he is very restrained in what he can do; he cannot learn to fly an airplane, even though it is his dream, and his employment is limited to menial jobs. He spends time at the poolroom where he meets his friends Gus, G. H., Jack. They also go to the theatre, where they watch a newsreel featuring vacationing rich white people and the rhythmic tom-toms of primitive Africans, but they know

that both the worlds are out of reach. It is, of course, the white world that has set the narrow limits of the black world and forced Bigger to retreat behind his self-protective curtain. Bigger's notions of the white world are derived primarily from the mass media. White people to Bigger, are presidents, generals and corporate executives. When he and his friend Gus 'play white,' they mimic the voices and manners of men of power. White women are promiscuous 'rich chicks,' like the featured character in the movie Bigger sees, *The Gay Woman* who floats between the scenes of dancing, cocktail drinking, swimming, and spinning roulette wheels.

The plot to rob a white man's store aborts when, calculating to get out of the scheme because of the danger usually associated with crimes against whites, Bigger picks a fight with Gus, accusing him of being afraid of robbing the white man's store. He blames Gus and acts violently against him so that Bigger can hide his fear and shame of not willing to rob a white man. The poolroom scene dramatizes perfectly the importance of violence to Bigger:

> Confidence could only come again now through action so violent that it would make him forget. These were the rhythms of his life: indifference and violence; periods of abstract brooding and periods of intense desire; moments of silence and moments of anger - like, water ebbing and flowing from the tug of a faraway, invisible force. (58)

Such shame and fear is due to the impact of the law in the racist society. Cops would never mind, when a black does a crime against a black. This is not the case when a black stands in opposition with a white. Usually, Bigger along with his gang executes robbery only against his black folk. It never stirs up any chaos. When a hostile attitude is constructed against a white, it is not only the black individual who suffers under a racist law but the entire black folk is forced to undergo oppression

both physically and psychologically. Thus, the blacks are permitted to commit crime within their own culture but when they try to cross the periphery they are punished.

Bigger is always a victim of environmental determinism: a mean Negro who is a puppet in the hands of another environment. Among many ideas which have propounded regarding the role of physical environment or nature as an agent shaping human life, the concept of environmental determinism in American culture highlights some underlying issues. Environmental determinism is always associated with institutionalized racism and eugenics. Frenkel in his article, "Geography, Empire and Environmental Determinism" states that, "...environmental determinism itself encompasses a variety of discourses; ideas that now might be labelled as racism, imperialism and geopolitics were subsumed in its theoretical confines" (143). It originated as a set of ideas introduced into the mainstream of American thought and practice by Ellen C. Semple, on the basis of her selective interpretation of Friedrich Ratzel's nature-culture relationship. In environmental determinism the free agency of man is largely subordinated to the environment which is emphasized as the shaping force. It follows the thought that nature influences and controls human behaviour or culture. Environment holds the responsibility of shaping Bigger's inner violence and outer passivity. Living in a segregated black belt, Bigger has to face the fact that he is not the member of the society but despised being who is deprived of rights.

Bigger, though apprehensive of the move, crosses out of the Black belt into the affluent world of Mr. Dalton to get a new job, only because his family needs him. By sending Bigger into Dalton household as a live-in chauffeur, Wright plunges him swiftly and dramatically into the heart of the white world. Here the stereotypes loom more menacingly. Bigger can 'play white' with Gus and be entertained by the whites in the movie because he restricts the white world to a comfortable cast of well-defined

stock characters. Since these stereotypes are images of his own creation, he can control them. His perception of the real white world, however, is more closely represented in a vague, gothic whiteness of the blind Mrs. Dalton and her ubiquitous white cat.

The lasting presence of white oppression is also symbolized in the Dalton's family's unnamed white cat. Just like the rat which foreshadows his eventual failure and ultimate inability to face the oppressive white world. Here the rat is Bigger and the white cat symbolizes the white force. The white cat keeps on chasing the rat until the rat ends its flight with death. The cat constantly keeps watching Bigger when he is in the Dalton home: "The white cat still contemplated, him with large, moist eyes" (80). This can be seen as the watchfulness of the white world, an ever-present gaze that grants that world power over the African American community, while keeping Bigger's consciousness entangled in fear and shame. During the period of investigation regarding Mary's death, the big white cat bounded down the steps and leaped upon Bigger's shoulder and sat there. Such an act made Bigger to feel that the cat had made it easy for the detective, for it had pointed him out as the murdered of Mary. Bigger's understanding of the cat's importance makes the plot more serious and meaningful

Bigger's uncomfortable attitude at the Dalton's reflects the two separate worlds they inhabit; Bigger has literally crossed into unknown, dangerous territory. Wright expresses how a dominant white society compels black males like Bigger to have double selves, a version of W. E. B. DuBois's double consciousness. Bigger, on one hand, displays his tough masculine self among his own people; on the other hand he displays his submissive self in front of white people. Both selves are always conditioned by whites: "... his hate toward the whites; for he felt that they ruled him

by conditioning him in his relation to his own people" (145). In order to survive a racist environment he has to balance these two selves, but such a balance can never be witnessed in Bigger throughout the novel. Mr. Dalton has knowingly invited into his world a person that race and status have ignored, even though he gives money to National Association for the Advancement of Coloured people (NAACP) to assuage his conscience for renting to black people in the black belt at exorbitant price for rundown apartment. As much as Mr. Dalton and his blind wife, as well as their daughter Mary and their servant Peggy, try to make him comfortable, Bigger is too confused to understand what they are telling him. They cannot see clearly that they and Bigger inhabit two different worlds - that they know too little about each other. In contrast to his violent behaviour among his own people, when Bigger visits the rich white Daltons he can display only his submissive self.

Bigger is one of the retiring Negro in front of Mr. Dalton. He speaks the simpleton dialect which is often expected of him and appropriate to the role that the white society has designed for him. Through this, the readers witness a strong example of the way the fractured psyche reflecting the broken society. Although he undergoes the sense of fear and hate, he responds to the white servant Peggy and Mr. Dalton with a submissive "Yessum" and "Yessuh" and does not meet his future employer's gaze: "he had not raised his eyes to the level of Mr. Dalton's face once since he had seen in the house" (79). When worrying about picking up the letter he has dropped in the Dalton house, he feels totally uncomfortable for he wanted to wave his hand and wipe out the white man who was making him feel this. If not he wanted to throw himself out. He hates both the compulsory performance and Mr. Dalton, whose performance forces him to play the stereotypical Jim Crow. In a society in which a black man's violence against a white man is strictly prohibited, Bigger's

and they being white, me being here and they being there, I feel like something awful's going to happen to me" (50). When both of this assertive and submissive are threatened, he falls into a passive state in which violence is what happens to him rather than being a means of asserting his manhood.

Mr. Dalton gives Bigger the duty of driving his daughter, Mary to the university. The first night on the job, he drives Mary, but instead of going to the university, she directs him to her Communist friend, Jane Erlone. The two make him even more uncomfortable by sitting him between them, talking to him, calling on him to address them by their first names, asking him to take them to an African American dinner where his friends are present, and insisting on him eating with them, thus humiliating him in front of his friends. Mary becomes self-parody as she coaxes Bigger to help her sing a spiritual and after Jan has left, flirts with Bigger and puts her head on his shoulders. Mary and Jan, in their naïve discharge of blackness as an identity, view Bigger not as a human but as a social experiment. Member of the Communist party like Jan Erlone, though believes that they are able to look beyond race and colour, have never succeeded in regarding them as equal. Like the Dalton family and the rest of the white society, Jan and Mary are just blind to him. Their efforts to demolish race distinction in such an environment, rather than humanizing Bigger, make him feel like an animal. Such a situation unwittingly lead him into a state of traumatic psychological tension.

When Mary and Jan converse with Bigger, they pressure him to dismiss the identity he has developed from communicating with the white people. Bigger then enters into a confused state for he finds it difficult to breakdown the well-constructed submissiveness which he outpours in the presence of white people. In their misguided

attempt at improving race relations, Mary Dalton and her Communist boyfriend, Jan Erlone, succeed only in magnifying the colour-line for Bigger. Both of them use Bigger to fill a role that they are defining for him: they simply change the role from black servant to black proletarian. After dinner the drunk Mary and Jan make out in the back seat. After the car drops off Jan, Mary and Bigger drive back home, but Mary is so drunk that she needs Bigger's help to go to her room. As Bigger helps the intoxicated Mary up the stairs, the text heightens his hate for her. While helping Mary, Bigger finds himself in a rather traditional servant's role after all; having had their fun, Mary and Jan have left Bigger to protect both them and himself by cleaning up the mess.

Bigger is unable to act beyond the behaviour designed by the conditioned submissiveness that emerges in the presence of whites. This was the case with the aborted robbery of Old Blum, a passive surrender to Mr. Dalton and so on. Till the moment before Mary's murder, Bigger's psychology is ruled by this submissiveness. The following scenes portray the consequences of his fear, frustration and hate that he developed out of his submissiveness. The fracturing of Bigger's personality and the whites inability to understand the dangerous impact a racist environment has forged his consciousness both contribute to the circumstances that will lead to Mary's murder and Bigger's gain of power and meaning in life. Before his killing of Mary, Bigger's mind is saturated with the barriers and restrictions of racism but after the murder he works to keep a distance between his private thoughts and the representatives of hegemonic culture, white people. The pressure of surrendering to the white power tamed his actions for example his dream of becoming a pilot is totally shattered as he offers himself to a menial job under Mr. Dalton. But his yearning for liberation transcended all authority when he killed Mary. Wright constructs the first section in a

manner which defines Bigger's tension and gives a reference material for the causes of his later action. Social and psychological conditions are flawlessly paralleled, and each scene is an intensification of the previous ones and prefiguring of later ones.

The next chapter highlights how Bigger's fear of crossing the boundary constructed by the Jim Crow, gets totally shattered. It also discusses the great transformation within Bigger's mind which he handles with courage and intelligence. The chapter reveals a new world through which Bigger tries to gain power and meaning in life.

Chapter Three

Black Crime: Gain of Power and Identity

African American literature has from its very beginning sought to the oppressed image of the Negroes in racial discourses framed by whites. In all forms of literature, a Negro has always been represented in negative terms; and in certain occasions, if he is presented as virtuous, it is only to show that he has become so by absorbing and practicing the laws established by the white masters. The negative portrayal of the blacks can be depicted through a subgenre often referred to as the 'noir' novel or the crime thriller. Crime fiction can be seen as a genre not merely detailing the individual crime but also the process of criminalization itself. Racial and economic disruptions found its expression through the language of crime. The crime novel advance the possibility for investigating how the narration of crime might be linked to the criminalization of race.

The link between race and crime is highly influential in the 20th century as it has been in the past. Violent crime rates in the nation's biggest cities are generally understood as the reflection of the presence and behaviour of the black men, women, and children who live there. The U.S prison population is larger than at any time in the history of the penitentiary anywhere in the world. The strategies of segregation are to a larger extent responsible for forcing the Negro towards a life of crime and confinement.

Nearly half of the more than two million Americans behind bars are African Americans. The language of black criminality often means different things to different people, it is the glue that binds race to crime today as in the past. The

practice of linking crime to blacks, as a racial group, but not whites, reinforced and reproduced racial inequality.

That in a racist society blacks become criminals by virtue of their very existence is a predominant theme of Richard Wright's fiction. His protagonist runs through the factors from the illiterate victim of oppression, who acts in explicit self-defense, to the intellectual 'ethical criminal,' who acts to reshape the world to meet a self-definition. Other criminals fall between the extremes. Silas, of "Long Black Song," kills a white man who has had sexual relations with his wife. Wright implies that whether his characters become convictable criminals or not is largely a question of luck, context, and semantics. In the eyes of the dominant society, they are guilty and not to be proved innocent. Even Wright's autobiographical protagonist in *Black Boy* ultimately resorts to theft to finance his family's exodus from the South. Wright like his black heroes, realizes that the crime for which he will be punished is the crime of being black.

In *Native Son*, Wright develops most explicitly the metaphor of potential criminality that haunts much of his work. The crime for which Bigger Thomas is condemned to death, the killing of a young white woman in her bed, is a metaphor that represents the meaning of Bigger's life. *Native son* might be said to be about Bigger's perception of images. It is about his struggle to understand and control the metaphor of his own life. Bigger who begins by refusing to confront the terrible reality of his life, at the end glimpses the truth: "I didn't want to kill!.... But what I killed for, I am! (453). In *Native Son*, the process of criminalization of a black man, helps him in gaining freedom and control in life. After the crime, Bigger is transformed into a man of power. A timid black boy begins to plan perfectly in order to fool the investigating whites. Bigger, a black animal, according to whites, is able to

sketch out [illegible] skillfully, by turning his whole play against the Communists. The most important thing is that, Bigger's blind submissiveness is destroyed and he is able to see a glimpse of reality. He is also able to witness, this blindness both in blacks and in whites but in different ways. Images at first cloud the truth for Bigger, but his growing ability to understand and control them launches him towards a deepened understanding of reality.

Richard Wright's *Native Son* views the problem of racial segregation as the basis of criminalization of the entire black race. In *Native Son*, being born a black is to be branded as a potential criminal. Wright exposes the criminalization through the predicament of his protagonist, Bigger Thomas. The disturbing elements in the novel, doubtlessly forecast how the ghettoization of the blacks in unhygienic and inhuman conditions remain one of the most influential factors behind their indulgence in criminal activities. The negligence of their livelihood force blacks either into menial jobs under white masters or into petty crimes like mugging and stealing. A detailed reading of *Native Son* presents a dreadful cycle of exploitation strongly rooted in the American social order. The impact of the cycle is so strong and the duration so long that it eliminates the possibility of having any option at all. It is the blackness of their skin which transforms a black into a criminal. Identity for the blacks is racially determined. Gordon in his work, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought*, observes the construction of racial identity: "Racial constructions are leeches on all manifestations of human ways of living: language, sex, labour (material and aesthetic), socializing (reciprocal recognition), consciousness, and the 'soul' " (24).

The first section of *Native Son* overflows with the conditions of racial segregation by which Bigger is dominated and controlled. Because of the false images

or stereotypes that govern whites perception of blacks, he is offered no acceptable image of who he is or what he might become. Because of his own partial image of whites, he lives in continual hate and fear. He fragments the reality of both worlds, keeping the painful truth of his own world at bay and creating a fantasy white world with his own cast of stereotyped characters. Being always shaped by the society, Bigger was under the control of the white masters. Bigger's passivity changes when for first time he experts his violence against a white. The moment when Bigger helps Mary, he steps into the periphery constructed by the Jim Crow, for he is sexually aroused by the physique of a white woman. Taylor in his article, "The Blindness Motif in Richard Wright's *Native Son,*" claims, "However when he does finally touch (feel her breasts) and eat (kiss her) in her bedroom, Bigger's eyes are opened in that he gets a glimpse of reality..." (49).

Bigger suddenly has been dragged in between the black and white worlds than he has ever been in his life. Even though he knows of the dangers involved, he takes her in his arms to her room, where he starts to kiss and fondle her. Being filled with terror, he smothers Mary on her white bed with a pillow, when he hears the door creak and turns to see Mrs. Dalton, like a "white blur...standing by the door, silent, ghostlike" (116). Bigger has no thought of killing Mary; his intention is to keep her quite so that Mrs. Dalton will not come over to the bed and discover him. He puts first his hand and then the edge of the pillow over Mary's mouth. The pity is that Bigger succeeds only in encouraging Mrs. Dalton to approach. Attracted by the muffled noises, she moves closer to the bed. When she smells the odor of whiskey on Mary, Mrs. Dalton first becomes angry, then kneels by Mary's bed to pray before leaving the room.

Wherever one turns, it is ultimately because of the racism of white world that Bigger kills Mary. Bigger does not for a moment consider his course of action rationally. Although he knows that the white blur is Mrs. Dalton, it is not until Mary has stopped struggling that he can see Mrs. Dalton plainly. Over three hundred years of conditioning tells him the implications of his being found in the unconscious Mary's room, and he acts in response to a racial prototype rather than to the specifics of the situation. Mrs. Dalton is a white blur; Mary is a white body to be silenced; Bigger himself is much strained and a quivering black mass of terror. Without denying the truth of this view of events, Wright shows that reality is considerably more complex. Mrs. Dalton is not really a blur of white vengeance. In his terror, Bigger forgets his earlier opinion that she would always judge him fairly. He has no way of knowing that Mary has caused trouble for her parents before, that the Daltons dislike Jan, that there is a very reasonable possibility that Mrs. Dalton would believe the truth and that Mary herself probably would confirm it. With good historical reason, Bigger has feared all along that the Daltons somehow would hold him responsible for the entire evening. All along, he has known that because he is black he is guilty.

The crime has a greater impact on Bigger: it gives him an identity for the first time in his life. Not once does Bigger consider shirking responsibility for murder. As soon as he realizes that Mary is dead, he accepts the image of himself that he knows society will see. As he accepts the role society has assigned him, he comes from behind his wall of indifference. He now has a way to act, an image with which to conform, and he acts like a murderer. He begins to think, plot and plan: what to tell the Daltons, how to burn Mary's body in the furnace, how to cast the blame for Mary's disappearance on Jan and the communists, how to go about acting normally so

that no one will suspect. With a definite role to play, he feels that he can control himself and other people, even white people, for the first time. What actually has happened is that, without understanding fully, Bigger has sensed that the symbolic truth of the image is greater than the literal truth of what has occurred:

> And in a certain sense he knew that the girl's death had not been accidental. He had killed many times before, only on those other times there had been no handy victim or circumstance to make visible or dramatic his will to kill.... The hidden meaning of life - a meaning which others did not see and which he had always tried to hide - has spilled out. No; it was no accident, and he would never say that it was. (136)

In Book II, Bigger learns to handle the situations. Throwing away his sense of indifference, he is able to look directly at both the white and black worlds for the first time. At home with his family the morning after the crime, he begins to see things that he has never allowed himself to see before. He sees the shabbiness of their lives and the passivity of their response to it. He also becomes aware of another metaphor that permeates *Native Son* to the saturation point, that of blindness. As he observes his family going about their daily routine, he begins to convince himself that his murder of Mary Dalton was premeditated rather than accidental. Further, he begins to view everyone around him as being blind and himself as the only one capable of seeing or fathoming reality: "Jan was blind. Mary had been blind. Mr Dalton was blind. And Mrs Dalton was blind; yes, blind in more ways than one" (137). Such a concept plays an important role for the growth of the novel's general theme. Most of the characters in the novel are 'blind' in a figurative sense. It makes them biased or apparently charitable not knowing what the consequences are. They arouse hatred and are not

able to see reality as it is. According to Bigger, all the characters who are not aware of the ravening economy in which they are immersed are blind. Bigger's awareness of the concept of blindness, arises only after his killing of Mary Dalton. As Allan W. France in his article "Misogyny and Appropriation in Wright's *Native Son*" states that: "It is, in fact, the killing of Mary Dalton that makes Bigger aware of the general blindness. After Mary's murder he notices that those around him did not want to see what others were doing if that doing did not feed their own desires" (416).

One of the significant motifs in the literature of the western world is blindness. In *Native Son*, Wright uses blindness as a metaphor to explain the relationship between whites and blacks in America. Even upon a surface reading of the work, the reader uncovers that all of the major characters - both black and white are victims of a limited vision. They lack psychological insight or the ability to fathom reality, except from their own narrow perspective. This lack of insight can be attributed solely to the evils of the white caste system of Wright's world that brands the white man as superior and the black man as inferior.

Both blacks and whites in the novel are affected by this unjust system but in different ways. The liberal white capitalists, for example, who own the rat-infested tenements in the black Chicago neighbourhood, attempt to soothe their guilty consciences by giving huge sums of money to black recreational centres and to the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). The liberal white communists, on the other hand, who promise but never deliver freedom, really never understand the black man as an individual but only as a sociological phenomenon. Both groups are blind to the reality of their situations and to the situation of black people. The black cause is not aided by gifts of baseballs, footballs, and the pool tables from white capitalists, nor it is aided by paternalistic gestures of

white communities who see the black man only as a statistic rather than as a human being.

Just as the white characters lack psychological insight, so do the black characters also lack the ability to understand the reality of their predicament. To be sure, Bigger's entire family is blind to a great to great degree. His mother, Mrs. Thomas, for example, has absolutely no interest in civil rights nor any understanding of Bigger's frustration as a black male. Mrs. Thomas has long since given up fighting for respect from the white man, if indeed she ever thought about it. Even when the reader sees her at the end of the novel in Bigger's cell, she finds it hard to understand the circumstances of Bigger's crime or his arrest. Having little hope of the black man's ever receiving justice from the white man, she finds her solace or her escape from reality only in her fundamental religion. Biggers's girlfriend Bessie also joins this category as she never wants to face reality and blinds herself through drug and religion.

Bigger's sister, Vera also suffers from psychological blindness. Although she plays a minor role in the novel, it is clear that she lacks the ability to fathom reality. She lives continuously with fear - fear of rats, fear of herself, fear of her family, fear of the world, and certainly, fear of the white man. In fact, Vera is an emotional cripple, too frightened, even of Bigger, to fight white racism. Like Bigger's, Vera's world is filled with frustration and misery. But unlike Bigger, who ultimately rebels against the white caste system, Vera accepts the subservient role assigned to her by white society.

Bigger neither loves nor pities his sister; he merely tolerates her being part of his world. Once Bigger has broken the white man's bonds, he is not willing to live a Jim Crow existence. Vera, however, has no such challenge; she is willing to live on

the white man's terms rather than create her own. Unlike Mrs. Thomas and Vera, however, Bigger's younger brother, Buddy, has some redeeming qualities. Although he is pictured as being unwilling to challenge the status quo during most of the action of the novel, he undergoes a miraculous transformation near the end. For example, when Buddy is seen for the last time in Bigger's cell, he is no longer content to remain silent about white injustice but feels compelled to speak out aggressively about his brother's plight. Buddy finally asserts his manhood and thus is able to take of his blinders and gain insight into the white - black problem of his world. With Buddy's transformation. Wright makes it clear that Bigger is symbolically reborn in Buddy. Hence, never again will the black man be content to accept a subordinate role.

In fact Mrs. Dalton's physical blindness is symbolic of the emotional blindness that is so represented not only of the members of the Dalton household but also of the majority of the white characters in Wright's work. It is interesting to note that even the Dalton's white housekeeper, exhibits her blindness when she asks Bigger whether he is the 'Thomas boy.' Since Bigger is twenty years old, obviously he is no more a boy. Yet, to whites who have been conditioned by the white caste system, a black man is always 'a boy.' Even with servants, there is a rigid caste system, for even here the Dalton's white servant, Peggy, feels superior to Bigger, the black servant. With the entry of Mary Dalton and Jan Erlone, the blindness motif takes on added significance. Mary, the only child and rich young heiress to the Dalton fortune, and Jan her communist boyfriend, are just as removed from reality as the senior Daltons. Both of them remain ignorant, considering Bigger only as a social experiment. On the whole they are represented as threat to his security and, indeed to his very existence.

When Bigger meets Mrs. Dalton for the first time, it is obvious that she is blind to the reality of her situation and to the situation of the Bigger Thomases of the world. Because she gives millions of dollars to the blacks, she believes that she is a friend to black people. Yet she speaks to Mr. Dalton of injecting Bigger into his new surroundings, as if he were an animal to be used in a scientific environment. The images of whiteness associated with her white cat, her white hair, and her white skin are all a parody of the innocence and truth she professes to represent. Further, they become symbols of blindness in the white characters, just as darkness becomes a symbol of blindness in the black characters. And for Bigger the white cat instead of a black cat is a symbol of bad luck. With the appearance of Mrs. Dalton in her daughter's bedroom, Wright makes it clear that because Mrs. Dalton is both physically and psychologically blind, she is unaware that Bigger is in the room, just as she is unaware of the real predicament of black people. It would never draw upon someone like Mrs. Dalton, who has been isolated all her life and imprisoned by her white caste ideology, that a black man could be in her daughter's bedroom at two, early in the morning. Wright seems to imply here that it is the white world's total ignorance of blacks as real human beings that gives rise to men like Bigger Thomases. Throughout the novel, Wright uses the metaphor of blindness to illustrate the relationship between the races.

The practical implications of Bigger's awareness of everyone's blindness is that he can use it to make himself invisible as criminal. He assumes that people will see what they want to see; whatever does not fit their preconceived images will be discarded. Bigger has always known what whites want to see. The role works in two directions, pleasing them and permitting him to disguise his real feelings. Now Bigger is able to use the stereotype consciously. If he conforms well enough to the

preconceived images, no one will suspect him of being anything else. Now everyone would think that, there is no chance of a black timid Negro boy to murder and burn a a rich white girl. Living has become a great game for Bigger, a game to which only he knows the rule. Bigger has become a conscious dealer in stereotypes. He has made rapid strides in his ability to perceive and analyse.

Bigger's scheme seems to be working for a while, especially because the capitalists hate and distrust the communists; moreover, Bigger is able to manipulate the Daltons and the police because of their internalized view that Bigger is incapable of intelligent schemes such as writing ransom notes. His flight starts when an investigative journalist discovers Mary's bones in the furnace. After telling his girlfriend Bessie the whole story, Bigger involves her in his flight. Then, after raping her in an abandoned building, he murders her by hitting her several times with the brick.

The rape and murder of Bessie are a mirror image of what Bigger is thought to have done to Mary. He becomes as nearly the animal that the whites assume him to be as possible: the rape is a completely irrational act, and he bashes Bessie's skull with a brick, much as he had killed the rat. These deeds are superfluous to the plot, since it is the supposed rape and murder of the white woman for which Bigger will be condemned, not the known rape and murder of the black woman. Bigger already has accepted responsibility for raping and murdering Mary because he sees in those acts an objective correlative for his violent mental response to the white world. Of the murder, he thought that he had killed many times before, even though there were no corpse to show for it. When Bessie first points out to him that because he has destroyed Mary's body, the whites will assume that he raped her, he at first reacts with shock but then embraces this crime too.

One explanation for Bigger's irrational act that the relationship between Bessie and Bigger is completely devoid of love. Sex and lust are the only motivating forces bringing the two together. Like most of the characters in the novel, Bessie is psychologically blind in that she tries to blot out reality. Thought never penetrates either her conscious or her unconscious mind. Robotic in her action, she moves about and behaves like a wound-up baby doll, driven only by such desires as food, clothing, and shelter. Indeed, sex in itself means nothing to Bessie; it is only a means to get free alcoholic drinks.

Bigger attempts to rationalize his actions and blames others for his failures. He blames Bessie in exactly the same way that he blames Mary. From his own perspective, both Bessie and Mary are responsible for their own murders. His reasoning, like everything else in his world, is totally upside-down. Up to this point in the novel, Bigger has undergone a rebirth of sorts, but he still cannot fully see. If both Bessie and Mary had just left him alone, he reasons, he would not have murdered them. For after all, it was Bessie who kept nagging him to tell her of his scheme, and it was Mary who got drunk and made him drive to Ernie's Chicken Shack when he did not want to. The monstrousness of Bessie's murder exhilarates Bigger even more than murder of Mary. As Edward Margolies contends: "Bigger has opted to become a murderer and has freely chosen his identity. In an absurd and hostile world that denies his humanity and dichotomizes his personality, he has made a choice that somehow integrates his being" (77).

The flight takes place in the Black Belt of Chicago South side, an area covering a radius of thirty-five blocks. In the later part of Book II, as the flight escalates, the taut, tense rhythm of the narrative corresponds to a quickening pace of the flight and the pursuit. As the police inexorably close in, Bigger runs from one

street to the next and from one tenement to the next trying to escape the world. He is chased across roofs until finally he is flung down from the chimney to which he has been clinging by the pressure of the water directed at him from the hose of the fireman. In his flight through the city, he realizes that his crime has become sensational in the newspapers. He has a sense of empowerment, as everybody is talking about him; whites have reverted to stereotypes about blacks, and blacks hate him because he has given the police a good excuse to terrorize them and the other undesired groups such as the communists, members of labour unions, and worker's organizations.

At the beginning of Book III, entitled "Fate," Bigger has been caught, just like the rat he chased and killed in the opening scenes of the novel. He has been cornered by the police on a rooftop and is arrested. With his capture, at the close of Book II, Bigger is temporarily thrown into passivity. Wright's protagonist will not be destroyed, however, until the very end of the work, so that Bigger can complete the process of attaining self-awareness, begun initially with the killing of Mary. To attain this awareness, he must come to realize, at least partially, some of his own failures for which he has hitherto blamed society.

As Bigger goes through the end process of regeneration, Richard Wright makes Bigger to face some of the realities of life, but at the same time allows him to expound upon the evils of racism and its impact upon the black psyche. Throughout the novel, Bigger is victimized by the racist society. Erich Fromm cited Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud as his two greatest intellectual influences, and spent his psychoanalytic career attempting to work out his theory of 'Humanistic Psychoanalysis.' There lies also key to humanistic psychoanalysis. Freud, searching for the basic force which motivates human passions and desires believed he had found

it in libido. But powerful as the sexual drive and its derivatives are, they are by no means the most powerful forces within man and their frustration is not the cause of mental disturbance. The most powerful forces motivating man's behaviour stems from the condition of his existence, the 'human situation.' The existence of Bigger in racial situation has shaped him both as a seducer and as a murderer.

Humanistic psychoanalysis, posited that neurosis was caused, in large part, by the internalization of aberrant social values. In particular, he believed that psychological suffering was caused by the person's unconscious identification with the hatred and aggression harboured by those in power toward those who are powerless. Gold in his article "The Failed Social Legacy of Interpersonal Psychoanalysis," states that:

> Fromm (1955) found that those who are vulnerable economically, politically, and culturally because of race, gender, sexual identity, or religion, often choose to forfeit their unique potential and authenticity, in order to blend in and to obtain some small measure of freedom from hatred and insecurity. (150)

However the cost of this decision is the loss of the ability to respect and to love oneself and others, and the development of a kind of devalued character that he termed 'automaton conformity.' This term refers to the personality for whom fitting in and being a member of the group is all important. This results in a kind of psychological death that is expressed through psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, phobias or compulsions. To accomplish the task of presenting the evils of racism and its effects, Wright introduces Max, the communist lawyer, who argues Bigger's case to the jury.

One set of images that Bigger has rejected steadily throughout the book is that offered by Christianity. His mother's singing of hymns and spirituals while she works had been a continual source of annoyance to him. While he was in flight in Book II, he overheard singing from a black church. This music was full of 'surrender, endurance' and the belief that life is filled with sorrow which has to be accepted patiently. When he is visited in prison by his mother's minister, the Reverend Hammond, he is again briefly drawn toward this ordered view of reality. Although, he loathes the preacher's message, he responds to the configuration of images which the preacher presents. But Bigger will not accept his mother's solution simply as a way to die. He permits the Reverend Hammond to hang a cross around his neck. Later, when he associates that cross with the burning cross of Ku Klux Klan, he will throw the preacher, his Bible, and his cross forcibly out of his cell.

Jan Erlone visits Bigger next, and this encounter proves more significant. Because he had attempted to frame Jan for Mary's disappearance, Bigger is aroused by fear at the sight of him. But what Jan said quickly startles Bigger out of his fear. Jan says that although he was angry at first, now he understands why Bigger killed. Wright is quiet explicit about the effect Jan has on Bigger. The impact Jan has on Bigger is unique and irreversible: he offers Bigger an escape from his existence of the boundaries of the black and white worlds. Wright describes a reciprocal process that gives responsibility and control to Bigger. Because Jan sees that Bigger is human, Bigger is able to see that Jan is human. It is Bigger's recognition of Jan's humanity that breaks the colour-line for him, that makes him feel remorse, and that offers him the chance to join the human race.

The black cause is the endurance of humiliation, fear, and frustration, surrounded by white indifference. Wright makes it clear, therefore, that the black

predicament cannot be solved by dealing with effects rather than cause. The solution rests solely with the dismantling of the unjust white caste system which has helped create all the Biggers of the world. Of all the major white characters in the work, only Jan seems to recognize this fact near the end of the novel and begins to understand their guilt in the crime and his responsibility for the way in which Bigger was forced to live. Now Jan wants to break the pattern of racial vengeance by helping rather than hating Bigger, and he has a friend, a lawyer, who wants to help Bigger, too.

Wright sketches out carefully the concluding drama of Max's speech and Bigger's final response. As an organizing centre for the novel and as the core of Bigger's political consciousness, wright leaves open the possibility of a Marxist conversation experience, a rebirth in which the Communist images and symbols would lift Bigger above the dread of being black and unequal and would give meaning, pride, and dignity to his life. Throughout Book III, Bigger's feelings ebb and flow around the poles of the fear of death, his sense of himself as a black man, his depleting racial fear, hate, and shame, and his need for meaning, pride and dignity. Wright uses the political art of Max's eloquent courtroom speech to restate key insights into Bigger and what he represents. Through Max, Wright complements the inside view he has given along with an elevated outside perspective into the historical, economic, and racial forces that shaped Bigger. Max's entire strategy is to make his readers understand so that the words like 'crime' will have a new meaning, a deepened political meaning.

Having decided that he will trust no one, he is dragged into this last major cycle through a conversation with Max. Max comes to talk with Bigger in order to prepare his defence. Their talk is quiet unremarkable that Max later forgets that they had it at all, and the tremendous weight that it carries for Bigger can only be an index

to his desperation for human contact. Max asks Bigger about the crime and about his life. Some of his questions and reactions seem insensitive; he says nothing brilliant or terribly perceptive. What is remarkable from Bigger's point of view is that for the first time someone has sat and listened to him talk about how he has felt about his life. The action is all Bigger's; Max provides the platform to make his feelings known. In Max's listening, he felt a recognition of his life. He begins to wonder whether other people, even those who hate him, have the same kind of feelings that he has. He feels that possibility of oneness, a wholeness to life that he had not perceived before.

Max makes the best use of his defensive argument to release Bigger from his psychological confinement. Max explains in detail 'the way of life' the dominant society has forced on twelve million Biggers. He further adds on that, the blacks are burdened to live in the jungle as predatory animals: "You rent houses to Negroes in the Black Belt and you refuse to rent to them elsewhere. You kept Bigger Thomas in that forest" (421). Max proceeds with his argument that the relationship between the Thomas family and the Dalton family was that of renter to landlord, customer to merchant, employee to employer, "the Thomas family got poor and the Dalton family got rich" (421). By distributing money, Dalton feels that he could clear his sense of guilt that he has gained out of such a relationship.

Central to his argument is the analysis of the difference between injustice and oppression, an analysis that relates Bigger's way of life to its historical origins in slavery. If only a few people for a few years had been involved, Max argues, it would have been unjust. But slavery was not unjust, it was oppression, in short, "what is happening here today is not injustice, but oppression...." (419). To discredit Bigger and support the rape charge, Buckley established that Bigger masturbated while watching Mary in the newsreel. Wright has Max turn this charge into an indictment of

the entire process that conditioned Bigger's relation to Bessie and the world. Max argues against Buckley, stating that, Bigger's relationship with his girlfriend was also masturbatory and his relationship to the whole world was on the same plane. His entire existence was one long craving for satisfaction, with the objects of satisfaction denied and he also accuses his entire white folk for having regulated every part of the world he touched. Through the instrument of fear, whites determined the mode and quality of his consciousness. Bigger's trial becomes a forum where society and its institutions show their power and crush the individual whom they had already reduced to poverty and humiliation. Everybody involved in the trial of Bigger Thomas, knows about the bias that governs race relations and the judicial system.

Even though Bigger Thomas does not have a life after his own revolutionary pronouncement, the readers witness his trajectory from nothingness to being. Naturalism allows Richard Wright to duplicate the slave narrative's sense of annihilation: the rat-infected apartment, the impossibility of Bigger pursuing any real dream, his life within a gang, his helplessness, his entrapment by the snow storm that bars all ways out of the city, his frustration, and his violence are all elements that annihilate Bigger Thomas and other blacks. The overwhelming crushing of naturalistic elements over Bigger Thomas shows him as a victim, an object or a patient of forces he cannot control. Naturalism in Richard Wright's hands signals that Bigger Thomas is doomed, crushed, annihilated by superior forces. His act of killing sets him on a journey to defeat being a stereotype, a dead sign. He refuses to continue being acted on, being the victim. He acts instead; he becomes the agent, the subject, the doer. "I always wanted to do something" (451), he tells his lawyer and that something significant would redeem him.

Through Jan and Max, Bigger enters into a new world. The white mountain begins to crumble, and he catches a clear view of a human community. Bigger undergoes the fullest growth and gains the greatest insight into reality. He realizes for the first time who he is, understands his own actions, and takes responsibility for them. As existential man at the end of the novel, Bigger is alone but is able to comfort himself in the face of certain death. Bigger Thomas at last attains a kind of existential freedom. Although Bigger's transfiguration cannot revive him physically, he succeeds in identifying the human nature that lies deep within. The transformation of Bigger's psyche and demeanour reflect the reality of the 20th century when blacks find their way to revolt through various movements and seek freedom. His revolt and transfiguration, forever stays as a warning to the white society until they stop encouraging and celebrating racial inequality.

The next chapter substantiates the change and revolt of Bigger with Frantz Fanon's theory of violence. Bringing out the importance of violence in a young black protagonist, it also centralizes the reversal of this violence against dominant whites. Unlike the black characters who stay blind or passive under the suppressing whites, Bigger Thomas who was so long controlled, takes a daring step forward by rebelling against the racist environment. Therefore by reversing the dehumanizing attitude of the colonizer, the colonized try to gain their identity and meaning in life.

Chapter Four

Violence: An Instrument of Liberation

In American society, racial issues are never far from the fore front of social, economic, and political issues. As modern-day Americans observe and interact with this tension, particularly with acts of racially charged violence, it is necessary to question its origins, critically analyzing who is responsible for the disproportionate distribution of violence among races. In *Native Son,* Richard Wright examines how the link between race and violence leads to a great reform through the novel's main character Bigger Thomas. Bigger eventually recognizes that, violence plays an important role in moulding his identity. Black violence in the novel acts as a positive force, allowing Bigger to succeed over indifference and, for the first time, explore his identity as a human being. Anna M. Gee in her article, "Violence and Identity in Richard Wright's *Native Son*," states that:

> *Native Son* demonstrates that violence is perpetuated by white objectification of blacks. In treating blacks as objects, whites create an environment that preludes black identification as human. Whereas a lack of violence continues to obscure black identity, violence allows blacks to recognize themselves as sentient, autonomous being. (14)

The nature of violence has to be closely examined in order to understand its effects on both the blacks and whites. Violence holds the dimensions of physical and psychological domination by one group over another. Physical violence is the infliction or threat of infliction of painful injury by the use of instruments and weapons. Psychological violence makes the use of hostile behaviour such as gestures and words to cause emotional damage or harm to the victim. Both forms of violence,

when in the hands of whites work together to destroy the victim's sense of identity, freedom and self-worth. But most African American writers reverse this scene by offering violence into the hands of blacks thereby making them more powerful. In order to justify the black violence it is necessary to uplift Frantz Fanon's theory of violence, through which he reciprocates the injustice against the dominant force.

Frantz Fanon stands as a great symbolic hero among the militant blacks, and his ideas find responsive audiences in the Black Writers Congress, and in the ghettos of the Unites States. But within the academic circle, especially among the sociologists, Frantz Fanon is still a controversial figure. The main elements of his thoughts are, firstly, his stress on black consciousness and his revolt against racist colonialism; secondly, his concern for creating a new humanism; thirdly, the incorporation of existentialist and Marxist influences. Next he gives importance to the discovery of peasantry and lumpen-proletarian as new agents of revolution in the Third World; and finally, his glorification of violence. Fanon's theory of violence is the most original and most important element in his thinking.

Fanon attaches great importance to violence on several grounds. First, Fanon maintains that it is only through violence that man creates himself. Revolutionary violence frees man's consciousness and creates a new man. Fanon's idea is quite different from that of Hegel and Marx. While according to Hegel man is the product of his thought. Marx maintains that man is the product of labour. But Fanon says that man produces himself through violence. According to Sartre, Fanon makes it clear that, "the native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When his rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self" (*The Wretched of the Earth* xiv). There is also another sense in which man creates himself through violence.

Fanon maintains that colonized man finds his freedom through violence. It may be noted that for Fanon freedom implies the liberation of consciousness in such a way as to create a new man. He is convinced that individual can be converted from his previous existence as a 'thing' to his new existence as a 'human being' only through violence. Being a psychiatrist by profession, Fanon uses violence as a catharsis. He argues that violence is a cleansing force. It frees the blacks from their feelings of inferiority and humiliation; it makes them fearless and restores their self-respect. Thus Fanon believes in the purificatory role of violence.

Fanon glorifies violence because it acts as a unifying force for the native people. He maintains that it is not enough for the colonized to gain liberation as consciousness. The social and political institutions of the colonial regime ought to be completely destroyed and new ones created. In order to destroy these structures effectively, it is necessary to build solidarity among the colonized. This solidarity can be built only by violence. It binds the people together to form a collective individual. The armed struggle propels the people; it throws them in one way and in one direction. Thus the armed conflict creates a feeling of solidarity and introduces into the consciousness of the people, the ideas of a national destiny and of collective history.

Fanon maintains that violence pays not only during the colonial struggle for independence, but also in the second phase of decolonization. The second phase of decolonization is the period of national reconstruction and building up of the nation. However, people are called upon to fight against oppression; after national liberation, they are called upon to fight against poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment. Thus the struggle goes on and the people realize that life is an unending contest.

Fanon extols violence because it is a key to social truth and action. He conceives of violence as a process in which two phases can be distinguished. In the first phase, there is spontaneous outburst of violence, without organization and without any political concept, against the foreign intruder. In the second phase, it gets organized and politicized. The first phase of violence is motivated by the racial hatred, the second by political indoctrination; the first releases the pent up feelings, the second raises consciousness. The former one tends to do away with the psychological alienation of the colonized, the latter changes the capitalist colonial structures which produce such alienation. The decisive result of this process is that the colonized people lay the foundation of the new reality through their own actions. B.K. Jha in the article "Fanon's Theory of Violence: A Critique," states that: "They achieve a self-confident attitude towards their own history. They regard themselves as subject rather than object, as creator rather than creation, of history. It is in this sense that the liberating act of violence makes them aware of social truth and action" (362).

Writing as a revolutionary and psychoanalyst, Fanon developed a theory of National Liberation which showed how violence could be used to create a new society. First the blacks had to recognize that colonial society was 'violence in its natural state;' they must recognize that violence reduced them to 'natives;' by recognizing the role of violence in dehumanizing them, they rediscovered their suppressed humanity. With this heightened political consciousness they reversed the role of violence from an instrument of suppression to one of national liberation. The liberating violence was necessary for the overthrow of the colonial society formed and maintained by the violence of suppression.

Richard Wright and Frantz Fanon have been criticized by some and defended by others for the violence associated with their works. Wright was a product of the

American South, in which the violence of the slave days continued in more intense and gratuitous form, under the regime of Jim Crow. Fanon, who grew up in Martinique, where people remembered the days of slavery, later experienced the brutality of colonialism when French settlers and military tried to destroy the humanity and personality of the colonized Algerians. In his monumental work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon concludes that the relations between the colonized and colonizer: "...were marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons" (28). Colonialism was violence in its natural state. Wright's biography and fiction showed just as graphically as Fanon that the relation between black and white Americans was violence in its natural state. The collection of short stories, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and the novel *Native Son* are graphic illustrations of the way in which black life and existence were suppressed and extinguished by uncontrolled violence by whites and the racist system they maintained. In his autobiographical work *Black Boy* and in *Native Son,* Wright depicts the structure of the society created and maintained by direct brutal violence. Violence was experienced through poverty, enslavement, colonization and racial stereotyping of one set of men and women by another.

Fanon and Wright, through their works, bring out the effects of violence on the colonized. The 'native' was prevented from making eye contact or showing resentment by guns, whips, and the lynch rope but was free to beat, torture or kill his fellow. This was part of the conqueror's strategy of divide and rule, to weaken the conquered and prevent unity which would threaten the ruler's sway. In *Black Boy,* Wright relates how he was induced to fight with fellow African Americans, which his bosses bet on. Bigger Thomas was reduced by the society till his behaviour was

Fanon's 'violence in its natural state.' He was so coiled with tension that he was capable at any time of springing into action. He was prepared to kill the other members of his gang and killed his girlfriend without compunction. The killing of Mary was an accident caused by violence that held the society together with whites on top and blacks at the bottom. Bigger's consciousness was concrete, and had more in common with that of the colonized 'natives' who became conscious of their humanity, suppressed by colonial violence, and made plans to recover it: "For they [blacks] know they are animals. And at the very moment when they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory" (Fanon 8).

While Bigger awaits his trial, pestered by his counsel and the prosecution, he achieves a measure of serenity from the consciousness that murder is a very human action for which he can take responsibility without feeling any guilt, because his action was made inevitable by the violence of the racist society. This is the essence of absurdity or transcendence: that the individual could choose what was necessary. He was not the automaton, the sub-human of the racist society, which formed a link in the deterministic chain of cause and effect created by the racist other. But because of fictional convention, this was as far as Wright could go.

In Richard Wright's novel *Native Son,* as the title suggests, Bigger Thomas is native to America because he was born there but, because of the colour of his skin, is treated like a stranger. This title also signals a colonial-like situation in America in the 1930s. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon describes the cramped and dirty living apartments of the colonized: "It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal and light" (4). Fanon also points out that they occupy one part of the city while the colonizers, who live in huge

comfortable healthy houses with servants, occupy the other part. Like the former situation, Bigger is forced to live in the crowded, dirty, and poverty-stricken apartment in the South side of Chicago's black ghetto. Therefore, Bigger is physically segregated from whites. According to Fanon, the settler paints the natives as a sort of quintessence of evil and ascribes to them no positive values which is much appropriate to Bigger's situation. Fanon in his work *The Wretched of the Earth*, refers to the way the colonized people are generally dehumanized: "...when the colonialist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms" to describe them (7). Similarly in the court scene of *Native Son*, white people describe Bigger in Social Darwinist terms, such as jungle beast, black mad dog, sly thug, earliest missing link in the human species, and a monster. Considered as a hazardous animal and a threat to the society, it is not surprising that eight thousand men are hired to search for him.

In order to celebrate the success in Wright's creation of *Native Son*, it is important to note the influence of his works on the development of Fanon's theories. Finding parallels or similarities between the major events in Wright's and Fanon's works acts as a bridge to understand the relevance of colonial theories to African American literature. Since the publication of *Native Son* in 1940, Richard Wright has been compared with Theodore Dreiser, Fyodor Dostoevsky, John Steinbeck, and Charles Dickens. Wright also influenced Jean-Paul Sartre. Both Sartre and Fanon, in their writings, refer to Wright either directly or indirectly. In the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre refers to a scene from *Native Son,* in which he implicitly advocates Bigger's use of violence. Towards the end of the preface, with the murder scene from *Native Son* in mind Sartre refers to the indispensability of violence as a tool for colonized people. Fanon refers directly to *Native Son* in his most famous work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), offering a deep psychological reading

of Wright's novel. Discussing about the characteristics of blackness, Fanon identifies Bigger's extreme fear as the cause of his violence. He argues that Bigger is transfixed by fear and passivity. In Fanon's reading of the novel, Bigger, like the central character in Chester Hime's novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), puts a pause to his fear by taking action: "To put an end to his tension, he acts, he responds to the world's anticipation" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 139).

Applying Fanon's theory of violence in Wright's *Native Son*, provides much attention to the pivotal role of violence in situations where it is the only recourse left to the African Americans, respectively. This can be witnessed through Bigger's conversation with Max, and in Fanon's account of the native's reaction to work limitation. Both French Colonialism and American Jim Crowism deny work opportunities for natives. In prison, Bigger unfolds to Max that the only jobs he was interested in were joining the army and attending aviation school. But "Hell, it's a Jim Crow army," Bigger said. "All they want a black man for is to dig ditches. And in the navy, all I can do is wash dishes and scrub floors" (383). Bigger also adds that, if he had fulfilled his dream of joining the army or aviation; perhaps he would not have killed Mary. Fanon points out the colonial environment where the job opportunities for the colonized are perhaps still more limited. When Bigger pours out his anger on Mary, Fanon writes that for the colonized: "To work means to work for the death of the colonist" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 44). However, where Wright uses an unintended murder to emphasize the consequences of discrimination, Fanon maintains that the murder committed by the natives were intentional.

Another parallelism between Fanon and Wright's depiction of violence is that both believed that the colonized or the native's violence is highly reactive. Fanon accuses the white settlers of the original violence, that the settler is the bringer of

violence into the home and in the mind of the native. Since colonization is established by violence, Fanon feels that, it can only be destroyed by the same weapon. Similarly, at the beginning Bigger reacts to white violence by resorting to black-on-black violence and then later he returns his anger and violence against the whites.

Fanon proclaims that the relation between the natives and the settlers in the colony was based on violence. Violence as a form of redemption therefore forms another common ground upon which Fanon and Wright meet. Fanon's therapeutic definition of violence parallels Bigger's psychic metamorphosis after he commits his first murder. In fact, it is more likely that Bigger is Fanon's model for his theory of redemption through violence. A major difference in the use of violence between *Native Son* and the previous two works, *Lawd Today!* and Uncle Tom's Children, is that Wright not only depicted both forms of violence – internalized and externalized – in *Native Son*, but he also added another element to the use of violence, namely its power to heal and liberate. Bigger's violent act of murder is represented by Wright as having beneficial psychological effects. Before his first crime, Bigger is scared to death wherever he is forced to confront whites. He is altogether passive and distressed. He is also seriously obsessed with lack of options and meaning in life. But after his crime against a white woman, he overcomes his inaction and neurosis, and begins to see his choices more clearly. For the first time in his life, he feels powerful and begins to plan against the whites with much courage and intelligence. A timid black boy who at first hesitates to rob a white man's store, later becomes more powerful by murdering a white woman. Perhaps when Fanon wrote about the many options the native had opened to him after committing violence against white oppressors, he was affected by the above scene; Bigger's situation was not completely different from the colonial natives'. Fanon, Wright, Bigger and the colonized are all

the 'crowd imagery' discussed by Elleke Boehmer in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995). Boehmer describes 'crowd imagery' as a process of 'othering.' When the colonized were against the colonizers' demands, the European colonizers portrayed them as unruly, enigmatic, or malign and without individuality. Thus Europeans employed 'crowd imagery' to represent the colonized's "lack of character and individual will" (95).

Memmi's portrait of the colonizer in the colony, brings out five important features of the way in which the colonizer treats the colonized. First, it follows that, since the colonized is considered as inhuman, the colonizer shows no responsibility to him, just as he has no responsibility towards animals or objects. Second, the colonizer therefore becomes as indifferent as a stone to the colonized's pain and distress. Third, if one colonized person commits a mistake, then the blame and guilt rests upon the whole community as a means of intimidating them. Fourth, since the colonized is reduced to the level of a thing or an animal, he is not protected by any of the laws. If the colonized does a crime against one of their own group, the colonizer's law disregards the crime in order to let them degenerate more and more. Fifth, since the colonized are considered as animals or mere objects, they are to be segregated from the colonizers.

In *Native Son* Wright, like Memmi delineates the practices in which the colonized are categorized as an inhuman mass. In doing so, he aims to express three different things: First, he is much concerned in revealing the way white Americans treat African Americans as an anonymous collective. Second, he wants to show how African Americans respond to this treatment. Third, he wants to demonstrate what happens when an African American appropriates the idea and uses it against whites. In *Native Son*, Bigger reacts to the use of 'anonymous collectivity' by reversing its

application, using it against all white people. Indeed, his shocking decapitation and burning of Mary's body can arguably be seen as carrying out the implications of this reversal. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), throws light on Bigger's psychological suffering that was brought on him by the alienation and depersonalization that he experienced under Jim Crow system. It is necessary to understand Bigger's violence in the context of Fanon's claim about the 'cleansing' role and levelling effects of violence and his complementary claim that anti-colonial revolution will not take place unless the colonized resort to violence. In drawing on Fanon, it is important to notice that Fanon's theories about decolonization were influenced by Richard Wright's fictional representation of violence in *Native Son*.

In *Native Son*, one can see the idea of 'anonymous collectivity' at work soon after Bigger's first murder. When Mary's bones are found in the furnace, Bigger escapes from the basement and his disappearance makes the white people suspect him of both rape and murder. While on the run, Bigger grabs a newspaper from the drugstore before taking refuge in a battered building. On reading the newspaper he learns what white people say about him and how they react to his crime. Evidently they had accused him of a sex crime. The account of Mary's alleged rape and her murder had aroused the community's resentment and disorder. According to a police report, some white people were even smashing many windows in the Negro sections. It also included that in the Northern and Western neighbourhoods, white men torture several Negro men, both physically and psychologically.

After reading the newspaper, Bigger begins to wonder if black people are equally outraged by his crime. He soon learns of their attitude when he moves to a two-storey building holding the sign 'For Lease.' Here Bigger understands the ways in which the concept of 'anonymous collectivity' destroys the lives of African

Americans. From behind a thin wall inside the building, Bigger listens to a conversation between two black men called Jim and Jack. They discuss about Bigger's crime and its influence on their lives. Their conversation revolves around the question of what 'anonymous collectivity' meant for them and how it affected their livelihood. Jim says to Jack, "We's is all murderers t' them [white folks], Ah tell yuh!" (282). But Jim and Jack are also extremely angered by Bigger's action because they are among those Negroes who were dismissed from their jobs and threatened with death by a white mob because of the murder. As Jim says to Jack, "...ever' nigger looks guilty t' white folks when somebody's done a crime....Yuh see, tha' Goddamn nigger Bigger Thomas made me lose mah job....he made the white folks think we's all jus' like him!" (281, 282). Both Jack and Jim feel that they are trapped, because they know that white folks will extend their judgement of Bigger Thomas to the whole black community. Jim adds that he would surrender Bigger to the white people if he could find him. On the other side of the wall, Bigger is so angered by their conversation that he took out his gun, determined to shoot even his own people if they bothered him.

Wright also draws upon the notion of 'anonymous collectivity' to demonstrate that Bigger sees himself, other blacks and even whites, not as individuals but in terms of depersonalized types or 'collectivity.' In a conversation with Gus in the first part of the novel, Bigger shows the degree to which he has absorbed the objectifying tropes of whites when he refers to African American as 'things.' This 'anonymous collectivity' rules the way the African Americans perceive whites. In the prison, Bigger explains to Max why he was not able to accept Mary's well-intentioned offers of assistance saying, "She wasn't kind to me.... She and her kind say black folks are dogs. They don't let you do nothing but what they want" (380). Bigger refuses to

except that Mary was trying to help him because he sees her as a part of a depersonalized collective. According to Bigger, she looked and acted like other white folks. Even when Max tries to convince Bigger that he is wrong about Mary, Bigger defensively upholds his dehumanized view of her, insisting that Mary is not real to him, not a human being, and that she is of same colour as the rest of them. Even his language indicates that he has unconsciously absorbed white people's use of collective terms, terms like 'they' and 'we.'

In the novel Wright makes use of the examples of 'anonymous collectivity' several times to counteract white people's habit of depersonalization or dehumanization. In the scene where Bigger is ordered to sit between Mary and Jan in the front seat of the car, Bigger perceives them as two huge white looming walls. In another instance, when Britten, the anti-Communist private detective who helps Mr. Dalton investigate Mary's disappearance, refuses to accord individuality to Bigger, saying, "To me, a nigger's a nigger," Bigger responds to this situation by saying to himself, "Britten was familiar to him. He had met a thousand Brittens in his life" (193). Even as Bigger prepares the ransom note, he draws upon the notion of 'anonymous collectivity' to make Jan appear responsible for Mary's disappearance. Bigger was well aware that, for American whites, Jan and other Communists were regarded as potential wrongdoers and who were always interested to set things on fire. As he signs the ransom note, he makes use of the plural subject: "Not 'I.' It would be better to say 'we.' *We got your daughter*" (206). He printed it slowly in big round letters. When later he was arrested, Bigger informs his captors that he killed Mary as vengeance for being continually dehumanized by white people. In his confession, he refuses to use the pronoun 'her' while referring to Mary, but instead makes use of the pronoun 'it.' After the murder Bigger drives Mary's trunk to the station. While

day long, he thinks about the feeling of humiliation he experienced in front of Mary while she was still alive and how she filled him with fear and shame; he then understands that it was not just Mary who induced that feeling but it was white women in general. Through the window of the car Bigger looks at the black people upon the pavements and feels that those people were like him in that they were consumed by similarly hateful feelings: not only did they consider whites in multiple terms, but they also depersonalized them by likening them to an evil force of nature that continued to dominate their lives no matter how hard they tried to escape its influence.

Wright never allows Bigger to feel any remorse or regret for Mary's death. Not even in the ghastly beheading scene where, realizing that he will not be able to stuff all of Mary's body into the furnace, Bigger decides to cut her head off. Even after brutally dismembering and burning her body, he remains free of dreams, never haunted by the murder scene simply because of his depersonalized ideology. In his mind, he has simply eradicated an object. Bigger acts like a colonizer who, in Memmi's words, is unsympathetic, unregretful and indifferent to the pain, tears and suffering of the colonized. Michel Fabre asserts that Bigger forced whites "to see the world through the eyes of a black man" who eventually reduce "the whites to stereotypes, since Bigger always remains an outsider to their world" (183). Bigger might have hated white people, but this same hatred drove him to imitate their brutality. Since Bigger associates Mary with the white world, he is not able to feel any sense of regret for murdering her.

Both Mary and Jan were Communists and they believed in racial equality, but beneath all their talk of equality and their demonstrations of kindness, Bigger thinks he perceived a subtle and complex form of racism. It is true that they treated him as an

equal, but they eventually refused to see him as an individual. This is not the kind of stress on individuality implied by Bigger's criticism of Mary; instead Bigger suggests that if African Americans are to be recognized as individuals, their history of oppression must also be taken into account. An 'anonymous collectivity' cannot be substituted by anonymous individual. One might have expected that, as Communists, Mary and Jan would have understood the importance not of 'anonymous collectivity,' but of a people's sense of its own historical experience and identity.

Providing Bigger the power to act, confidence, hope, and self-respect murder also provides a platform through which he can release his sense of inferiority and his maddening fear of whites. Struggling for an answer as to why he had been drawn to murder, in particular, why he had committed his first murder, he explains to Max the liberatory role of violence: "For a little while I was free. I was doing something. It was wrong, but I was feeling all right.... But I been scared and mad all my life and after I killed that first woman, I wasn't scared no more..." (328). Thus, violence has purified and transformed Bigger. From his death-like existence Bigger is brought back to life.

Fanon was much interested in Wright's humanism. He is concerned with the humanizing effects of violence rather than its destructive side. In general, violence leads to disharmony and the formation of a disordered state. But in *Native Son*, Wright shows a world in which people are placed in situations in which they have to kill if, paradoxically, they are to remain human. Given the nature of the human being – his quest for understanding, for self-worth, for identity, for sensation – and the kind of world he lives in, killing becomes nearly unavoidable. Bigger doesn't attribute individuality to white people until he meets Jan, a Communist member, and Max, a Communist lawyer, in the prison. In fact, it is only after a long conversation with Max

that Bigger begins to change his views about white people. Only at this moment in his life, he feels that a white man is genuinely prepared to treat him as a human. Bigger asserts that if whites have recognized his humanity like Max did, he will not have committed any murders. As a result of their conversation, the mask of depersonalization is removed and Bigger is able to acknowledge Max's own humanity. It is because Max never blames Bigger for what he has done - seeing the white community as driving him to the murders - Bigger is able to recognize Max's own humanity. Thus, his conversation with Max and Jan helps him change the way he regards whites and himself.

Towards the end of Wright's *Native Son*, Bigger discovers that white men are human beings like him, and he even forgives them for hating him, and thereby feels that there is no essential difference between himself and white people. This radical change from a view that sees people only as things to the one that recognizes their humanity is described using Fanon's ideas. For Fanon, the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin. Fanon further adds on that, "his [native] world receives a fundamental jolt" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 10). The extent of such a change can be seen in the way by which Bigger addresses Jan. Having been taught always to prefix a white person's name with the word, 'Mr.,' Bigger is at first able to break this habit. At the end of the novel, Bigger intentionally drops 'Mr.' before Jan's name to show that he regards him as an equal.

At the beginning of *Native Son*, Bigger's inability to develop anything other than a depersonalized view of white people was enough to make most readers dislike him. However, at the end of the novel, he is portrayed a much more sympathetic character, largely because of the transformation in his attitude towards white people.

In the final pages of the novel, Bigger acquires more humanistic view of whites after committing two murders, and being sentenced to death.

It is striking that, Bigger's conduct in *Native Son* although belongs to the oppressed rather than the oppressor, reproduces all of these features. For example, on the one hand, the white characters in the novel do not regard Bigger as human and therefore feel no sense of responsibility towards him. Yet on the other hand, when Jan and Mary try to treat him as a human being, Bigger responds with fear, shame and anger. And he in turn takes no responsibility for them, being willing to frame Jan and other Communists for a murder he himself committed. Also, when the white characters in the novel display their indifference towards blacks, including Bigger, he returns it in a remorseless fashion. Indeed, far from portraying him as a hero, at this point in the narrative Wright suggests that he is just as racist as his white persecutors. Furthermore, Bigger's act of murder has dire consequences upon the black community in Chicago and other states because white racists use it to terrorize innocent blacks and put them in their 'place.' The reverse again is also true, with Bigger believing that all white people are accountable for his sense of fear and shame, a belief that explains why he at first despised Jan and Mary.

Bigger is extremely doubtful about the way white law works, since everything pointed to the fact that the laws of the country extended to everyone except African Americans. Early in the novel, he catches sight of Buckley's poster, at the top of which, in tall red letters it is written: "IF YOU BREAK THE LAW, YOU CAN'T WIN! (43). Not much later, the readers recognize that Bigger and his small gang robbed Negroes because they knew that the white cop will never really search for the Negroes who committed crime against other Negroes. Bigger experienced no qualms about murdering Bessie for the same reason – he knew that to the police Bessie's

death was not important and they wouldn't bother looking for her killer. Bigger had even heard that the white people were convinced when one Negro killed another, since it meant that they had one Negro less to contend with. Bigger realizes that crime, for black people, is defined through its relation to the white world. A Negro is considered as a criminal only when he attacks the white lives and their property. Finally, in the novel the moment Bigger is perceived as a threat to white people he is physically segregated from them.

Fanon, however, diverges from Wright, when he discusses about the issue of integration. He acknowledges that as part of their protest against racial issues, African Americans need to attach themselves to a cultural matrix in America, by which he means the desire to become a part of the American nation. In short Fanon wants to put forward that, by and large colonized people were against integration. In Fanon's theory of decolonization, the account of 'horizontal violence' (black-on-black violence) and 'vertical violence' (black-on-white violence). Wright gives importance to 'horizontal violence' in his first novel *Lawd Today!* before emphasizing the latter form of violence in *Uncle Tom's Children.* 'Horizontal violence' is nevertheless present in *Native Son* in the struggle between Gus and Bigger, and an example of 'vertical violence' can also be found in Bigger's decapitation of Mary. Wright claims that for the suppressed people 'horizontal violence' always precedes the act of 'vertical violence.'

Fanon substantiates, while also developing, this sequence. He agrees with Wright that unplanned 'horizontal violence' is common among the natives in the first stage of decolonization. This is the period in which the native internalizes the negative values and stereotypes of the colonizer. The 'vertical violence' occur in the second phase of the decolonization, when the colonized can take no more of the colonizer's

abuse and the contradictions of colonialism become too great to bear. At this moment, the colonized turn against the colonizer by inflicting their anger and pain on the master's body or on the bodies of their family members or loved ones.

At the end of the novel, Wright does not elaborate in any detail what is to happen in the society as a whole after the black man has recovered his humanism. Fanon develops this account by mentioning the third stage of decolonization. In this stage, new cultural forms are developed for building a new nation, one that combines modernity with tradition. Arguably, one of the reasons why Wright does not represent a third phase is because many African Americans had forgotten the knowledge of their traditional culture and home and therefore had nothing to construct in place of the colonizer's culture. Fanon states that he was much attracted to Wright's depiction of the African American's potential for revolution. Fanon also explains that Wright's first novels unravelled the Negro's guilt-complex in detail. Wright's interest in psychology and in violent criminal behaviour was another fact by which he shares a common platform with Fanon. Fanon's theory of violence in Richard Wright's *Native Son,* emphasizes the problematic, partial overlap, in situations of extreme oppression, of violence and humanism. This application of the theory of violence, takes a step forward, allowing the readers to witness the individual and collective experiences of the African Americans as a being, in important respects, not dissimilar from the experiences of the colonized in the other parts of the world. The experience of the African Americans, and the issues regarding violence, freedom and humanism that it embodies, is universal, in the sense that in this human experience one can see an intense human dilemma present in all situations of extreme oppression.

The next chapter summarizes all the ideas explained in the preceding chapters. It also discusses the possibility of creating a new world by challenging the white racist

society. This chapter focusses on the hope and identity that the author promises to instil in the hearts of the future African Americans.

Chapter Five

Summation

Richard Wright is well known in the history of African American literature for he is an essential figure in the development of African American literature, influencing such authors as Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin. He has been called one of the most powerful writers of the twentieth century. Wright began his literary career hopefully. He was the one who discovered the power of words, that words when used skillfully could be weapons, powerful instruments armed against racism. Kressner Cobb in his article, "Richard Wright: Individualism Reconsidered," states that, "Wright's sense of powerlessness had directed him to use his imagination to change his inner landscape,..." he also understood that, "...words could be used as weapons to change the environment" (339). This discovery not only transformed Wright's sense of freedom from an internal to an external one, but also partially explains his proclivity for naturalism.

With Wright's entry into the John Reed Clubs, he broadened his early discoveries. First, he clarified his own role as a writer who would use his position as a means of effecting social change. Second, he could ponder the black experience with others through an organized institution that with courage and commitment would reach other cast-out millions and thus break his own isolation and loneliness. Out of this passionate call for a common front among the disinherited, Wright responded with a burst of creative energy unparalleled in his career, an energy whose origins stem from the clarification of his role as a writer and social critic with some structure of a definitive ideology.

Wright always showers the essence of hope in the field of African American literature. His primary idea is that black writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not to encourage them, but to change them. Significantly, Wright admits that previous black writing has been a national joke created by black writers as a means to beg for their humanity or a mere form of stock entertainment for the jaded tastes of whites. Black writing never warranted serious criticism or deep concerns from white America. The blacks have accepted some form of nationalism in their lives based upon the fact that a special existence was always forced on them, that America in the manner of the lynch rope and violent confrontation segregated them even when they did not necessarily want a separate existence or identity. Therefore the black writers' words and values are wasted on a small white audience. The results of this failure by black writers to accept their racial responsibilities and role has led to isolation among Negro writers as well as between Negro and white writers. Thus, on one level Wright concludes that meaningful direction for black writers – and ultimately for the greater society – begins with their ability to accept and draw upon the rich folk culture of the oppressed Negro masses and to deepen and extend this rich tradition by standing shoulder to shoulder with black workers. No one was more aware of the importance of this marginality than Wright himself. By representing the oppressed black society, he endeavours to create a positive change in the repressed world.

In any case, Wright's position is clear. While still in the process of forming his literary career, even before he had completed any of his known creative pieces, he feels that something was missing in his imaginative efforts; his flights of imagination were too subjective and too lacking in reference to social action. He always hungered for a grasp of the framework of contemporary living. Moreover, even when Wright's

reputation was established, he continued to maintain this similar view throughout his life. The driving force behind Wright's quest might be described as the multiple dimensions of hunger. During his childhood, Wright's hunger was mostly physical due to his father's abandonment of the family when Wright was only seven years old. In fact, the absence of food and of his father became indistinguishable in the boy's mind. When, as a man of thirty-seven, Wright reflected on his boyhood and youth in the deep South, he expressed his pain through his works. He began associating the image of his father with his pangs of hunger, and whenever he felt hunger he thought of him with a deep biological bitterness. This hatred however, is not only directed against his biological father but also against a whole society that provided grounds for hunger.

Richard Wright combines a highly dramatic life, a restless intellectual career that involved him in some of the major issues of twentieth-century thought, and a literary achievement of both intrinsic artistic merit and crucial historical importance in the development of African American writing. Craven, in his work *Richard Wright in the Post-Racial Imaginary,* proclaims that,

> ...Richard Wright is not only a possible literary and political prophet of his time, but that he is perhaps one of the most plausible prophets of America's potential to transform from a deeply racist nation to a nation where the terms white and black no longer dominate national discourses about race. (1)

Racism has by no means disappeared from America's social landscape, but this does not preclude the idea that racist trends have diminished. Wright's racial thinking ultimately emerges as a social-conscious renunciation of 'race' when this term is used in ways that divide and harmfully define human beings. Wright always

provides a framework for a forward looking racial imaginary and maps out possibilities for richer and larger conjectures about race, narrative theory, and narrative form in a future projection of a post-racial America.

Wright's fiction and non-fiction demands to be taken beyond borders and boundaries, to be interpreted in relation to what it means to write African American literary text into a world literary history. Wright's strategies create discourses between distinct literary genres – between modernist, naturalist, and high cultures on the one hand, and popular pulp, and low cultures on the other. Wright's literature, travel writing, and literary journalism responded both to a social world defined by the system of Jim crow segregation and to a world that was increasingly diasporic, transatlantic, and global. Wright drew from a wide array of disciplines, movements, and genres in insisting on such a vision, including sociology, proletarian, literature, psychology, existentialism, popular culture, and Marxism. As a celebrated author, Wright spoke differently about race and identity formation during his period of exile from the United States. Wright's experiences outside the United States and his writings about them provides the contemporary reader an idea of the path he chose in craving out a space for a global humanist vision.

Literature was Wright's window on the world and himself, giving him far broader vistas than his own milieu provided. It allowed him a degree of emotional fulfilment – albeit vicariously – that he could not attain in his own life. In effect, by transforming his inner world, literature became Wright's salvation. But at the same time it alienated him from his family and the Negro community. Armed with his imagination, he brought a great reform in his hostile environment.

Richard Wright's 1940 novel, *Native Son*, was the first book by an African American writer to enjoy widespread success. In fact, Wright's novel generated much

popular and critical interest before it was even published. Soon a school of black American writers began modelling themselves after the author in the belief that powerful art about the black Americans would lead to positive political change. Wright suddenly became the most recognized black author in America.

Among his works, Wright's creation of *Native Son*, entirely changed the attitude of the blacks towards whites and vice versa. Immediately upon its publication, *Native Son* was hailed in America and beyond as the definitive 'black' novel. Critics far and wide lauded its social realism, some suggesting even as others insisted that its sustained political engagement – its attritional, unrelenting didacticism – illuminated the way forward for all black art. Irwing Howe, a Jewish American critic, viewed *Native Son* as a successful social critique. He maintained that black literature must make these kinds of political protests, and declared that *Native Son* has changed the entire racist society.

Native Son was one of the earliest successful attempts to explain the racial divide in America in terms of their social conditions imposed on African Americans by the dominant white society. The book is numbered 71 on the American Library Association's list of the 100 most frequently challenged Books of 1900-2000. The Modern Library placed it number 20 on its list of the 100 best novels of the 20th century. *Time* magazine also included the novel in its "TIME 100 Best English" – language novels from 1923 to 2005.

Native Son introduces a figure familiar to mid-twentieth century America, the lone man backed into a corner by discrimination and misunderstanding. Frustrated by racism and the limited opportunities afforded to black men in society, Bigger strikes out in a futile attempt to transgress the boundaries and limits of his position. By

creating Bigger as a symbol and his quest for meaning in life, Wright ennobled his protagonist and enlarged his novel's frame of reference.

In order to place a great responsibility on Wright's *Native Son*, he found it is necessary to include the element of race thereby making this political art much serious. Racism in America is strongly rooted, especially in the mid-twentieth century. It is due to this discrimination that the African Americans are left jobless. They suffer both socially and economically. Underemployment and poverty, gradually leads them into a world of crime. It also affects the psychology of the natives. Altogether they are the victims of the dominant white society. Racism in general induces many factors with the aim of destroying the African Americans, these include: environmental determinism, divided self and so on. These black Americans are subjugated under the order of the whites. This suppression leads to several catastrophic events by moulding the Negroes as perfect black criminals. In *Native Son*, Wright brings out the effects of racism by dividing it into two parts – before and after the murder of Mary Dalton, the daughter of Bigger's white lord.

The first part of the novel, to the core pictures out the environment in which the blacks are forced to live and their passivity as a response to the unjust law and order of the whites. In order to show how blacks have been invited to identify with national narratives of democracy, progress, and prosperity, Wright points to 'variations' of the Bigger Thomas pattern, or different ways in which blacks have reconciled their lives to the restrictions of living in a racist culture. The racist environment creates a deep impact on Bigger's psyche. His family is forced to live in the garbage dump, an apartment, so cramped and infected. This is not the case only with Bigger but all the Bigger Thomases living in a racist environment. The family's poverty and his sense of impotence makes him so frustrated. His inability to do

anything about the family's poverty, raises a question regarding his 'manhood.' This leads to the germination of the crippled psyche of Bigger.

DuBois' concept of Double Consciousness is used in expressing the divided self of Bigger. He is conflicted with the ideals and impositions of the racist society. He is unable to find consistency within himself. Double consciousness is a unique feeling aroused when the identity has been made divergent by societal law and order. Like Bigger, many African Americans are unsure as to where they stand in a society and therefore experience a behavioural crisis.

In *Native Son*, Wright continues to explore the possibility for black subjectivity through the story of Bigger Thomas, whose first day as a chauffeur for the Daltons, a wealthy white family, culminates in the accidental murder of his employer's daughter. Through Bigger's encounters with members of the Dalton household, Wright considers the way in which the black subject is constructed by the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. If the novel offers a critique of liberal solutions to racism, however, it seems even more preoccupied with attempts by blacks to grapple with the constricted forms of subjectivity available to them in Jim Crow society. In a powerful scene that evokes wartime images of American political power and industrial development, Bigger and Gus watch a commercial plane circle the sky, leaving the advertisement "Use Speed Gasoline" in its trail (47). The dialogue that accompanies this image of two young black men passively watching the plane emphasizes their exclusion from a heroic narrative of modernity and progress. This scene silences the dramatic sweep of the message – bearing plane with the material reality of racism and poverty. Tolentino in her article, "The Road Out of the Black Belt: Sociology's Fictions and Black Subjectivity," states that, "...whites are viewed as the normative protagonists in modern American culture, blacks are figured as

passive consumers and bystanders" (384). This scene functions as an allegory of racial inequality that assumes that to be a modern American citizen one has to become a white American.

Harry Stack Sullivan, an American Neo-Freudian psychiatrist, through his concept of 'interpersonal psychoanalysis,' explains the impact of poverty, racism and class discrimination on the suppressed blacks. It also provides an understanding that all persons, regardless of the race, is exposed to many other forms of injustice and discrimination.

Many critics have interpreted *Native Son* in the context of environmental determinism. Ralph Ellison later took Wright to task for environmental determinism, for his characters are always the product of their environment. This concept focusses on the role played by the environment in moulding the life of the blacks. It influences and controls the human behaviour. The entire responsibility falls on the racist environment in shaping Bigger's passive and violent behaviour. The racist society trains Bigger to be passive before white men and women. The whites wanted to showcase themselves as a pure heart, as if by working hard to get rid of this racial line. But this well-constructed racist society, is always in need of a passive black animal. This numbness stirs up rage within Bigger's mind, which he diverts it towards his fellow blacks. He gets relieved or escapes from his racial stress temporarily using horizontal violence (black-on-black violence). But immediately after his murder of Mary Dalton, this violence takes a different turn.

Ralph Ellison declares in *Shadow and Act* that in Richard Wright's fiction, the black man has a choice of one of three roles to assume: he can assume the role of passivity designed for him by the southern whites and resolve his personal conflicts through the emotional catharsis of religion. Secondly, he can strive for and establish

his own middle-class society and thereby consciously or unconsciously become the white man's accomplice in oppression. Finally, he can reject the entire southern white ideology and assume the role of a criminal, which will inevitably erupt into physical violence. In *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas chooses the latter.

The black American literature right from its origin, portrays the pains and sufferings of the oppressed. It pictures out the suppressed image of the Negroes within the frame designed by the whites. Such type of works, makes the readers to sympathize with the black protagonist. But the negative portrayal of the Negroes are represented through the crime fiction. This subgenre instils a kind of hope and freedom in the minds of the readers.

The crime fiction gives a clear idea regarding the process of criminalization. In the world population, it is mostly the African Americans who are forced towards a life of crime and confinement. From the very beginning of the 20th century, the link between race and crime is highly influential. This linking of crime to blacks, aims at producing a disordered state. In *Native Son*, the element of crime is perfectly moulded to bring out the individual potential and courage of a Negro.

Wright's fictional Bigger Thomas is an accessible and appropriate model of resistance from an important twentieth century author who revolutionized African American literature with his bold attack on taboos previously avoided by many of his peers. Wright is an important guiding voice to model because he confronted the contradictions of American promise of citizenship, opportunity, and justice in the second half of the twentieth century for the black masses – the Biggers of the world. His fictional Bigger broke silences, forcing America to address its contradictions of democracy and mistreatment of black Americans. *Native Son* and Bigger is an important marker of an unapologetic response to hate and abuse. Bigger's crime has

always been justified by some critics and readers, this is because it is not just a crime but it is a black crime. Such a black crime always involves the historical as well as the psychological factors. Before investigating and accusing the criminal it is necessary to delve into the process of criminalization.

In *Native Son,* the murder and the circumstances which surrounds it are in reality an extended metaphor. The readers are insisted to read the novel not merely as the story of a dreadful crime. But, it is necessary to delve deep into the hidden meaning of Bigger's life, as revealed by the murder, which is the original essence of *Native Son.*

It is only after the vertical (black-on-white) violence Bigger gains power and enters into the world of reality. He realizes both the blacks and whites around him are psychologically blind. The motif of blindness, is the most important factor through which Bigger takes a different turn. For the first time, he finds himself newly born into a world of reality. For Bigger, all the blacks who are ignorant of their lost culture and identity, are blind. He feels that his mother and his sister, Vera, blindly surrenders themselves under the white law and orders. They find a temporary relief by hiding behind a screen called religion. Bigger's brother though passive at the beginning, expresses his valour, when he sees Bigger suffering under unjust white orders. Bigger's family members are blind for they never mind the despotic racist white laws imposed on them.

African Americans in general never wants to get into the world of reality. They feel that this world leads them to a catastrophic end. They enjoy being safe inside a shell called racism. Though they are aware of their lost identity and culture, they remain passive trying to assimilate with the white culture. Wright wants to throw

light on this blind attitude of the blacks. He wants the African Americans to change such an attitude and to face the oppressor through protest and violence.

But this is not the case with Mrs. Dalton who is blind both physically and psychologically. The whites are also blind to reality of their situations and to the situation of the blacks. These white capitalists, in the name of service offer a huge amount of money to black recreational centres. This can be seen as a kind of generosity, but this is highly materialistic. The whites are extremely blind for they try to get rid of their guilt with the help of these false services towards blacks, instead of considering the black humanism which the oppressed world is in need of. Wright perfectly and at the right moment fixes this motif of blindness into the novel to bring Bigger into the world of reality and to place him on the platform of protest and resistance.

The theme that Bigger's killing has given him a freedom he never before had is sounded frequently: "He had murdered and created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it was the first time in his life he had had anything that others could not take from him" (135). Wright never wants to advocate murder but he brings in the element of murder for a tenor of protest that produces honest, piercing truths that outline the horrid details of state sponsored police violence against black lives and brings it to a halt. Through this murder, Wright highlights that a 'good-for-nothing' black timid boy is transformed into a black hero. A black illiterate is transformed into an intellectual, by sketching out his plan so perfectly against whites making them to wander temporarily as foolish white characters. Bigger's sketching of the ransom note in order to relieve himself from the crime showcases his courage and intelligence. Wright's representation of both the passive and resistant nature of Bigger offers hope and valour in the lives of the oppressed. The

metamorphosis in Bigger's life though leads him to physical death, its product such as power and hope which is proclaimed everywhere, is universal. The sense of freedom that Bigger receives might be short-living but he moves to a higher stage in life after he is caught and imprisoned. Bigger right from the beginning is much concerned with the meaning of his life which he attains at the very end of the novel through Jan and Max.

The final courtroom speech of Max helps Bigger to feel the essence of humanity and gain meaning in life. Another important reason for Wright's creation of this novel is to make his readers understand the importance of humanity in life especially in the life of the oppressed. This essence of humanity is expressed in detail through Max's defensive speech. An old, wise, weary Jew, deeply aware of the radical defects of the society of which he is a member, Max, in his courtroom speech, envisions a cataclysmic end to this white society and seeks desperately to avert it. With his fine sensitivity, Max understands Bigger's feeling about whites, which Bigger had conveyed to him in prison interview, and tries to make the judge understand it, using the same image of the white world as a natural force, not made of human feelings. Max's speech is, in short, an agonized plea to the judge to understand the significant position of Bigger and, by understanding, to break through the pattern of hatred and repression that makes the future of both blacks and whites fading away through the image of violence. Nor is the speech a savage attack on capitalism or on the 'guilt-of-the nation.' These words work upon Bigger. They give him what he wants. Bigger, however, accepts himself completely, including his overwhelming impulse to kill.

The frustration and the hatred of the oppressed is a natural, human condition. It is only unhealthy when he finds it extremely suffocating. But this can be used as the

motor power of an idea driving towards a goal, that can transform both the individual and society. Bigger, being sentenced to death realizes that if there were any sure and firm knowledge for him, it would have to come from himself. Wright indicates, that the inner liberation of the blacks will have to come from within themselves. *Bigger* in prison and in the face of death acquires the belief in himself and in his people that could propel the ghetto millions towards a goal that would catch the mind and body in certainty and faith.

The most important catalyst for the progress of the novel is Wright's incorporation of the element of violence. Its supreme role in the novel helps in distinguishing the complex nature of the protagonist. To justify the role of violence in the hands of the oppressed, Frantz Fanon's theory of violence and his work *The Wretched of the Earth* is injected. According to Frantz Fanon, violence is a necessary factor in the concept of anti-colonial freedom. He also feels that this violence would shatter the internal and the external struggles of the native. Fanon, through violence strives for national liberation. He wants to create a new society using a strong weapon. The blacks are in need of this weapon to overthrow the colonizer. It helps them to reverse the inhuman attitude against the whites.

The most characteristic feature of the colonial situation is racism, which underpins ideology the division of society into 'human beings' and 'natives' caused by the colonial process of production. For the former one, privilege and humanity are one and the same thing; he makes himself into a man by freely exercising his rights. As for the latter the absence of any rights sanctions his misery, his chronic hunger, his ignorance in short his subhuman status. Racial prejudice so glibly denies the native his quality of a 'human being.' Frantz Fanon in his work *The Wretched of the Earth*, explains that the oppressor assigns 'zoological terms' for the oppressed. The

oppressor thus produces and perpetuates the misery which in his view increasingly makes the oppressed a kind of creature that 'deserves such a fate.'

Through Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* the readers travel into a colonial world where they get a clear picture about the cramped and infected living apartments of the colonized. The living conditions of the blacks can be very well seen through the lens of Fanon's works. He compares the living conditions of the blacks with that of the whites. This comparison makes it clear that the blacks are segregated. This is the exact situation of Bigger's family in *Native Son.* They are segregated and are forced to live in dirty, poverty-stricken apartments in the South side of Chicago. Fanon in his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), brings out the deep psychological aspects of Bigger. Bigger's extreme fear and frustration makes him so violent. He expresses his violence not only against his fellow blacks but also against the whites. Fanon claims that violence makes them so daring and the crime committed by the blacks are intentional.

Fanon's theory of violence, explains the role of American Jim Crow in the life of the African Americans. They never allow the blacks to achieve their desires and future aspirations. Terror and exploitation dehumanize, and the exploiter uses this dehumanization as a pretext to step up his exploitation. In *Native Son,* Bigger is forced to follow his fate, by choosing a job which he totally dislikes. In his description of the dominant world Frantz Fanon insists on the creation of the violent characters, who through their violence can reform the entire racist society. Fanon throughout his work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, emphasizes the significance of violence in the colonial system. Fanon's thought, was not explicitly concerned with the colonial situation as such but dealt specifically with white racism directed against the blacks. According to Fanon, violence is always a liberating force for the natives.

He also adds that violence paves way for the purification or the catharsis of the blacks. Sharp in his work, *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, states that, according to Fanon, "...violence would be cleansing and restorative for those individuals subject to colonial rule, purging their feeling of impotence and inferiority and restoring their self-respect" (127). Readers at the beginning sympathize with Bigger, but his murdering of two women generates a kind of resentment and bitterness towards him. This displeasure disappears by highlighting Frantz Fanon's theory of violence through which Bigger's violent and indifferent nature is justified. Bigger has created a new path after committing violence against the white oppressors. This new way illuminates a new life not only for Bigger, but for the entire black community.

The guidance of Franz Fanon and Memmi's concept of 'anonymous collectivity' help in reversing the idea of depersonalization against the dominant force. Bigger in most cases is made to utilize such a concept to segregate and dehumanize the entire white society as a collective. Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1990), pictures out the complex bond that exists between the colonizer and the colonized. He suggests that the colonizer makes use of plural terms to dehumanize the colonized. The concept of 'anonymous collectivity' represents the well-built colonial structure. Within this structured rule, when a colonized person commits a mistake, its responsibility falls not only on the individual but on the entire black community.

Bigger, gradually becomes efficient in reversing the concept of 'anonymous collectivity.' This can be understood, with the a view of his typed ransom note, where he makes use of plural terms, by blaming the entire Communist group as responsible for Mary's murder. Even Max, in his courtroom speech blames not only Mr. Dalton for creating such a violent Bigger but the whole white community in creating a

number of violent Bigger Thomases in America. Altogether Memmi's concept of 'anonymous collectivity' provides courage for the blacks, triggering their actions against the racist environment and Fanon's theory of violence helps in rationalizing the violent demeanour of the blacks.

Wright's *Native Son* cannot be compressed under a single theory or concept. Apart from, interpersonal psychoanalysis, environmental determinism and theory of violence, it can also be viewed through the light of various other concepts such as existentialism, naturalism, Marxism etc. These theories also assist in establishing the uniqueness of the novel in the field of African American literature.

Through *Native Son*, Richard Wright boldly portrays the chaotic racist society, which no other writer dares to portray. This makes his work *Native Son* much serious, thereby making it an epitome in the representation of the oppressed world. Wright was very particular, that *Native Son* should never be overloaded with traumatic events that psychologically compressed the natives and made them passive by their living conditions. Through *Native Son* he forever enlightens the minds of the future African Americans. It is through violence, protest, and resistance Wright illuminates the life and spirit of the blacks. *Native Son* also provides an understanding for the readers that the struggle for equality through 'violence' will result in a 'tragic fate.' But the novel's conclusion leaves its readers with an insight that such a physical death or suffering is of no matter when one triumphs power, identity, humanity and meaning in life.

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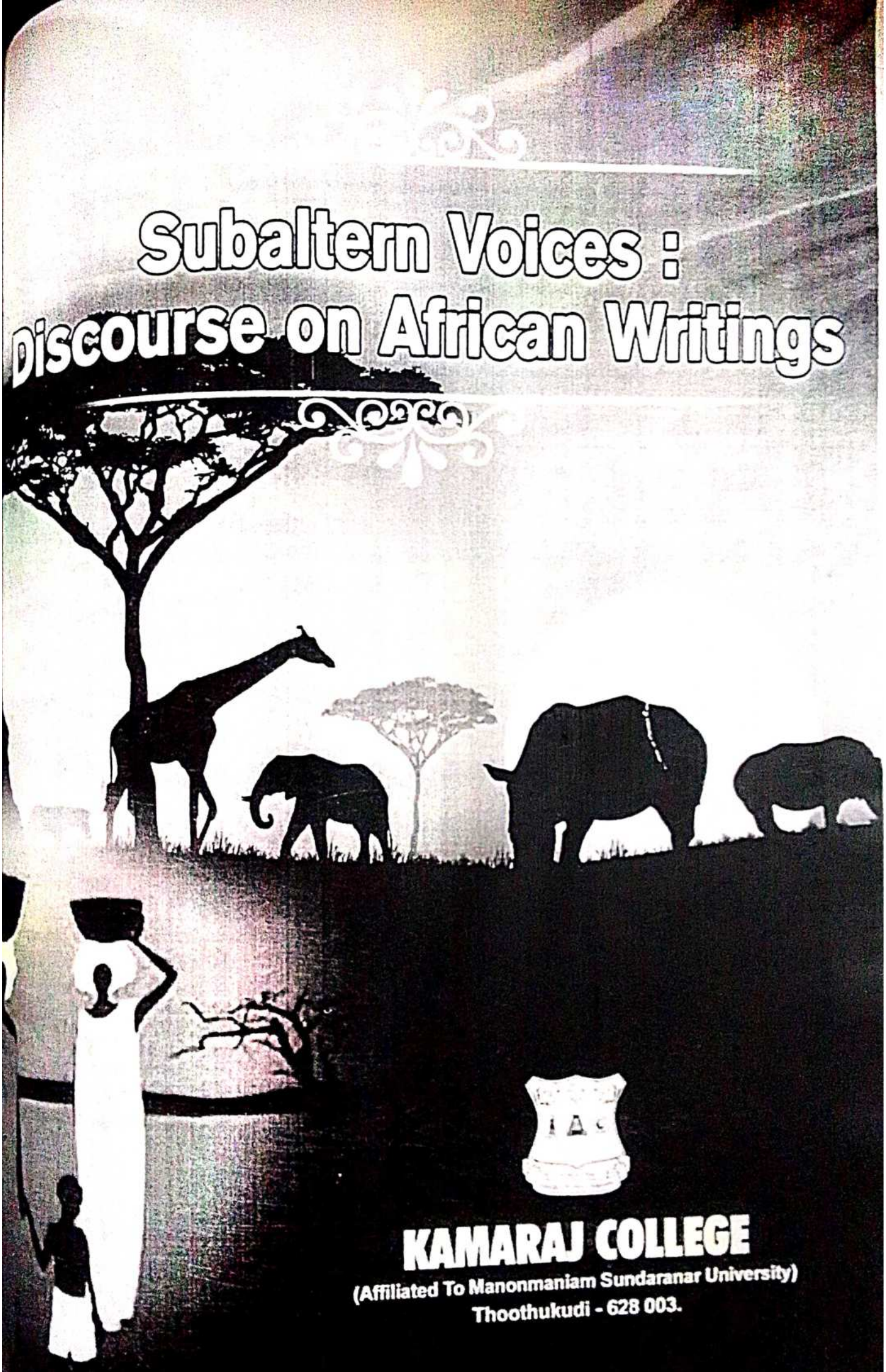
ANNEXURE

Subaltern Voices : Discourse on African Writings



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Belief Structure of African Religion

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African religions are as diverse as the African continent itself. Africa is the home of more than fifty countries, nearly every form of ecological niche found on Earth, and hundreds of ethnic groups who together speak more than thousand languages. It is not surprising, then, that this enormous range of people, cultures and modes of living would also be reflected in a diverse range of religious expressions. Religious worldviews, often unique to distinct ethnic groups, reflect people's identities and lie at the heart of how they relate to one another, to other people and to the world at large. These religious worldviews encode, as well as influence ethical practices, taboos, and the knowledge particular to each group.

John S. Mbiti claims that, "Religion has been largely responsible for shaping the character and culture of African peoples throughout the centuries. Even if it has no sacred books, it is written everywhere in the life of the people" (30). African religion is an essential part of the way of life of each people. Its influence covers all of life, from before the birth of a person to long after he has died. Africans find it useful and meaningful in their lives, and therefore they let it spread freely.

It is African religion which gives its followers a sense of security in life. Within this religious way of life, they know who they are, how to act in different situations, and how to solve their problems. This does not mean that African religion has no weakness and no false ideas. But as far as it goes, it has supplied answers to many of the problems of this life even if these may not have been the right answers in every case. Because it provides for them answers and directions in life, people are not willing to abandon it quickly, otherwise unless something else gives them an additional or greater sense of security. When Africans are converted to other religions, they often mix their traditional religion with the converted religion. In this way, they think and feel that they do not lose something valuable, but gain something from both religious systems.

Some of the world religions like Christianity and Islam have founders who have stated them. This is not the case with African Religion. John S. Mbiti, expresses his ideas in his book *Introduction to African Religion*, "it evolved slowly through many centuries, as people responded to the situations of their life and reflected upon their experiences" (16). Many factors must have played a part in its development. These include the geographical environment, the change of seasons, the power of nature and so on. To these must be added man's reflection on the universe, the question about its origin, the earth and the sky, the problem of evil and suffering, the phenomenon of nature and many other problems.

Every African has a set of beliefs and customs. Beliefs are an essential part of religion. Beliefs generally deal with religious ideas; customs deal with what people normally approve of and do. John S. Mbiti brings about the religious beliefs of the African people, he opines, "God, spirits, birth, death, the hereafter, magic, witchcraft and so on" (29). The belief structure of African traditional religion has been presented in diverse forms of different scholars of regions. For example, P. A. Talbot propagated a four- element structure consisting of polytheism, anthropomorphism, animism, and ancestral worship. For E. G. Parrinder, the structural elements are made up of Supreme Being, chief divinities, cult of divinized ancestors, and charms and amulets. However, the most acceptable belief structure of the religion has been the five hierarchical structure advocated by Bolaji Idowu. These are made up of the Supreme Being, divinities, spirits, ancestors, and magic and medicine.

The belief in the Supreme Being constitutes not just a universal belief among all Africans, but also represents

...ects and apex of the African religious belief system. ...ral forms of the dynamics of this belief have been ...erved among the people of Africa. First there is belief ...ised practical demonstration, such as having cult of ...e Supreme Being represented by religious officials and ...ecognized locations of worship. Second, there is belief ...n spiritual worship. The third form of belief is belief ...n practice. Long before the introduction of Christianity ...nd Islam, Africans not only knew and acknowledged ...he existence of a Supreme Being, but their religious ...worldviews was built around his being the source of all ...ings. Through his creative activities, humanity was ...erceived to be inseparably bound together with all other ...creations, indebted to this source of all life.

This perception is vividly demonstrated in various ways by African religious thoughts and practices. In most cases, the perception is captured in the names and attributes given to the Supreme Being by different African people. For example, in West Africa, the Yoruba people of Nigeria have many names for the Supreme Being by African people. The most distinctive among them are Olorun, which means 'owner of the heavens' and the ritual name Olodumare which means 'one who own power and authority'.

The belief in divinities stands next in rank to the Supreme Being. Africans regard divinities as assistants to the Supreme Being. They are what could be regarded as ministers in the theocratic government of the Supreme Being. There are primordial ones, believed to have been with the supreme. Being since the creation of universe. There is also the category of deified divinities; these are human beings, who after their death were raised to the level of gods. A divinity that belongs to this category in Yoruba belief is Sango, the god of thunder. The third category is made up of divinities associated with natural object such as rivers, mountains, rocks, forests and so on. With the introduction of Christianity or other religions, such as Islam, this belief with its worldview may have an added feature and it is henotheism, the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods.

The Africans are also conscious of the existence of non human beings, which are also divinities by nature, description and functions. These are known as spirits. By nature, the spirits are immaterial beings, though some of them may possess abstract powers through which they may take both human and non human forms. Non - human spirits are regarded in hierarchical order in accordance with their kind and importance, depending upon their power and the role they play in the ontological order in the spirit world. Ibigbolade S. Aderibigbe claims that in the Religious traditions of Africa , "two types of spirits are identified, natural spirits and human spirits. Nature spirits habituate trees, rivers, mountains, and other natural object. For example, human spirits among the Yoruba are called 'Iwin' or 'Irunmole' "(31). They could be either benevolent or malevolent.

The characters of *Things Fall Apart* are no exception. The people of Umuofia call upon representatives of the spirit world as a means of hospitality. They rely on their religion to settle resolutions with other tribes and to answer questions. They depend on the spirit world also to take care of punishments and in addition play a significant role on new born babies. But this strong reliance of the spirit world collapses when the white Christians invade. It is clearly seen how important the spirit world is to the people of Umuofia. They entirely depend on the spirit world to help them in times of trouble. When a nearby village has killed an Umuofian woman, they turn to their gods to see what is fit for punishments. The gods order that the village do penance for their sins towards their people. Mbaino offers a boy and a young virgin as payment "an ultimatum was immediately dispatched to Mbaino asking them to choose between war on the one hand, and on the other hand the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation" (*Things Fall Apart* 8). Another example is when the members of the clan call upon the representatives of the spirit world when consulting with Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves. They seek the spirit world to provide punishments when sacred laws of their religion are broken. Okonkwo is forced to make sacrifices to the earth goddess when he violates the Week of Peace. Twins are thought to bring bad luck for parents therefore are left to die in the Evil Forest to please the gods.

Ekwefi, Okonkwo's daughter is forced to find the stone that is linked to the spirit world. People rely on this because it is thought that the spirit of an evil child re-enters its mothers womb, as punishment they are mutilated, but if the stone is found, then the cycle of dying babies cease. The people of Umuofia depend on the representatives of the spirit world to help them with their problems specially with punishments. Chinua Achebe portrays the life and beliefs of Umuofia as a mirror of the African society.

The African belief in ancestors symbolize and actually gives meaning to the immortality of humans. It is a belief that underlines the definition of the African community of comprising both the living and the dead. It also justifies not only the practice of many African

tribes burying their dead at home, but also the elaborate funeral ceremonies that are conducted as full burial rites. If they are given an inferior burial, they believe that they incur the anger of the dead ancestor, and may ensure dire consequence for the living.

The ancestors are called different names by different people of Africa. The Igbo and Yoruba of Nigeria call them 'Ndichie' and 'Babanla' respectively. The Ashanti calls them 'Samanto' while the Ewe calls them ' Neshuwe.' The high level of significance enjoyed by the ancestral cult among Africans have led to erroneous conception that Africans worship their ancestors. The ancestors are venerated as the demonstration of respect for elders and forefathers. As these ancestors exist in the spiritual world, they are not subjected to the limitation of time and space. They consequently protect the family. It should be stressed, however, that not all people who die will automatically attain the status of an ancestor. Certain qualifications must be met. They include dying in ripe old age good death.

The ancestors are venerated in different forms. For example, among the Yoruba, the communal veneration of ancestors is annually observed in different localities in the Egungun festivals. The festivals are the time for visitation of the ancestors called 'Ara orum,' the central belief of Africans is that life would be of no value without the presence and power of ancestors.

The belief in magic and medicine has been sometimes elevated to disproportionate status in African traditional religion. These beliefs are considered to be highly significant. For example the Yoruba call the two phenomenon 'Oogun,' thereby suggesting that they are one and the same. Their distinctive nature and functionalities which are brought out in the definitions, indicate their difference in subject matter, attitude and approach. Historians, anthropologists and archaeologists have relied heavily to obtain factual depiction of the African people's diverse way of life.

Religious officials are central to the practice of African traditional religion. These officials conduct religious rituals, and act as intermediaries between the devotees and spiritual sphere. The priest and priestess preside over the activities at the shrine of the divinities, the Akan and Yoruba people have a sizable number of these officials. They are officially responsible for offering sacrifices. Another category of religious officials is that of diviners. Their main function is to communicate with the spirit world. This is very important to the Africans because it is through which they communicate with the ancestors, divinities and ultimately the Supreme Being. In *Swamp Dwellers'*, Wole Soyinka brings out a clear picture of a corrupt priest and throws light on how a priest should be. He triggers awareness in faith and belief of the African people. For which he portrays a self-centred priest Kadiye, who takes goats, ores, and other sacrifices offered by the simple minded villagers. They offer the sacrifice to appease God and want protection for their lives and crops. But the priest consumes everything, and shatters their beliefs. Soyinka, criticizes the false priest Kadiye by portraying his appearance. This can be seen through the words of Igwezu. "Ay, he is fat. He rolls himself like a fat and greasy porpoise" (101). This shows that he feeds on the sacrifices and the efforts of the people.

Sacred places are central and vital to the practical expression and functions of the religious leaders in African traditional religion. Sacred places, particularly the shrines, are very important as sources of information for African religion because they provide traditional nonoral knowledge and understanding of the African religion and their people.

Therefore, before the advent and influence of Christianity and Islam, and particularly in precolonial Africa, the beliefs and practices of African indigenous religion were firmly rooted in cosmological and cosmogenic worldviews in a number of fundamental, philosophical, and theological concepts. In many cases, Africans who have converted to other religions have still kept up their traditional beliefs and practices, combining them in a syncretic way.

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Department of English (SF)
National Level Seminar

on

SUBALTERN VOICES : DISCOURSE ON AFRICAN WRITINGS

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that ~~Dr.~~ / ~~Mr.~~ / Ms A. Rosy Agnesia, St. Mary's College, Tuticorin has ~~served as a~~ Resource Person/ Chair Person/ Participated/ Presented a paper titled Belief structure of African Religion in the National Level Seminar on

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organized by the Department of English (SF) on 30th August 2018.

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Organising Secretary

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A NATIONAL SEMINAR ON

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM: LITERATURE, THEORY AND PRACTICE

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St. Mary's College., Thoothukudi

~~chaired a session~~/participated/presented a paper on Quest for Identity Out of One's Tortured Self.

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Historical Fragments: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*

A Dissertation submitted to

St. Mary's College (Autonomous)

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Historical Fragments: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Soundarya 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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DECLARATION

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THOOTHUKUDI

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PREFACE

This dissertation entitled **Historical Fragments: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*** explores the study of the Partition history through the subaltern eyes of young girl narrator belonging to Parsi diaspora.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with the Diasporic literature with a short biography of Bapsi Sidhwa, the general characteristics of her works, her style and short summary of the novel.

The second chapter **Partition and its Repercussions** focusses attention on the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the consequences of Partition and how people suffered during Partition.

The third chapter **Religious Bigotry** throws light on the communal discord and religious intolerance in India and Pakistan, which can be registered as a period of worst religious riots in the history of humankind.

The fourth chapter **Feminine Aspects** assesses how Sidhwa represents a trauma of female characters during the chaotic time of 1947 in India and focusses on the victimisation of women and female bonding.

The fifth chapter **Summation** sums up all the highlighted aspects dealt in the preceding chapters and justifies the title of the dissertation **Historical Fragments: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man***.

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

Chapter One

Introduction

Literature is a term used to describe written or spoken material. Broadly speaking, "literature" is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, but the term is most commonly used to refer to works of the creative imagination, including works of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction. Literature is one of the fine arts that employs "language" as a medium of expression. It is essentially an expression of human feelings, emotions, sufferings and joys. Good literature is never outdated and knows no bound of place and time. Language or culture may be different but human sentiments remain essentially the same in all literatures of the world.

The word diaspora is everywhere. It had a specific and restricted meaning referring to the dispersal and the exile of the Jews. In the twentieth century, the meaning of the term gradually expanded to cover the involuntary dispersal of other populations, especially Armenians and people of African descent. Since the 1980's, diaspora has proliferated to a remarkable extent, to the point where it is now applied to migrants of almost every kind.

The Greek noun diaspora derives from the verb *diaspeirein*, a compound of "dia" and "speirein", literally meaning 'to scatter', 'to spread' or 'to disperse'. In all of its various uses, diaspora has something to do with scattering and dispersal. It was originally used to refer to the dispersion of Jews after the Babylonian exile in 586 BC and to the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities scattered in exile outside Palestine. In current parlance, the term is applied to describe any group of people who [illegible]read. In its original Greek sense, diaspora referred to a destructive process,

rather than to a place, a group of people, or a compassionate pattern of population dispersal.

Diaspora refers to a particular kind of migration. Most scientists agree that at least a few of the following characteristics are crucial to describe a diaspora. Dispersal from an original homeland to two or more countries. The causes for the dispersal may vary from traumatic experiences to the search for work, or the pursuit of a trade or other ambitions. There must be a collective often idealised – memory, myth of the homeland. In some cases, there is commitment to creating or maintaining this homeland, as in the case with some Sikhs and their efforts to create an independent Kalisthan, or the Jews and their relation to Israel. A myth of returning to homeland is grounded in a strong ethnic consciousness of migrants abroad, which may have prevented them from assimilating in the local society. There is a sense of empathy and solidarity with similar groups in the homeland. Diaspora is a contemporary term used to describe practically any population considered 'deterritorialised' or 'transnational', whose cultural origins are said to have risen in a nation other than the one in which they currently reside and whose social, economic, and political networks cross nation and state borders to span the entire globe.

Using diaspora to understand migration does not mean that one must remain trapped within the theological confines of the original Jewish model. Throughout history, migrants of many different kinds have experienced their migrants as coercive, made connections with their kinsmen abroad, and dreamed of returning to a homeland.

The notion of the diaspora straddles some of the most fundamental and problematic divides in the migration field. Among these is the distinction between so-

called 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration, or in broad terms between labour or economic migrants and refugees or forced migrants. Another key division is that between analysis of migration itself on one hand – the process, experience and dynamics of mobility – and on the other the outcomes of migration, such as the integration, assimilation, segregation or exclusion of people of migrant background and the changes in society that may result. These divisions are found both in analysis of migration and in the migration policy field. To some extent the notion of diaspora helps to reconcile these divides in migration discourse.

Migration and dispersion are natural phenomena. Migration does not mean the mere physical movement of people. Migration carry with them a sociocultural baggage which among other things consists of a predefined social identity, set of religious beliefs and practices, a framework of norms and values governing family and kinship organisation, the food habits and language. Kim Knott in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersection, Identities* says, "The migrants are not inevitably cut off completely from the land of their breed. They themselves may retain physical and mental contact with their homeland, often characterised by what is called the myth of return" (36).

This is very much disturbing to the migrant people to live in a land which is different from that of their own; they find it difficult to mingle with the native people, native culture of the adoptive land. This is the case also with the native people. All these kind of experiences have been portrayed in the literary works of some of the migrant people. These literary works are popularly known as Diasporic literature.

Migration takes place due to various reasons and in the Indian context the migratory movements were governed by historical, political, economic reasons

including higher education, better prospects and marriage. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffers is genuine and intense; but in recent times it has been seen that this concept has been minimised and made less intense through their social networking and sense of solidarity.

Immigrants, the people who come to live permanently in the foreign land play a significant role in this process. A diaspora is the group of people who are living away from their original homeland and share common experiences. Diasporic literature is a dynamic branch and it is a very vast concept and an umbrella term that includes it in all those literary works written by the authors outside their native country, but these works are associated with native culture and background. In this wide context, all those writers can be regarded as diasporic writers, who write outside their country but remained related to their homeland through their works. Diasporic literature has its roots in the sense of loss and alienation, which emerged as a result of migration and expatriation.

Generally, diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity. It also addresses issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. It reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of the immigrant settlement.

If the modern condition is characterised by alienation, the literary text born out of and speaking back to a diasporic history is increasingly seen as emblematic, even revelatory of that condition. Diasporic literary texts by writers of South Asian heritage from V.S. Naipaul to Salman Rushdie, from Hanif Hureshi to Jhumpa Lahiri, writing from locations as diverse as Trinidad, New York, London and Boston, have offered through the robustness of critical reception and popularity, some of the most

meaningful and illuminating commentaries on modernity's intimate relationship to diaspora.

Diasporic writing as a creative genre encapsulates the shared social and psychological preoccupations of whole dispersed generations and their offspring. Diaspora, is therefore, a scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which are a new creation and a fight to survive. After independence, the women novelists of quality have amazingly attained new heights both inside and outside India.

Diasporic literature or Immigrant literature is generally referred to the literary work done by immigrants. It is a dynamic branch inspired by the vast spread of migration, immigration or emigration, diasporic literature gained prominence in universal literature in a backdrop of postcolonial context, simultaneously developing with postcolonial literature. The salient characteristic of diasporic literature is that it is not based on any theory or philosophy but on the life experiences of immigrants. It creates an emotional haven to its diaspora by discussing their own physical and emotional conflicts. Diasporic literature focusses mainly on themes like discrimination, cultural shock, orientalism, identity crisis, alienation and displacement, dilemma, depression, hybridity and generational gap.

The diasporic literature is fascinating but it is equally complex and unique. Many writers got recognition initially as the proponents of a new genre belonging exclusively to overseas Indians. But today, many writers have become mainstream contributors to global literature. They have come of age and get counted without their identity as migrants with their feeling of estrangement with both the homeland and the host countries.

Interestingly, the terms 'diaspora', 'exile', 'alienation', 'expatriation', are synonymous and possess an ambiguous status of being both a refugee and an ambassador. As a refugee, he seeks security and protection and as an ambassador, projects his own culture and helps to enhance its comprehensibility. The term 'exile' is resonant with ideas of forced emigration, displacement, social and political marginalisation of an individual or a group of refugees. It alights to experiences of loneliness, foreignness, homesickness and an enduring longing to immigrate to the place of origin. The Latin notions *exilum* and *exul* denote a temporary banishment and also an asylum.

The chief characteristic features of the diasporic writings are the quest for identity, uprooting and rerooting, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia, nagging sense of guilt etc. The diasporic writers turn to their homeland for various reasons. For e.g. V.S. Naipaul who is in a perpetual quest for his roots turns to India for the same. Rushdie visits India to mythologise its history. Mistry visits and revisits India for a kind of revitalization and to reenergise his aching soul. Bharati Mukherjee's childhood memories harken her time and again. All the same it is necessary to realise the importance of cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls which finally helps in the emergence of the new culture. The diasporic writings also known as the theory of migrancy help to generate aesthetic evaluation, negotiate with cultural constructs and aid the emergence of a new hybridity.

The notion of South Asian identity promotes a unity and solidarity among the 'imagined community' of the South Asian diaspora. In South Asian history, the subcontinent of India has undergone major partition into India and Pakistan in 1947. The division was based on two nation theory with the disagreement that the Hindus

and the Muslims cannot live together as one nation since both have distinct social, cultural and religious identities. The Muslim majority regions of Punjab and Bengal were divided with west Punjab and east Bengal forming West and East Pakistan, and India in the middle of the two. This resulted in massive and vehement migration of the people across the divide. Muslims moved into Pakistan, and Sikhs and Hindus moved into India with the panorama of peaceful and better living, with their own religious as well as ethnic identities.

Many Indian writers have written about the mass transfer of Hindus and Muslims on the side of the border, plus their loss of property, lives, and women's rape. Such women when rescued were left as unclean and dishonoured. Kushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan* depicts such horrors with accuracy. The novels of Amrita Pritam such as *A Line of Water* (1975) and *The Death of a City* (1976) reflect the author going from Lahore to New Delhi as a refugee. The Pakistani Parsi writer Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-candy-man* (1988) approaches the theme with an unusually comic touch which is related with the story of an abducted Hindu Ayah.

The women who have roots in South Asia and are living in the diaspora have issues including migration and settlement, self identity, the role of the family and marriage are seen in all the works with varying degrees regardless the author is Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani; Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. The details may be specific to religion or nation, but as will become apparent in what follows the broad themes are shared by South Asian women in the diaspora.

Emerging South Asian diasporic writers writing in English from Pakistan of the last half of the twentieth century are now regarded as pioneers of Pakistani Diaspora of English fiction. English fiction by the writers prior to the beginning of

this century had a dominant postcolonial perspective; an example of which can be seen in the writings of Bapsi Sidhwa, Hanif Kureishi, Sara Suleri, Shahid Suhrawardy, Ahmed Ali, Alamgir Hashmi, Taufiq Rafat, Daud Kamal, Maki Kureishi and others. The second generation writers written their works mostly in the new century. Their writings reflect a poignant bend in the postcolonial view as "hybridity". Hybridity is neither the one nor the other struggling to free itself from a past ancestry, and which values the 'pure' over its threatening opposite, the 'composite'.

While the first generation immigrants from India costly nurse their grievances against the homeland, the second and third generations look at India without prejudices and take pride in India's accomplishments. For them, India is a brand name, which they can use for their own advancement and they become true asserts for the country. This feeling of elation at India's exalted status is present in the writings of young people.

Partition created the modern South Asian subject as perpetually fugitive and fragmented. Thinking of Partition literature as a part of South Asian diasporic literature helps explicate the interest in Partition displayed by another category of diasporic South Asian writer: one whose life is based in several locations including those in South Asia, and who is, hence, transnational. The life and writing of the transnational author straddle the binaries of 'homeland' and 'diaspora' and, indeed, may extend to imaginative investment in diasporas not 'properly' his or her own.

All creative writing catalysed through diaspora arises out of the tension between memory and nostalgia. This preoccupation with belonging is figured through a characteristic dialogue, from a distance, with the concept of 'homeland'. The diasporic novel rewrites the master narrative of official histories of how diasporas

came to be, by focusing on the micro-histories of families and individuals, located at dislocated home in the world.

The writers in English from Pakistan mainly depicted the Muslim consciousness and sensibility in their writings that has neglected before partition. The ideas of liberalism and socialism that infused the Muslim writers, who started writing before the partition of India in 1947 were pulled into the background of Pakistani Literature.

A member of Parsi community, Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi, a part of India on August 11, 1938. She spent her first seven years as an Indian citizen in the plains of Lahore. In 1945, after India was divided, she became a Pakistani. At the age of two, she contracted polio and as a consequence received no formal schooling until she was fourteen. By that time several operations had given her greater mobility, and she was able to lead a fairly normal life. She continued to spend much of her time reading virtually every book she could get her hands on which prepared her handsomely for her career as a writer. She has graduated from Kinnard College for Women, Lahore. When she was still nineteen years old, she fell in love with a Bombay businessman and married him. But this marriage did not last long. After the breakup, she took to writing. Later she got married to Noshirwan, a respected businessman from Lahore. She bore three children in rapid succession and spent a number of years as a house wife in a privileged commercial family in Lahore.

Sidhwa's primary interests were women's rights and social investigation. In 1970, she had taken a part of women's delegation to Iran and Turkey. As an activist among Asian women, she represented Pakistan at the Asian Women's Congress in 1975. She actively involved herself in setting up the Destitute Women's and

Children's home in Lahore. As a young girl, Sidhwa witnessed the bloody Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 in which seven million Muslims and five million Hindus were uprooted in the largest, most terrible exchange of population that history has known.

Sidhwa expresses the strong relationship between community, religion, class to cultural identity and social structure which made an intellectual effort to analyse the various dimensions of feminism and has identified feminine subjugation as a social disease caused by patriarchal, class based and economic factors.

The Parsees are of ethno religious minorities in India, living mostly in the west coast of the subcontinent, especially in Bombay. In Pakistan, most Parsees reside in Karachi and Lahore. The Parsees have the feeling of group identity and active participation in the social, cultural and economic life of both India and Pakistan. The Parsees have become the most westernised of all Indian communities. Parsi writers have contributed their might to Literature. They have made an enduring mark in the literary arena.

Sidhwa has a significant place in English fiction as one of the major South-Asian novelists. She is an author of internationally acclaimed novels: *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), *An American Brat* (1994), *Water* (2006) and *Their Language of Love* (2013) and has been translated into several languages. She was appointed a Bunting fellow at Radcliffe in 1986-1987 and in 1987 was also awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Grant for Creative Writing. She taught in the graduate program at Columbia University in 1989 and prior to that at Rice University and at the University of Texas at Houston. In 1991, she received the Sitara - I - Imtiaz, Pakistan's highest national honour in the arts in 1991

as well as the Literature Prize in Germany for *Cracking India*. A Writer's Grant of $105,000 was awarded to her by the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund in 1993. Sidhwa's work has been translated into German, French, and Russian. She resides in the United States but frequently travels to Pakistan.

She is known for her racy style, wit, narrative technique and thematic orientation. A widely acclaimed feminist novelist. She is one of the few women writers who bring theory into practice; for in her own life she has done a lot for the betterment of women and children. Her life revolves around writing about women's issues and having their abuses redressed. Sidhwa emerges as a real voice of women of the Asian subcontinent who are expected to have silenced voices. Sidhwa portrays women from a feminist perspective and endeavours to do full justice to her characters. She has made a conscious effort to change the image of woman through her novels. R.K. Dhawan in *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa* says:

> Her novel reflects the recent trend of globalization, the concept of the world as a global village and increasing movement of professionals ('brain drain') from the Third World to First World nations like the USA, England, Australia and Canada. As people move from one part of the world to another, national boundaries dissolve, the formation and maintenance of community takes on new dimensions. (22)

Sidhwa's novels are notably different from one another in content, form, subject and treatment. Her first novel, *The Crow Eaters* published in 1978 deals with the lives and fortunes of the Parsi Junglewalla family in British India. The narrative adroitly adopts comic and ironic modes directed towards the realisation of Zoroastrian values in the lives of the members of the community. It is an interesting story of

Faredoon Junglewalla (Freddy) who leaves his ancestral village finding no future there for Punjab along with his pregnant wife, infant daughter and a widowed mother-in-law. He travels through the forests of central India on a bullock cart facing a lot of difficulties to arrive the busting city of Lahore. Despite the ragging of his unbearable mother-in-law, Freddy's business and family flourish, and he soon become a patriarchal figure in the Parsi community. The novel as an endearing family provides a vibrant window onto life and sociocultural milieu in India under the British colonial rule and the nation on the threshold of historic transformation in Pakistan. The first of Sidhwa's novels is a story of marriage and commitment, of the conflict between adherence to tradition and the indomitable force of a women's spirit.

The Pakistani Bride (1983) deals with the repression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The novel is based on a true story narrated to Sidhwa when with her family, she stayed at an army camp in the remotest regions of the Karakoram Mountains. A colonel in charge of place and some engineers narrated the story of a girl from the plains. She was being taken across the Indus by an old tribal to marry his nephew. But the girl ran away after the marriage and hid herself in the cold mountains for fourteen days. The tribal men and her husband chased her and caught her. After beating her severely, they threw her down into the turbulent waters of the Indus. Sidhwa with the help of her imagination and craftsmanship fictionalised this true story. The girl is named as Zaitoon. This novel provides a realistic picture of the treatment of women in Parsi society. In this novel, Sidhwa also introduces a parallel story of an America girl and her flirtation with Major Mushtaq of Pakistan Army. In the main plot, Zaitoon is fascinated by her father's vision of the lost mountain paradise. When she is married in the mountains, she realises that her romantic dreams of mountain life were only dreams. Reality was shocking. The novel ends with

Zaitoon's epic struggle to find the bridge and cross it. In this novel, Sidhwa makes a conscious departure from the ending of the true story and the girl is not killed but she safely crosses the bridge.

In her next novel *An American Brat* (1993), Sidhwa moves the locale from Pakistan to the Unites States of America. In it, she takes up the issues like globalization, brain-drain from the third world. In this novel, Sidhwa handles the change in the theme and locale with a lot of humour and from a contemporary perspective. This novel marks her entry into the orbit of diasporic fiction in which other South Asian novelists have already made a mark. The genius of Sidhwa as a writer is better revealed in her novel *An American Brat* which brings out her gift of keen observation, heightened sense of story and character along with her moral vision of her Parsi community. In the narrative of *An American Brat*, the protagonist Feroza Ginwalla the rebellious daughter of Cyrus and Zareen Ginwalla moves from Gulberg, Lahore to Denver, Colorado, USA with her ambitious hopes and dreams. The novelist delineates the character of Feroza adapting to an alien culture and the stress that enlarges when colliding cultures clash. On many occasions, Feroza finds herself in an awkward situation whom she fails to understand the nuances of a foreign language. Her roommate Joe teaches her various Americanism. This helps Firoza to grow and make herself fit in a new system. In the last pages of her novel, Firoza has shed her old persona of Lahore and she finds herself a new with an independent attitude. This novel caused alarm in the Parsi orthodox people.

Sidhwa's *Water* (2006) is the basis of the film by Deepa Mehta. In this deeply moving story, Sidhwa narrates the pathetic state of the widows in the ashram at Benares. The novel revolves around a six years old Chuyia who belongs to a Brahmin family. She lives a very carefree life in the village with her pet Tun-Tun. According to

Hindu culture, a girl must be married before she attain puberty. So, when she was at the age of six, she got married to a forty four year widower Hira Lal. After her marriage, she was expected to live in her parent's home before her womanhood blossoms. When Chuyia was at the age of eight, her father brings her the news that her husband is dying. She accompanied her father and her mother-in-law to Varanasi with her dying husband. To her fate, her husband died in Varanasi, and she becomes widow at the age of eight. The novel *Water* is not alone the story of Chuyia, who becomes a catalyst for the change in the lives of widows, but it is the story of all the widows in colonial India. It is a tribute to the victims and survivors of those days. Woman is the pillar of the society supporting, strengthening and enduring everyone around her. She is the guardian of culture and the advocate of tolerance and acceptance. The expressions used in the novel, resourcefulness in characterisation are the major strengths of the novel.

The *Ice-candy-man* (1988) deals with the theme of Partition of the Indian subcontinent and its effects on the minority communities living with the majority communities for ages together. The novel presents a catalogue of events as seen through a child's eye, only half understanding the perplexing adult word of shifting loyalties and adult emotions. The narrator is a Parsi girl, growing up in the busy city of Lahore during the most tumultuous days of the Partition. This novel has thus historical importance of its being the first novel of a Parsee novelist in which one gets the Parsee perception of the partition, that too from a child's point of view. This has provided Sidhwa with ample opportunity to concentrate her attention on the peach loving and industrious miniscule Parsee community and its actions and reactions to the disastrous and dehumanising effects of the partition on the subcontinent in general and the Parsee community in particular.

This novel narrates about the exodus of Parsees from Pakistan to India during prepartition era and in the meanwhile explains their customs, moors, culture, religious practices and politics. Sidhwa presents several rude incidents of Indian subcontinent of preindependence days. Sidhwa takes the liberty to voice truthfully the isolation and aloofness from which her community suffers. Lenny, the daughter of a well to do jobholder, is the narrator of the story of the novel. She presets the panoramic views of existing social milieu along with turmoil situation of partition of India and formation of Pakistan. The novel deals with the monumental and potent slice of Indian History.

The novel sparkles with a whole world teeming with a lot of details of surrounding day to day life with all the political, social, and religious import. The novel may be regarded as a fictional biography of Sidhwa, chronicles the exodus of Parsees to India during preindependence era and truthfully voices the sociocultural suffering and shortcomings of her own Parsi community Lenny who expresses it as Godmother, slave sister, electric aunt and my nuclear family are reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures.

In *Ice-candy-man*, almost all the major incidents of Indian subcontinent are shown. Besides end of the Second World War, India's independence and partition of the subcontinent into Pakistan and India revolved around Ayah. She is a symbol of realism larger than life reality and shows us everyone—beggars, holy man, hawkers, cart drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists, lust after her.

Almost all the major characters of the novel are unpredictable, but they are convincing. Ice-candy-man changes his profession and becomes hawker to marauder. Ayah, for instance, at the outwit is just a maid at the Sethi's residence and there she looks after Lenny. All of sudden she is swept off from her cozy corner into a vortex of

political upheaval. She gets the coarse treatment meted out to her for no fault of hers. She becomes just a puppet in the hands of a fate and becomes the replica of the several millions of displaced, looted and raped Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs during one of the hardest sociopolitical phases in the history of the subcontinent. Sidhwa performs the remarkable feat of bringing together the real pictures of Parsi family life and the stark drama and horrors of the riots and massacres of 1947.

Ayah was lifted from the house of Lenny by the rioters and thus she lived in the sense of humiliation and guilty feeling for a long time. However, with sincere efforts, perseverance and strength of mind, she traces Ayah in the captivity of the rogue Ice-candy-man, who under the deception of marriage forces her into prostitution at Hira Mandi. She is freed and brought to the rehabilitation camp to come back to her roots at Amritsar after partition.

Once it is decided to divide Punjab between India and Pakistan, rioting starts and the simmering religious tensions continues—"The Sikhs, only their rowdy little boys running … are keeping mostly to themselves … We walk past at Muslim family. With their burka-veiled women they too sit apart … A group of smooth skinned Brahmins and their pampered male offspring form a tight circle" (97). Even the police are targeted and there is towering inferno in Lahore. Lenny observes: "The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot I think my flesh and cloths will catch fire. I start screaming: hysterically sobbing" (137). *Ice-candy-man* deserves to be ranked amongst the most authentic and best books on the Partition of India. The novel was renamed as *Cracking India* for publication in USA.

It is a reinscription of male texts on the Partition, which valorises objective reality in the narrative and ignores the experimental realm of the woman. Sidhwa uses

again the women as victim paradigm but here the victimisation is a result of a collective action that is the communal riots that followed the Partition. Riots are largely orchestrated by males and become a signifier of a collective male victimiser. The maid in the Parsi family at Lahore, the 'Ayah,' is the one who suffers the impact of Partition the most.

The *Ice-candy-man* is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the cataclysmic event is depicted. It is the only novel written by a Parsi on the theme of Partition. While the novel shows in the beginning the non-committal attitude of the Parsi community towards the flux in which the various communities of India found themselves at the beginning of the twentieth century, it distills the love hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims through the consciousness and point of view of Lenny, and unusually precocious five year old Parsi girl.

The novel essentially foregrounds the gendered premises of traditional myths and the male centered social and ethical codes of conduct which need to be questioned and redefined in the context of the lives of contemporary Indian women. For women in India, gender has always been and still is, to a large extent, a prescriptive factor in life which in interaction with the ideologies of caste, class and religion, circumscribes for them the socially permissible range of experiences and determines their response to all that emerges.

In the works of Sidhwa, borders act as important agents for the actions of her texts. These borders are not only the physical borders between countries and neighborhoods but also the invisible borders placed between religious groups, between classes, between stages of development, and between women and men.

These physical and psychic borders often represent limitations placed on the characters in their struggle for entry into the dominant social structure.

The uniqueness of Sidhwa as a feminist novelist consists in her women characters refusal to accept conventional roles. Though they are tortured in various ways by men and the manmade social, religious and cultural systems, they are not ready to surrender and accept their sufferings as their fate. Sidhwa's characterisation with psychological overtones has enabled her to demonstrate that society is more powerful than its members. Unlike radical feminist writers, Sidhwa hasn't made her novels a source of mere criticism of males. Though some of her male characters are good-hearted, they become cruel just to uphold their social ethics because the entire code rests on their notion of sexual superiority of men over women. So, the honour of a man is judged by how well he can oppress his woman. Being social animals, they cannot come out of the shadow of society.

The following chapter focusses on the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and narrates about the consequences of Partition with the Parsi point of view. The horrors of Partition are aptly depicted by Sidhwa without histrionics or preaching.

Chapter Two

Partition and its Repercussions

Indian partition was a horrible event in the history of Twentieth century world. The Hindus and the Muslims fought against each other fiercely. The trauma of the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the creation of a separate state Pakistan for Muslims, when India got Independence in 1947 is a lasting theme in Indian literatures. Many Indian writers have written about the mass transfer of Hindus and Muslims on the sides of border, plus their loss of property, lives, and women's rape. Such women when rescued were left as unclean and dishonoured.

India having been ruled by the British for nearly two hundred years got its freedom only in 1947. But the losses it incurred out of its struggle for independence are innumerable. Obviously one of them is partition. The country was broken down in 1947 because of Muslim League's misguided efforts and India lost its territories on both its sides.

Indeed, Lord Mountbatten implemented his plan of partition and Gandhi and Nehru nodded to it. But the fanatic Hindus-Muslims misused the genesis of partition and saw that a river of blood drained on either side.

The partition horror accompanying the transfer of population has been a major theme in Indo-Anglican writings. Even many Pakistani writers have, like their Indian counterparts, written much about the partition theme. Although the treatment different writers make use of, differs from one another, the subject is the same and the same is ably exploited by writers. Even though many Pakistani and Bangladeshi writers have written about the horrible event of partition in the Indian subcontinent, Indian writers have an edge upon them.

The division of India and Pakistan was based on Two Nation theory. It means the cultural, political, religious, economic and social dissimilarities between the two major communities, Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent. This theory means that there were two nations in the subcontinent, the Hindus and the Muslims. Subcontinent consists of two different communities having their own philosophy of life. This theory gave rise to two distinct political ideologies that was responsible for the partition of India into two independent states.

The Two Nation theory was the basis of the struggle for the creation of Pakistan as an independent state. It states that Muslims and Hindus are two separate nations and therefore Muslims should be able to have their own separate homeland in the Muslim majority areas in India, in which Islam can be practiced as the dominant religion. The Two Nation theory was a founding principle of the Pakistani Movement and the partition of India in 1947.

The ideology that religion is the determining factor in defining the nationality of Indian Muslims and Hindus was first propagated by people like Vinayak Damodar Savakar and later adopted by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who termed it as the awakening of Muslims for the creation of Pakistan.

In spite of living together for centuries the two communities not forgot their individual cultures and civilization. It raised a direction for the Muslims on the basis of which Pakistan was achieved. The two societies, Hindus and Muslims, like two streams have sometimes touched but never merged, each following its separate course.

There are a few factors which split the inhabitants of the subcontinent into two nations which are Religious differences, Hindu nationalism, Cultural differences,

Social differences, Economic differences, Educational differences, Political differences and language. The novel is not only a recreation of history as Lopamudra Basu in *South Asian Review* says:

> The novel, unlike conventional or oral history, is not just a straightforward recreation of a historic milieu. It can be thought of as a multi-layered palimpsest, gesturing at several different threads in the complex motivations and facts, which comprise Partition. (12)

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-candy-man* novel explores the horrors of 1947's holocaust. However Sidhwa's novel is from the Parsi angle, it depicts the bloody event succinctly. The *Ice-candy-man* deals with the partition horror and the life of Lenny, a limping girl, an Ice-candy-man, a Muslim and an Ayah, a Hindu. Lenny, the Ice-candy-man and Ayah's lives are governed by the event of partition and its consequences. Still a number of characters are affected by the 1947's communal troubles. Sidhwa succeeds in elaborating the intercommunity life from the Parsi angle. Manju Jaidka comments in *South Asian Review*:

> The book comprising of 277 pages not only traces the history of events leading to the cracking of the Indian subcontinent, but also gives us a graphic account of Lahore during the years preceding the partition and a sketch of the Parsi community during the times – its history and background, its ability to merge with the environment, and its neutral position in the political turmoil. (46)

Sidhwa's fiction deals with both the pre and postcolonial period of the Indian subcontinent. Her fiction not only brings to life the horror of partition but also vividly portrays the complexities of life in the subcontinent after independence. What makes

her work interesting from the postcolonial point of view is the way she rewrites the history of the subcontinent. In *Ice-candy-man*, Sidhwa grapples with the realities of the pre independence period. What is most remarkable about her work is her dual perspective which is based on both the Pakistani and the Parsi point of view. She speaks both for the Pakistanis and the marginalised Parsi community. Jill Didur in *ARIEL* says:

> As the narrative unfolds, it quickly becomes apparent that her subjectivity is mediated by a community identity undergoing a double crisis. The shift in power from British to the Hindu and Muslim centric stages of India and Pakistan respectively signals the end of the Parsees privileged relation, despite their minority status, to the ruling class. (74)

Sidhwa's rewriting of history in *Ice-candy-man* is far more complex than it appears to be, since she rewrites history not just from the Pakistani view but also from the Parsi point of view. In order to highlight the Parsi dilemma at the time of the partition, she goes back three hundred years to the significant moment in Parsi history when they were killed out of Persia by the Arabs and sailed to India. A historical perspective is essential to understand the Parsi dilemma, trauma and identity crisis that arose when they were booted out of Persia and during Partition in India. The Parsees, an ethno religious minority in India, live mostly on the west coast of the Indian Subcontinent especially in Mumbai. In Pakistan, they are settled in Karachi and Lahore. The word 'Parsi' means a native of 'Pars' an ancient Persian Province. The Parsees left their Persian homeland over 1200 years ago and sought refuge in India to safeguard their religion and from being Islamised by the invading Islamic Arabians in the seventh century A.D. Mallikarjun Patil describes the Parsees in *Bapsi*

Sidhwa's Ice-candy-man as a Partition Novel as, "the Parsees were forced to leave their homeland about 1200 years ago to save their religion from being Islamised by the invading Arabs" (183-84).

In short account, whether true or not, highlights the dilemma of the Parsees have faced over the centuries – the dilemma of assimilating themselves into an alien culture and risking the loss of their identity. The impending partition of the country, as Parsees have made over the centuries to assimilate themselves into Indian culture are futile since the community faces the threat of annihilation in the wake of the Partition. Thirteen hundred years ago, the Parsees had tried to accept Indian culture with all its diversities, but now at the moment of Partition they might be forced to take sides with one of the dominant communities, religions in India – Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs. Thus Sidhwa undercuts the received historical view that the Parsees were totally indifferent to the partition of the country. Instead of indifference the Parsees had a complex attitude towards Partition, as brought out in the main-hall meeting in the Fire Temple.

Col. Bharucha, the President of the community in Lahore, argues that the Parsees should shun the anticolonial movement and stick their long standing stance of loyalty to the British Empire. He warns the Parsees that once we get Swaraj, "Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!" (36). However Dr. Mody points out that it is not so simple. The Parsees cannot remain uninvolved and will have to take a stance otherwise, "Our neighbours will think that we are betraying them and siding with the English" (37). This, however leads to a further complication, as voiced by a fellow Parsi, when we asks, "Which of your neighbours are you not going to betray? … Hindu? Muslim? Sikh?" (37). This remarks brings to the foreground the bitter fact

that even after thirteen hundred years the Parsees feel alienated in the subcontinent. Their alienation from all the major communities in India ultimately forces them to support whoever rules Lahore. Col. Bharuch suggests, "Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land." (39) Thus Sidhwa by giving voice to the marginalised Parsees demonstrates that their choice of remaining neutral in the context of the partition was not out of indifference but forced upon them by a complex historical reality.

To counter the British and Indian versions of the Partition, Sidhwa not only tries to resurrect the image of Jinnah but also demystifies the image of Gandhi and Nehru. Jinnah in the novel is highlighted as an ambassador of Hindu – Muslim community, "And today, forty years later, in films of Gandhi's and Mountbatten's lives, in books by British and Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity', is caricatured, and portrayed as a monster"(160).

Even though Sidhwa tries to depict the atrocities committed by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs without partiality, being a Pakistani writer she makes it obvious that her sympathies are with the Muslim victims. Not only is the Sikh's attack on Muslim villages in Punjab described vividly, but also it is seen through the eyes of the Muslim child Ranna, which shifts the reader's sympathy towards the Muslims.

Thus we see that Sidhwa not only shifts the blame of the partition on to the Indian leaders, but also makes the reader sympathise with the Muslim victim of the partition by accentuating the violence inflicted upon the Muslims by the Sikhs.

Sidhwa through the *Ice-candy-man* successfully questions the British and Indian versions of the subcontinent's history based on the Pakistani point of view. She

has succinctly adapted the English language to suit her purposes. Further, she has not just provided the marginalised Parsi community with a voice but also a large number of Pakistani readers.

In *Ice-candy-man*, almost all the major incidents of Indian subcontinent are shown. Besides end of the Second World War, India's independence and partition of the subcontinent into Pakistan and India, revolve around Ayah. She is the symbol of realism larger than life reality and shows us everyone – beggars, holyman, hawkers, cart drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists lust after her.

Ice-candy-man is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the cataclysmic event is depicted. The novel is written on the theme of Partition. The novel shows in the beginning the non-commital attitude of the Parsi community towards the flux in which the various communities of India found themselves in the beginning of the twentieth century. It distills the love-hate relationship of Hindus and Muslims through the consciousness and point of view of Lenny, and unusually precocious five year old Parsi girl. The novel is a reinscription of male texts on the Partition, which valorises objective reality in the narrative and ignores the experimental realm of the woman. Sidhwa uses again the women as victim paradigm but here the victimisation is a result of a collective action that is the communal riots that followed the Partition. Riots are largely orchestrated by males and become a signifier of a collective male victimiser. The maid in the Parsi family at Lahore, the Ayah is the one who suffers the impact of Partition the most.

Veena Noble in *Fiction of the Ninetees* describes the novel, "*Ice-candy-man* is firmly rooted in a historical, political consciousness and concern directly or indirectly the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the creation of the newly independent

states of India and Pakistan" (162). The novel concerns wholly the turbulent events of Partition as they affect the lives of a Parsi family and the people who come into their lives. When *Ice-candy-man* was published in the United States in 1991 the title was changed to *Cracking India*, focussing on the Partition rather than on the eponymous character.

Memories of Partition though they are often too hurtful to be told; so they remain hidden, or half-hidden, in the folds of speech. Sometimes language seems to fall short of uttering them, it sounds truncated like the lives it tries to narrate.

It has been argued that art, better than any other language, can express the unresolved burdens of the past. Thus the kind of memory that would allow the representation of the horror of unspeakable experiences is called as post memory. Post memory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation.

Ice-candy-man narrates about the exodus of Parsees from Pakistan to India during pre partition era and in the meanwhile explains their customs, moors, culture, religious practices and politics. Sidhwa presents several rude incidents of Indian subcontinent of pre independence days. Sidhwa belongs to Parsi community and she takes the liberty to voice truthfully the isolation and aloofness from which her community suffers.

Lenny, the daughter of a well to do jobholder, is the narrator of the story of the novel. She presents the panoramic views of existing social milieu along with turmoiled situation of partition of India and formation of Pakistan. Her narration starts in her fifth year and ends after her eighth birthday. In the course of narration, she

presents the panoramic views of existing social milieu. Lenny recalls her first conscious reminisential recollection of memory of her Ayah that she passes pushing her pram with the unconcern of the Hindu Goddess she worship. She also remembers her house on Waris Road in Lahore and how she used to find refuge in her grandmother one-and-a-half room abode.

In *Ice-candy-man*, Lenny leads us dwelling on interesting facts mingled as it were with picturesque language. The main events, besides end of the Second World War, India's Independence and Partition of subcontinent into India and Pakistan, revolve around Ayah. Sidhwa is a minute observer of the society, she lives. She presents all the major and minor events of society in the novel. Ordinarily, a person is recognised by his language and clothings. The dresses adopted by people are also reflective of their culture. Lenny, therefore asks Ayah as to why she did wear Punjabi clothes despite a Punjabi and Ayah replies that she didn't afford it because of her meagre salary.

Sidhwa unlike the other partition women novleists like Amrita Pritam, Attia Hosain, Nina Sibal, Meena Arora Nayak, Manju Kapur and Shauna Singh Baldwin, has concentrated her attention on the Muslim dominated provinces of the pre partition days. She has very objectively described the communal harmony in the city of Lahore where people belonging to all communities live together without any prejudice. All centres of power like agriculture, finance and education were under the control of the Hindus and Sikhs and the Muslims worked with them very peacefully as they were solely dependent upon the rich Hindus. The Parsees, being a very miniscule minority, maintain a safer distance from all three communities. However they mix with all. Consequently, the Hindu Ayah, Hari, Moti, the Sikh Granthi and Sher Singh, and the Muslims like Imam Din, the knife-sharpening Pathan, Yousuf and the Ice-candy-man

gather in the house of Lenny. They gossip, discuss, exchange their thoughts and enjoy the company so much that they give an impression of a joint family.

The proposal of partition of India had created havoc in 1947 among the minority communities, particularly living in Lahore. The news of Partition discuss the calm and quiet life of the inhabitants of the Punjab and the admirers of the Ayah turn hostile towards each other. The Hindus and Sikhs of the group are betrayed by the Muslims. Ayah who is loved by all is also betrayed by the Ice-candy-man. This is to reason that Col. Bharucha feels that the Parsees living in Lahore will not be safe if the place is ruled by the Muslims. He further feels that the Parsees in Lahore should shift to Bombay where majority of Parsees live. Sidhwa shows this socioreligious reality in following words:

> 'We will caste our lot with whoever rules Lahore!' continues the colonel.
>
> 'If the Muslims should rule Lahore wouldn't we be safer going to Bombay where most Parsees live?' asks a tremulous voice weakened by a thirteen-hundred-year-old memory of conversions by the Arab sword.
>
> A slight nervousness stirs amidst the timorous. There is much turning of heads, shifting on seats and whispering. (39-40)

The rumours spread all around the country was worsening the situation in the country during the turmoiled condition of 1947. There were rumours that Hindus are being murdered in Bengal and Muslims being killed in Bihar. The British Government was not taking any positive steps for controlling the situation:

'My brothers,' he says. And as our eyes turn to him, running frail fingers through his silky white beard, he says, 'I hear there is trouble in the cities ... Hindus are being murdered in Bengal ... Muslims, in Bihar. It's strange ... the English *Sarkar* can't seem to do anything about it.' (55)

The novelist criticises Congress leaders or who were sitting on *dharna* and blocking rail tracks as a measure of protect political protest by them. It was nothing, feels Sidhwa, but political stunt. The Muslims-Hindus communal riots were turning into Sikh-Muslim notes also. The police were engaged in sifting them from the railway tracks:

Sly killings; rioting and baton charges by the police ... long marches by mobs ... The Congress-wallahs have started a new stunt ... they sit down on rail tracks – women and children, too. The police lift them off the tracks ... But one of these days the steam engines will run over them ... Once aroused, the English are savages ... 'Then there is this Hindu-Muslims trouble,' he says, after a pause. 'Ugly trouble ... It is spreading. Sikh-Muslim trouble also ...'. (56)

Age old fraternity among Hindus-Sikhs-Muslims was still intact. Imam Din has confidence that so long as Sikh brothers are there with him, they have no reason to fear. He thinks that the communal madness will not infect their village. Jegjeet Singh reciprocates positively and says that the Sikh of the village will protect their Muslim brothers even at the cost of their lives.

Imam Din nods. There is a subtle change in his face; he looks calmer. 'As long as our Sikh brothers are with us, what have we to fear?' he

says. speaking to the *granthi*, and including the other Sikhs with a glance. 'I think you are right, brothers, the madness will not infect the villages.'

'If needs be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!' says Jagjeet Singh. (56)

The Muslim leaders were demanding creation of Pakistan by combining Muslims majority provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Kashmir, the North West and Bengal. Largest population of country consisting of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh were desiring immediate independence. But some Muslim leaders of Muslim League and Congress were interested in formation and for this they were even ready for violence and bloodshed

Rivers of blood will flow all right!' he shouts, almost as loudly as Mr Singh. 'Nehru and the Congress will not have everything their way! They will have to reckon with the Muslim League and Jinnah. If we quit India today, old chap, you'll bloody fall at each other's throat!. (62)

Birdwood Barracks, Inspector-General of Police, told that if the Britishers leave the country then Hindus-Muslims-Sikhs will fight with each other and cut each other's throat. Mr. Singh replied him that there are fights because of your divide-and-rule monkey trick. He said further that the moment we get our Home Rule, that is *Swaraj*, then we won settle our dispute and differences.

Ice-candy-man is a mysterious and wonderful novel. Sidhwa's humour comes in pungent one-liners and her style is highly visual. Sidhwa bitterly satirises those scrupulous business. Such person make money by selling such wonder oils and dupe

people at large scale. Sometime they claim that if fingers touch such oil, then it may even grow hairs on finger tips. The novelist highlights such types of frauds found commonly in our country:

> Masseur and Ice-candy-man drift over to us and join the circle. Masseur is ranking in money. He has invented an oil that will grow hair on bald heads. It is composed of monkey and fish glands, mustard oil, pearl dust and an assortment of herbs. The men listen intently, but Masseur stops short of revealing the secret recipe. He holds up the bottle and Ayah reaches out to touch the oil.
>
> 'Careful,' says Masseur, whipping the bottle away. 'It'll grow hair on your fingertips.' (89)

Sikhs and Muslims lived together years and years with solidarity. They helped each other in distress while living amicably in one and the same village. But the partition of India and follow up communal riots have spoiled their relations. This is the reason that Sher Singh asks Ice-candy-man as why he being a Muslim will not help to a Sikh:

> 'At first Sher Singh hemmed and hedged,' says Ice-candy-man. 'Then he said: "You're a Mussulman ... The tenants are Mussulman ... Why should you help a Sikh?" '
>
> His raconteur's gift places us in Sher Singh's shoes and we look at him with the same questions in our eyes. (122)

The novelist ironically pleads the communal harmony between the Sikhs and Muslims. She reminds as to how the holy *Koran* is kept next to the *Granth Sahib* in the Golden temple. She further reminds that Guru Nanak carried inscription from the

Koran. She further pleads that in fact the Sikhs faith came into existence for the sake of creating Hindu-Muslim harmony:

> 'Don't fool yourself ... They have a tradition of violence.' says the wrestler. 'Haven't you seen the portraits of the gurus holiday the dripping heads of butchered enemies?'
>
> 'Shut up, *yaar*,' says Masseur, his face unusually dark with a rush of blood. 'It's all *buckwas*! The holy Koran lies next to the Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple. The shift Guru Nanaik wore carried inscriptions from the *Koran* ... In fact, the Sikh came about to create Hindu-Muslim harmony!' (131)

The claim and counter claim in favour and against the formation of Pakistan was being raised by both sides. Muslims were demanding vehemently the creation of Pakistan but the Sikh were opposing it. The novelist shows us the tense situation:

> Holding a long sword in each hand, the curved steel reflecting the sun's glaze as he clashes the sword above his head, the Sikh soldier-saint shouts: 'We will see how the Muslim swine get Pakistan! We will fight to the last man! We will show them who will leave Lahore! *Raj karega Khalsa, aki rahi na koi!* (133-34)

A slowy advancing mob of Muslims *goondas* was creating a reign of terror. They were shouting slogans like, "*Allah-O-Akbar! Yaaaa Ali*" and "Pakistan *Zindabad*". The Hindu *goondas* were also engaged in violence and killings of Muslims. The Hindus of Shalmi have piled a lot of dynamite in their houses and shops to drive the Muslims from Mochi Gate. Entire four kilometer area of Shalmi was full with flashes of explosions. There is a train which comes from Gurdaspur where

everyone is dead in this train. All the dead bodies are Muslim. There are no young women among the dead as they have obviously forcibly detained for sexual abuses.

The novel appears to be autobiographical in the sense that Sidhwa shares her personal experience she faced during the partition of India in 1947. She recollects the constant roars of the mobs heard by her as a witness of violence during communal riots during partition. Her personal experience of the constant roar of the mobs is reflected in the following lines of the novel:

> We hear the ubiquitous chanting of the mobs in the distance: '*Allah-O-Akbar*!' comes the fragmented roar from Muslim *goondas* of Mozang. '*Bole so nehal; Sat siri akal*!' from the Sikh *goondas* of Beaten Road. Standing at attention with the gun I feel ready to face any mob. (154)

Lahore changed entired after declaration of Partition of India and formation of Pakistan. Hindus and Sikhs migrated at large scale. There were now no Brahmins with caste-mark on their forehead or Hindu in bodies. There were only hoards of Muslim refugees from India:

> Beadon Road, bereft of the colourful turbans, hairy bodies, yellow shorts, tight pyjamas and glittering religious arsenal of the Sikhs, looks like any other populous street. Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension: there are no Brahmins with caste-marks - or Hindus in dhotis with bodhis. Only hordes of Muslim refugees. (175)

The palatial building of Hindus in Modal Town were badly looted and shops were gutted. Rioters looted away furniture, carpets, utensils, mattresses, clothes, etc. Other bungalows of affluent neighbourhood are looted away in similar way.

Lenny's houses is attached by the rioters for finding the Hindus shelters hiding there. Lenny's Ayah is a Hindu as such she hides herself to have protection from them. They asked about Shankar and Seth also. They assumed that they are Hindus from the name-plate on the states. They are informed that the persons are not Hindus but Parsees. When they asked about Hari. the gardener, were informed that he has now been converted into Muslim and now he is Himat Ali. They were also informed the Moti, the sweeper, has become a Christian now.

Ice-candy-man comes out of the crowd and convinces Lenny that he will protect Ayah. Believing his version, she confides her where about. He betrays and drag Ayah out. She was dealt with brutality by him:

> They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet - that want to move backwards - are forced forward instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat open her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulder, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seams shows. A sleeve tears under her arm. (183)

Sikhs have attacked at least five village around Dehra Misri. They were moving like marauding bands of nearly forty thousand people. They were killing Muslims and parading the Muslim women asked through the streets. Even the Sikhs and Hindus have join the marauding mobs:

> They are like swarms of locusts, moving in marauding bands of thirty and forty thousand. They are killing all Muslims. Setting fires, looting, parading the Muslim women naked through the streets - raping and

> mutilating them in the centre of villages and its mosques. The Bias, flooded by melting snow, and the monsoon, is carrying hundreds of corpses. There is an intolerable stretch where the bodies, caught in the bends, have piled up. (197)

A group of riot victims have taken shelter in an abandoned room. They heard a woman requesting to forgive her and not to torment her. A man identified her as Mullah's daughter. A teenager starts wailing and saying I don't want to die:

> Sometimes Ranna could make out the words and even whole sentences. He heard a woman cry, 'Do anything you want with me, but don't torment me ... For God's sake, don't torture me!' And then an intolerable screaming. 'Oh God!' a man whispered on a sobbing intake of breath. 'Oh God, she is the mullah's daughter!' The men covered their ears – and the boys' ears – sobbing unaffectedly like little children. (200)

Sidhwa shows us the other side of 'Kotha'. It is not as an ordinarily known only a place of shelter of sex-starved people. It is also a place of importance useful for whole society. It is the cultural pulse of the city where the poets are inspired and their songs are sung. These songs becomes famous from this place. The place also provides a stepping stone to film stardom for the nautch-girls. There is also praise for 'pimps'. They are a kind of male Ayah and they look after the dancing girls. Furthermore, they protect the girls from drunks and look after money the girls get. They also bring men and introduce them to the dancing girls Thus, the pimps are kind of adult and mercantile cupid.

Ayah is traced out at a 'Kotha' living there as a dancing girl. Lenny is happy to know about her. She was living in a sense of guilty feelings since the day the Ice-candy-man and other rioters lifted her forcibly. They attempted for Ayah's extradition from the Hira Mandi. The police swarmed through the rooms of Ice-candy-man's Kotha and finding Ayah took her away, with her scant belongings wrapped in cloth bundles and a small tin trunk, in a Women's Camp at Warris Road. At the end, Ayah goes to her family in Amritsar and Ice-candy-man too disappears across the Wagah Border into India.

Lenny's trite comment circumscribes the puzzled revelation of so many Parsees, who residing in Bombay found themselves as Indian while their counterparts living in Lahore had to identify themselves as Pakistani. The legacy of Partition, with its brutalisation of communal frenzy, and huge exchange of population unprecedented yet in the civilizational history of India, brought about dislocation of identities as the most gruesome fallout. This loss of the sense of identity as a secured anchor annihilated the base of beings of people. The Hindu-Muslim-Sikh community living in prepartition in the so-called 'centres' of assured complacence soon find themselves driven to the 'margins' trying to locate their parts of new identity. Because identity is connectivity, connecting to the world of concern and affection, it is a construct basically based on psychic, religious, emotional, social stilts of the community as such. Partition slashed and battered this existential base of the different community of people living in multicultural, multilingual ethos peacefully before partition, and worse.

Diversity was really the cornerstone of undivided Indian culture, which the opportunist, visionless political leader of India failed to perceive as in connivance with the cunning colonial impertinence they agreed to accept the idea of the exclusive

construction of nation state on the basis of religion. National identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative of the complex interweaving of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood. Sidhwa deals nicely with the theme of partition of India assuming it as a subject as harrowing as the Holocaust. She achieves the remarkable fear of bringing together the ribald farce of Parsi family life and the stark drama and borrows of the riots and massacres of 1947.

Ice-candy-man is memorable book, one that confirms her reputation as Pakistan's finest English language novelist. The novel is regarded as Sidhwa's gaze upon the domestic comedy of a Pakistani family in the 1940s and somehow managed to evoke the gait political upheavals of the age. The novel assigns Sidhwa as a feminist and an idealist, who sees in her women characters the strength of passion, the tenderness of love, and the courage of one's convictions.

History bear witness to the atrocities carried out during partition. Men were massacred and women were violated and children were thrown up where this religious intolerance during the time of partition is depicted in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Religious Bigotry

August 1947 marks the end of the British Raj in the Subcontinent. The departure of the British from the subcontinent led to the creation of two independent states, Pakistan and India. The division was based on two nation theory with the contention that the Hindus and the Muslims cannot live together as one nation since both have distinct social, cultural and religious identities. The Muslim majority regions of Punjab and Bengal were divided, with West Punjab and East Bengal forming West and East Pakistan, and India in the middle of the two. This resulted in massive and vehement migration of the people across the divide. Muslims moved into Pakistan, and Sikhs and Hindus moved into India with the panorama of peaceful and better living with their own religious as well as ethnic identities.

More than territorial partitioning it meant a widening of the mental divide between the Hindus and the Muslims. The cleft between Pakistan and India sufficed to heighten each other's hostility instead of bringing peace in the region. The border between the two was drawn with blood as nearby half a million were slain in communal clashes. This incident has been documented as the most lethal incidence that the entire humanity has ever witnessed. Undoubtedly, the partition loiters as an unforgettable event, not only for its political significance in the emergence of the sovereignties of India and Pakistan, but also for its lasting impact of monstrosity and horrific emotional duress.

Civil tension continued bestriding for months: thousands of families were rive apart, homes burnt down and villages abandoned. Some women were so embarrassed of the sexual humiliation that they refused to return home and opted for suicide. The

destruction of families through murder, suicide, and kidnapping caused grievous partition trauma. Twelve million people fled their homes and over a hundred thousand women were abducted, raped and mutilated. Tens and thousands of houses, shops and other establishments were set on fire. Every right-minded person alive at this point of hour was appalled at the savagery. The emotional pain of severance from home, family and friendships is by its nature immeasurable.

The tragedy of partition has given rise to fictional expeditions with an attempt to define the inner turmoil and social complexes that plagued the subcontinent. The novels on the partition present a realistic show of the tribulations the people underwent on account of the violence let loose by a spurt of sudden religious bigotry. The vast volume of partition fiction in English, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and other languages of the subcontinent faithfully records the gruesome human disaster in the wake of partition. The incredible suffering and bewilderment of the people of the subcontinent has been a favourite theme with the Indian and Pakistani writers.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-candy-man* was her most serious political novel. It differs from other works as it presents Partition in the Parsi perspective. Even as a child, Sidhwa witnessed historical moments. So for her subject she drew extensively from her own community. She truthfully voices the isolation and aloofness the Parsees suffer. Her portrayal of Partition is both a Pakistani as well as Parsi's perspective. The novel not only projects the Parsi perspective but also that of the Hindu, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Partition occurs as an offshoot of Communal disharmony. The distortion of life due to frenzied upheaval leads to greater degree of suspicion and distrust among the people in India.

Mostly the Parsi story is filled with pathos because of their long delayed recognition and the emptiness of the promise made to this colonial elite whose fragile image is full of paradoxes and dilemmas. Parsi community has always remained a minority and felt a threat of its extension under the rule of dominant communities. In *Ice-candy-man*, one can see how the community struggles for its existence at the time of Partition which is presented through the eyes of Lenny, an eight year old Parsi child. It is the only Parsi novel on Partition with political, social and religious impact.

The texts of the Parsi writers first try to create a space for themselves within the dominant culture of the land. So no effort is spared to assert their ethno religious identity. In the initial phase of Parsi writing not much stress was laid on identity or the problems by India's miniscule minority.

In the novel *Ice-candy-man*, all the events are based on facts but rendered into fiction with skilful artistry. Since independence there has been a plethora of fiction-novel and short stories about Partition, portraying the trauma of the communal holocaust that followed the British withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent. But Sidhwa has been able to capture the poignancy and suffering of the migrants with greater authenticity and imaginative power visualizing the partition of India in 1947 discussing the brutality and agony behind the partition.

Sidhwa witnessed the partition turmoil herself as she was born in Lahore and she was only eight at the time of partition in 1947, whereas she originates from Pakistan. Although she shares the theme of partition and postpartition turbulence in her novels, she upheld her own unique mirrors to reflect upon the physical tortures and psychological outbursts that became the order of the day when the division of the subcontinent into Pakistan and India was announced. The novel paints a vivid picture

of the separation between the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus in 1947. The theme of exile of belonging and non-belonging is a common link between writers from postcolonial cultures. Sidhwa develops the love story between the individuals of diverse religious and ethnic identities to escalate the pangs of love at the time of partition.

Sidhwa does not belong to any of the three communities—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. She is a Parsi and Parsees always believe in allegiance to the state. They are loyal to the land they inhabit and that is why they stay wherever they are. After Partition most of the Hindus and Sikhs left Pakistan, and a large number of Muslims left India but Parsees remained at their place both in India and Pakistan. They were not targeted by the mobs nor forced to flee across the new frontiers that divided their country.

In *Ice-candy-man*, Sidhwa presents the brilliant close up of communal violence during the time of partition of India through the eyes of Lenny, a young Parsi girl growing up in the city of Lahore. The Parsees remained neutral during the tumultuous events of the Partition. Being in a neutral position allows the young Lenny to be objective to others perspective and to easily get more insight on the different philosophies of people living in Lahore and in other surrounding localities. Lenny's parents are quiet affluent having a large staff of servants. Her eighteen year old Ayah, Shanta, taker her out to her Godmother's and Electric aunt's houses on the opposite sides of Jail Road, to the Queen's park, the zoo and other places from time to time.

Ayah has such an astonishing look that she draws avaricious glances from everyone. Beggars, holy men, hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes and ogle at her. Even the Englishmen are not able to resist her magnetic charm. But the real clique of her friends and adorers consists of the

Fallettis Hotel cook, the Government House gardener, Masseur, Ice-candy-man, Restaurant-wrestler, a knife-sharpener, Sharbat Khan, Ramzana, Imam din, Sikh zoo attendant Sher Singh and a Chinaman. They are people of different faiths — Hindu, Muslim, Sikh —yet they live together amicably in a spirit of the syncretic culture characterizing the pre-Partition India.

As the time of Independence and Partition draws near, Lenny notices a lot of hushed talk. "In bazaars, restaurants and littered alleys men huddle round bicycles or squat against walls in whispering groups" (101). The atmosphere of awe, suspicion and distrust takes its toll on the life of the people. The air instead of getting clear becomes more vitiated and clamorous. Everywhere there is some talk of India going to be cracked. Constant references are being made to Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh and Mountbatten:

> Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh, Mountbatten are names I hear.
>
> And I become aware of religious differences.
>
> It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah – she is also a token. A Hindu. Carried away by a renewed devotional fervour she expends a small fortune in joss-sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses in the temples. (93)

In a world gone topsy-turvy, friends turn into foes. In an attempt to save their lives, many convert. Some Hindus become Muslims, some convert themselves into Christians. Some Hindus leave Lahore. Everyone is not saved. Ayah, whom everyone

had flirted with is abducted. Ayah is Hindu, but, protected by her Parsi employers, she assumes that she is in no danger. But Lenny unwittingly betrays her. Unfortunately her charms lead to her abduction by a group led by the Ice-candy-man. Ayah is dragged away by the mob and raped. After her degradation, the Ice-candy-man renamed her as Mumtaz and sets her up in a house in the prostitute's quarters called Hira Mandi in Lahore. Having proved his mastery over her, he now professes to be crazily in love with her and wants to marry her. She, having been betrayed by him and physically abused by the mob, refuses to accept him. The women from Lenny's family eventually rescue her and she becomes a candidate for rehabilitation. However, the ever-present betrayer the Ice-candy-man, goes along with the rehabilitated Ayah to perhaps ravish her afresh.

Lenny notices a change in the demeanor of people around her. Ayah starts visiting temples. Imam Din and Yousaf turn into religious zealots and they take Friday afternoons off for the Jumha prayers. The Sharmas and the Daulatrams, swank their caste marks. Hari is humiliated. Masseur is killed. Personal scores are settled. Sidhwa brilliantly contrasts earlier, playful games with cruelty and brutality after religious differences begin separating Hindu from Muslim, Christian form Muslim, Christian from Sikh.

The caste and religious differences having come to fore, invidious behaviour becomes more obvious:

> Hari and Moti-the-sweeper and his wife Muccho, and their untouchable daughter Papoo, become even more untouchable as they are entrenched deeper in their low Hindu caste. While the Sharmas and

> the Daulatrams, Brahmins like Nehru, are dehumanised by their lofty caste and caste-marks. (93)

Even the Christians gets infected:

> The Rogers of Birdwood Barracks, Queen Victoria and Kind George are English Christians: they look down their noses upon the pens who are Anglo-Indian, who look down theirs on the Phailbuses who are Indian-Christian, who look down upon all non-Christians. (94)

For some time, Lenny's family is unaware of Ayah's whereabouts, believing that she is dead. It is soon revealed, however, that Ayah is alive and living in Hira Mandi in Lahore. Ice-candy-man has married her. He tells Godmother who rebukes him for having been a party to her abduction, "'Is-saved her,' he stammers. 'They would've ... killed her ... I married her!' (249).

Interwoven into this dark and shameful talk of political betrayal and rape in Lenny's childhood and her Parsi identity. The Parsi ethos is not stressed but subtly interwoven into the narrative. Lenny is at once autobiographical as well as metaphorical. In this novel Sidhwa also confronts the issue of how the Parsi identity was going to cope with the changes on the political front. Lenny is thus a witness to the varied adult worlds which are in the process of tearing the community which bore witness to the carnage of the partition of India. Though Sidhwa's novel does focus on the changing attitude of the Parsi community, it leaves out the exploration of the dilemma that the Parsi community had to revolve regarding its unnatural schismatic division between Indian and Pakistani Parsees.

With a certain detachment Sidhwa sees the excesses to which religious intolerance takes one, shows how violence marks everyone, and this is where the

Pakistani in Sidhwa comes in. She shows how Pakistanis have been unfairly treated. She stresses that Jinnah was no monster, and notes that in the atrocities committed during Partition, while both Muslims and Sikhs indulged in violence, the Muslim atrocities pale by comparison with those of the Sikhs. Sidhwa makes her Pakistani identity unmistakably clear in *Ice-candy-man* where she suggests how Partition favoured India over Pakistan:

> ... the Hindus are being favoured over the Muslims by the remnants of the Raj. Now that its objective to divide India is achieved, the British favour Nehru over Jinnah. Nehru is Kashmiri; they grant him Kashmir. Spurning logic, defying rationale, ignoring the consequence of bequeathing a Muslim State to the Hindus: while Jinnah futilely protests: 'Statesmen cannot eat their words!'
>
> Statesmen do.
>
> They grant Nehru Gurdaspur and Pathankot, without which Muslim Kashmir cannot be secured. (159)

As a Pakistani, Sidhwa feels it incumbent upon herself to defend Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the Muslim nation. The reference to Jinnah is made aptly in the context of the Parsi family that is the focus of the novel. Lenny comes across the picture of an astonishingly beautiful woman and is told that it is the picture of Jinnah's wife, a Parsi. She married the Muslim Jinnah, braving her family's displeasure. The marriage was not a happy one and the beautiful woman in the picture died of a broken heart. While Sidhwa cannot completely liberate Jinnah here, she manages to blur the criticism by noting that Jinnah too died of a broken heart she also makes it clear that she is on Jinnah's side.

> But didn't Jinnah, too, die of a broken heart? And today, forty years later, in films of Gandhi's and Mountbatten's lives, in books by British and Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity,' is caricatured, and portrayed as a monster. (160)

Is Lenny speaking or Sidhwa herself? To substantiate this image of Jinnah, Sidhwa quotes the Indian poetess Sarojini Naidu:

> ... the calm hauteur of his accustomed reserve masks, for those who knew him, a naïve and eager humanity, an intuition quick and tender as a woman's, a humour gay and winning as a child's - pre-eminently rational and practical, discreet and dispassionate in his estimate and acceptance of life, the obvious sanity and serenity of his worldly wisdom effectually disguise a shy and splendid idealism which is of the very essence of the man. (161)

Sidhwa gives the glimpses of the paradoxes of the ethnic behaviours in the state of religious anxiety. She sketches the Sikh processions and Muslim procession complementary to it:

> We will see how the Muslim swine get Pakistan! We will fight to the last man! We will show them *who* will leave Lahore! *Raj karega Khalsa, aki rahi na koi!*'... '*Pakistan Murdabad!* Death to Pakistan! *Sat Siri Akaal! Bolay se nihaal!*'
>
> And the Muslims shouting: 'So? We'll play Holi-with-their-blood! Ho-o-o-li with their blo-o-o-d!'. (134)

Sidhwa pictures the paradox that these people are fighting on the basis of religion and still Muslims are ready to enjoy the Sikh and Hindu festival of Holi with their blood. Lahore was burning. The humanity, love, caring, and human values were offered to the fire. British government distributed the Pakistan to Jinnah and India to Nehru. Lenny was categorised as Pakistani: "I am Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that" (140). Jinnah declared:

> 'You are free. You are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in the State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of State … etc., etc., etc. *Pakistan Zindabad!*'. (144)

Sidhwa portrayed Jinnah as secular leader of the Muslim State of Pakistan, where he promised all religions can live and prosper peacefully and harmoniously. It is the irony of the later day Pakistan which is hailed as the 'terrorist camp' in world, that they are misguided under the name of Jinnah and his concept of Muslim State.

Sidhwa narrates the incidents of partition violence and subjugation of the Muslims by Sikhs from Ranna's reconstruction of his memory of wounded past. With such an ambiguous agenda, it is hardly curious that the story of Ranna is interpolated at a crucial moment in the novel. The micro-narrative of Ranna occupies a very ambivalent place in a novel that is narrated entirely by Lenny. Its inclusion could well be a strategy to circumvent the dilemma of having to show in detail the sufferings of Muslims while struggling with the constraints of the first person narrative voice. One might well consider Ranna's story intrusive, designed to drive home a tendentious note. On the other hand, one could well argue that such a shift in voice is in keeping with the open-ended and problematic aspect of the text.

Even though Sidhwa tries to depict the atrocities committed by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs without partiality, being a Pakistani writer she makes it obvious that her sympathies are with the Muslim victims. Not only in the Sikh's attack on Muslim village in Punjab described vividly, but also it is seen through the eyes of the Muslim child Ranna, which shifts the reader's sympathy towards the Muslims.

Ranna is slightly linked to the Lenny household with which the novel is concerned. Ranna's story is told in great detail and the narrator is also at pains to continue the thread until the latter part of the novel. As formal strategy, Ranna's tale is necessary to capture the public dimension of the violence, but even more it is a device to privilege a point of view, to underline that Muslims did suffer a great deal at the time of Partition.

Ranna is the great-grandson of Imam Din. He is about the same age as Lenny, who visits Imam Din's family and the village of Pir Pindo many times. In Pir Pindo village, Sikh crowds attack the Muslim community. Imam Din's family is in trouble but nothing can be done. Muslims in Pir Pindo village get killed and their women are gang-raped. Children are butchered mercilessly. Ranna, the playmate of Lenny in Pir Pindo is also wounded and buried under the heap of dead bodies. After some time, he safely moves to other place. His journey of hide and seek has been dealt by Sidhwa. A little boy wounded and shocked, running for life suddenly finds himself alone in the world. Earlier, it has been decided that the women and girls in Pir Pindo would gather at Chaudhry's house and pour kerosene oil around the house to burn themselves. It was also decided to hide some boys and men in a safer place but nothing worked. Muslims are killed, women molested and children butchered. Only Ranna escapes and finds shelter in a camp in Lahore. When he reached Lahore, he observed, "*It is funny*

'As long as I had to look out for myself, I was all right. As soon as I felt safe, I panicked' (205). Before reaching the camp, Ranna had a tough time:

> There were too many ugly and abandoned children like him scavenging in the looted houses and the rubble of burnt-out buildings. His rags clinging to his wounds, straw sticking in his scalped skull, Ranna wandered through the lanes stealing chapatties and grain from houses strewn with dead bodies, rifling the corpses for anything he could use ... No one minded the semi-naked spectre as he looked in doors with his knowing, wide-set peasant eyes as men copulated with wailing children – old and young women. (207)

Later, Ranna was herded into a refugee camp at Badami Baug. Then chance united him with his Nani chichi and Iqbal chacha. Ranna's tale of massacre and mayhem remains a symbolic tale for the overall level of violence, rape, and murder occurring during the social and political upheaval following the independence and Partition of India and Pakistan. Ranna's story represents the massacre of Muslim country folk, just as the deaths, kidnappings, and rapes in the city of Lahore represent the atrocities visited upon those who are not Muslim. Nova Kapadia in *Parsi Fiction* says, "The political preoccupation – the violence and fragmentation caused by the Partition – is perhaps the most ostensible one, and the aspect of the novel that has received considerable critical attention" (34).

At the beginning, Ayah is a cementing force. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh admirers flock around her. Gradually, however, things change, and this change is depicted in the dwindling of the group around Ayah. Though they still come it is no longer together, but in "twos or threes, or singly" (147) things start turning ugly and violent.

Houses are looted and burnt. There are riots. Lenny watches English soldiers being chased by a mob of Sikhs:

> ... their wild long hair and beards rampant, large fevered eyes glowing in fanatic faces, pours into the narrow lane roaring slogans, holding curved swords, shoring up a manic wave of violence that sets Ayah to trembling as she holds me tight. A naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flag: her screamless mouth agape she is staring straight up at me. (134-35)

Lenny would like to attack the mob, but she knows it is useless, "the creature has too many stony hearts, too many sightless eyes, deaf ears, mindless brains and tons of entwined entrails ..." (135). The Sikh mob is followed by a Muslim one. And as Lenny watches she sees the destruction and the killing, "Every short while a group of men, like a whirling eddy, stalls - and like the widening circles of a treacherous eddy dissolving in the mainstream, leaves in its centre the pulpy red flotsam of mangled body" (135). Ayah moans at the horror of the scene and collapses, but the violence excites many, among them Ice-candy-man, "the muscles in his face tight with a strange exhilaration I never again want to see" (135). Whole areas are set on fire. Shalmi, with its Hindu population, is at a blaze, and the watchers on the rooftops enjoy the spectacle. Even Lenny at first is mesmerised:

> It is like a gigantic fireworks display in which stiff figures looking like spread-eagled stick-dolls leap into the air, black against the magenta furnace. Trapped by the spreading flames the panicked Hindus rush in droves from one end of the street to the other. Many disappear down

the smoking lanes. Some collapse in the street. Charred limbs and burnt logs are falling from the sky. (137)

When Lenny finally starts sobbing and screaming, Ice-candy-man tells her and Ayah, '...You must make your hearts stout!' ... 'The fucking bastards! They thought they'd drive us out of Bhatti! We've shown them!" (137).

Seven years old Lenny senses change in the Queen's garden. The people of different communities are sitting apart. The most shocking thing is that even children are not being allowed to interact with one another. When Lenny goes to play with a bunch of Sikh children, Masseur follows her and drags away. People have become so ghettoised that the Sikh women ask little Lenny what her religion is, and when she says she is Parsi, they express surprise at the discovery of new religion. Parsees being a minuscule community are reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures.

Finally, India is divided and a new nation, Pakistan, comes into existence. As Lahore has been dealt to Pakistan, it is no longer a safe place for the Hindus and Sikhs. Most of them have already fled especially the rich and those who have stayed behind, a few are determined to ride out the storm while others are preparing for a showdown. Both sides are getting their knives, choppers, daggers, axes, staves and scythes sharpened. The knife sharpener Sharbat Khan tells Ayah, "I never knew there were so many daggers and knives in Lahore!" (151). Vicious rumours add fuel to the flame of communal frenzy. While Masseur, Hari, Sher Singh and the Government House gardener sitting on Shankar's neglected verandah at the back of Lenny's house, are listening to the news on the radio, Ice-candy-man comes panting after a frantic cycle ride and announces: "A train from Gurdaspur has just come in,' he announces,

panting. 'Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women' breast!" (149).

He looks hatefully at his long-standing friend, Sher Singh, as if he is the culprit. A few days later, Sher Singh flees from Lahore as one of his sisters is raped and her husband is killed in scuffle with their tenants and some goons including Ice-candy-man. This is the height of communalism. Friends have turned into foes. Only a few months before, Ice-candy-man had helped his friend, Sher Singh in getting his tenants evicted from his house. But with partition things had topsy-turvy. Ice-candy-man confesses to the Government House gardener:

> ... I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from Gurdaspur ... that night I went mad, I tell you! I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I'd known all my life! I hated their guts ... I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women ... (156)

The Government House gardener feels completely dismayed and disillusioned. He goes to Delhi where he has already sent his family. The Fallettis Hotel cook runs away from Lahore. Hari gets his Bodhi shaved, becomes a Muslim and acquires a new name, Himat Ali. Moti becomes David Masih and he and his family converts to Christianity. Thus, of all Lenny's friends and acquaintances it is only Ayah who is Hindu and still living in Lahore. She, too, wants to go her relatives in Amritsar but Masseur whom she loves, doesn't let her go saying, "Why do you worry? I'm here. No one will touch a hair on your head" (158). But Masseur is murdered by Ice-candy-man and his mutilated body is discovered in a gunny-sack by Hari alias Himat Ali and Lenny. Ayah is terribly shocked at the news of his death.

Ice-candy-man joins the marauding ruffians out to plunder and ransack the abandoned houses, and also to wipe out the traces of Hindu and Sikh presence in Lahore. Muslim mobs show up at Lenny's house in search of Ayah. Ayah is kidnapped by Ice-candy-man and the mob. She is forced to prostitute her body and coerced into having sex with Ice-candy-man. Ice-candy-man successfully strips Ayah of her identity as a woman and as a Hindu. Whatever love he has for Ayah is smothered by his complete subjugation of her. He keeps her in the kotha even after marrying her. Although Ayah escaped her abductor, but even with her family in Amritsar, she will be marked by her defilement during partition. Thus, she will suffer the psychological and emotional outbursts forever. M. Preetha in *Religious Bigotry in Post Independence India* says, "The character of Ayah is introduced to refer to several millions of displaced, looted and raped Hindus and Muslims during one the harshest political phases in the history of the subcontinent" (168).

Ice-candy-man testify that the traumatic experiences of the partition have jolted the writer to roots and made her restless to give outlet to her outrage at the offensive holocaust which claimed a huge loss of impeccant human lives. The novel bear a testimony to the fact that the women of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims were among the greatest victims of religious and cultural persecution. The subjugation of the other nation, community is repeatedly associated with a feminisation of the men and the violation of the women. The women were kidnapped, abducted, raped and brutally killed in the name of religion. Ajay Saraswati Deshmukh in *Mapping Feminine Angst: Partition* Narratives writes, "One man's religion is other man's poison" (73). The befoulment of woman's body was reckoned to be the greatest dishonour that a family has to endure. And the violence imposed upon women was equivalent to the deviation against one's religion, country, and family. It is

appropriate to say that Sidhwa has successfully created a discourse to bring the turbulent past to the forefront of society. Sidhwa has intelligently reproduced the racial, religious, socioeconomic and political biases which led to the historic bloodshed, plundering, defiling and the disintegration of the society. She furnishes close and personal narrative of history where in the name of religion and nationalism, people who had lived together in relative harmony for centuries committed irresponsible acts of violence against each other. The novelist's appeal to the public is that if India has to forge ahead, she must shake off all religious bigotry and involve in issues that are more economic than communal.

Sidhwa introduces the Parsi character Col. Bharucha, Lenny's doctor and head of the community. He scolds an ignorant Muslim father, "Are you a father or barber? And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don't know what goes on in your house?" (12). It is an apt comment on contemporary political scenario as people were ignorant of the political upheavals in the country. Col. Bharucha blamed British for polio, "There was no polio in India till they brought it here!" (16). Lenny was shocked on this revelation as being Parsees on Lahore on the British Empire, "And, expect for a few designate renegades, the Parsees have been careful to adopt a discreet and politically naïve profile" (16).

This tone of neutrality manifested in the narrator-character while describing the climatic incidents of Partition, is anticipated in the Parsi get-together for the Jashan prayer, to celebrate British victory at the Fire temple Lahore. While the Parsees have all along been loyal to the British government. They, however, fear the Partition of India and consequently, are in a fix as to which community they should support. Col. Bharucha, the domineering Parsi doctor and the President of the 'Parsi Anjuaman' cautioned:

> We must tread carefully ... We have served the English faithfully, and earned their trust ... So, we have prospered! But we are the smallest minority in India ... Only one hundred and twenty thousand in the whole world. We have to be extra wary, or we'll be neither here nor there ... We must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare! (16)

Jashan prayer to celebrate the British victory in the Fire Temple presents the humourous nature of Parsees and their concern with the politics and willy-nilly mental state to support the freedom movement. It is at this moment of Profrockian dilemma Col. Bharucha spoke on the mike:

> It is no longer just a struggle for Home Rule. It is a struggle for power. Who's going to rule once we get *Swaraj*? Not you,' ... 'Hindus, Muslims, and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!' ... 'I hope no Lahore Parsee will be stupid enough to court trouble,' continues the colonel. 'I strongly advise all you to stay at home - and out of trouble.' (36-37)

Dr. Mody expressed his doubt about remaining uninvolved as neighbours will think we are betraying them and siding with the English, in response to these doubts the reply was, Which of your neighbours are you not going to betray?' ... 'Hindu? Muslim? Sikh?'". Col. Bharucha cautioned, "No one knows which way the wind will blow,' ... There may be not one but two – or even three – new nations! And the Parsees might find themselves championing the wrong side if they don't look before they leap!" (37).

One of the Parsi doubted the future possibility of subjugation under any ruler.

Does it matter where they look or where they leap? ... 'If we're stuck with the Hindus they'll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain; if we stuck with the Muslims they'll convert us by the sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs!" (37).

It is this moment of Profrockian dilemma that Col. Bharucha allays the fear of his community by advising them to cast their lot with whoever rules Lahore. It was their age old strategy of passivity towards politics and loyalty to the rules:

> 'Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land!' ... 'As long as we do not interfere we have nothing to fear! As long as we respect the customs of our rulers - as we always have - we'll be all right! Ahura Mazda has looked after us for thirteen hundred years: he will look after us for another thirteen hundred!' ... 'We will cast our lot with whoever rules Lahore!'. (39)

The composite culture and unity of undivided India can be seen in the character of Ayah. She stands for that as her friends admire her who are from various ethnic groups. Lenny is in custody of Ayah, Shanta a Hindu, who is covetous, beautiful; tempting has great fan-following from all strata of the society irrespective of religion, cast and creed. The character of Ayah and Lenny represents two different cultural, socioeconomic classes but their strong bond of relationship harmonises these differences in the colonial situation of subcontinent's partition.

The Ayah is undiscriminating towards all and she becomes a symbol of composite culture. Lenny's close relationship with Ayah takes her out of the confines of the bourgeois Parsi community and exposes her to the heterogeneity of

sociocultural perspectives of Lahore at the time of partition. Lenny's intimate relationship with her Ayah and her visits to the Sikh, Muslim village of Pir Pindo take her outside the bourgeois circle of the Parsi community and make her aware of the heterogeneous cultural context of her society at large. Sidhwa's text figures Lenny exercising agency by questioning the hegemonic structures of meaning that infuse her everyday experiences. Her decentered view of the end of British rule within her local community helps to defamiliarise the dominant interpretation of history and nationalism at the time of Partition and disclose its patriarchal and majoritarian underpinnings.

Lenny saw the religious harmony and social synthesis in Pir Pindo. The village Choudhary defied the rumours of ethnic riots, "But all that is in the cities ... It won't affect our lives" (55-56). The villagers, Sikh and Muslim, erupted in protest. The Sikh granthi talked the racial unity and denied the possibility of riots in the village, "Our villages come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (56).

Chaudhary replied Imam Din that gives us the glimpses of the contrasting communal attitudes of townsman and country-folk:

> But our relationships with the Hindus are bound by strong ties. The city folk can afford to fight ... we can't. We are dependent on each other: bound by our toil; by Mandi prices set by the Banyas – they're our common enemy - those city Hindus. To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh? (56)

Sidhwa draws our attention to the debate regarding how far can the term 'diaspora' be used and extended to describe 'religious' migration arising out of

specific geo-political crisis. Lenny is thrown into a psychological battle as she desperately tries to grasp an understanding of the rapidly changing world around her. The identities of ordinary people are increasingly fragmented and fractured.

Just prior to Partition, as her familiar characters turn into token religious nomenclatures, Ayah as a Hindu, Imam Din and the popsicle vendor as Muslim, Hari and Moti the untouchables, and Godmother and her nuclear family, Parsees, the narrator naively puts up the most vital question, "What is God?" (94).

With Partition, the discourse of secular rationalism and intimacy that reared Lenny finally becomes discredited and consigned to the flames. As the Hindu - Muslim conflict gathers momentum, Lenny confesses that her perception of people changed. Gradually, with the brutal killing of the innocent masseur and the abduction of her Ayah, she understands that her world has been broken and she will have to work with the fragments she is left with. Thus, she strives to envision and articulate new allegiances that can carry her forward, contending realities and forms of knowledge. Lenny's relationship with Hamida, as her new Ayah, postpartition, makes her more selfconscious and understanding. She continues her task of envisioning and revisioning individuals and communities in such times of crisis. She narrates the story of Partition victims in multiple voices like Hamida from the perspective of the Muslim cook Himat Ali, her Parsi mother who has given her work and the Sikh guard of the women's 'jail'. Thus *Ice-candy-man* critiques generalised versions of partition history by giving us not one but the series of perspectives, through the various characters in Lenny's world, which counter one another.

The power of allegiance to any religious ideology to mask human cruelties is explicated by the ice-candy-man's role in the novel. The effects of historical disaster

are perhaps brought in most meaningful and human terms in the abuse of the Hindu Ayah in the hands of the title character, the ice-candy-man. This complex and layered character, Ice-candy-man reads Urdu newspapers, the *Urdu Digest*, and even English dailies like *Civil and Military Gazette*. He informs the Ayah and her group of friends about national and world news. Occasionally, he drops a few insightful remarks like, "If we want India back we must take pride in our customs, our clothes, our languages" (28-29). Significantly, he falls short of mentioning the word 'religion' here As the other characters in the text dwindle into religious symbols, the Muslim vendor succumbs to religious fanaticism and intolerance. His parentage too is important in this context – his father is puppeteer, while his mother is a prostitute. His paternity or, more accurately, his family lineage is in dispute and so is his ability to tell about his wife. It is interesting to note here that while India is often figured as the motherland, Pakistan, on the contrary, is neither mother nor fatherland, but was inspired by the poet Iqbal's vision of Muslim brotherhood. This metaphor is partly literalised as he abducts and forcibly shames and ruins Ayah's dignity and justifies himself by citing amorous romantic poets such as Faiz, Mir and Ghalib. His defending argument when confronted by the Godmother that otherwise the Muslim zealots would have killed her is a grotesque approximation of Jinnah's famous historical words on religious tolerance on the day of the birth of Pakistan. Lenny thus hints at the human fallacies of the national figure heads and demystifies them – Gandhi in the case of India and Jinnah in the case of Pakistan.

The narrator thereby also critique the relationship between lie, fiction and history. The most disturbing aspect of the novel is the Ice-candy-man's lie about taking good care of the Ayah while he turned her into a prostitute – that troubles Lenny throughout her life. The lie – which is actually synonymous to the betrayal of

the trust of others – jars the sanctity of many preconceived ideas and notions about humans and their behaviour in the young psyche of the child. Partition is interestingly placed around the middle of the story of the girl's awakening to life and history. So, in a way Partition seems to apart her world of dreams, fantasies and fables while suddenly jolting her out into a rude, nightmarish and grim reality. The lie of the title character takes away, at least partly, the all-important meaning from not only Lenny's and the Ayah's life, but also the conception and idealisation of Pakistan in the eyes of the readers.

The novel therefore points out the fact that liberal freedom is a perilous balance between the need for freedom from tyranny and the need for a centre that can withstand the threat of disintegration. Lenny's narrative of the birth of Pakistan shows us how liberal freedom is under threat from forces of anarchy, in the guise of religious rioters and overzealous mobs. As a subaltern, the narrator hints toward a much needed subtle balance between freedom and tyranny.

The following chapter, describes the Sidhwa's portrayal of women in feminist aspects and endeavours to do full justice to her characters. She has made a conscious effort to change the image of woman through her novel. No longer have fatalists, her women characters questioned the patriarchal social system and even revolt against it.

Chapter Four

Feminine Aspects

In South Asian history, the subcontinent of India has undergone two major Partitions, first into India and Pakistan in 1947, and the subsequent Partition of Pakistan into East Pakistan and West Pakistan in 1971. There is no denying fact that gendered violence has been a part of the everyday and local experiences of women during Partition, although this fact has been mostly sidelined in nationalist historiography. The wide spread violence based on ethnic, communitarian, linguistic and religious identity led to the abduction, mutilation, rape and death of several women. Many women were made to walk naked in rows in the streets and their horrible paintings were drawn. The real life accounts of the survivors and witnesses of Partition, which are missing from nationalist historiography gives us this version of the history of Partition. The enormity of event makes it impossible to include everything under the roof of one objective history.

When India gained independence from Great Britain in 1947, the subcontinent was divided into separate nations: India, the Hindu homeland, and Pakistan, the Muslim homeland. To carry out this political solution to long-standing religious conflict, millions were forced to move, and this mass migration soon turned into slaughter. While exact numbers are not known, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands died. Those who survived also suffered—becoming refugees, losing fortunes and homes, succumbing to hunger and disease. Countless women were raped, then punished over when their husbands and families rejected them as polluted. Much of the bloodshed and anguish took place on the Punjabi plains in northern India, a rich farmland intersected by five rivers. Lahore, a major city in the Punjab once known as

the Parsees of India was given to Pakistan. Because of the city's strategic position, it turned into a massive refugee camp and the site of some of the worst partition violence.

This is the historical background for *Ice-candy-man*. The novel's first person narrator is an eight year old Lenny. At first consideration, this young girl from Lahore might seem to be a strange voice to tell such a story, for at the outset she admits that her world is compressed. Taking full advantage of this limited view, however, Bapsi Sidhwa relates through the eyes of her child narrator the partition story from a domestic standpoint and, more significantly from a feminine view. Lenny's privileged position and her religious background lend her version of partition a quality that order novels about this tempestuous period in Indo-Pakistani history lack. The momentous events leading to partition and the aftermath are constructed incrementally through the child narrator's point of view, as she repeats overheard adult conversations, tells of strange sighs, and sometimes even misrepresents or misinterprets situations which are later explained.

Memory plays an important role in claiming the truth about the gendered violence on women during Partition. Yet the whole process of 'memory' is complicated as memory is constantly invented and obliterated in the process of narrating Partition. Sidhwa's awareness of the ever burning issue of Partition seems to lie at the base of her motivation to write *Ice-candy-man*. She wanted her novel to function as a recording of particular history, hoping that one might learn a lesson from that history. Her narrative of the event challenges and questions official history retrieving from silence the horror and loss experienced by men and women, by showing the political impact concerning the Independence of the Indian subcontinent had on ordinary people's everyday life, how those decisions produced unforeseen

reactions, how far they were crucial in determining people's identity in terms of religion, community and citizenship, nationality and in stressing one's position in terms of gender.

The lines by the Urdu poet Mohammed Iqbal that open *Ice-candy-man* are a metaphor of the writer's conscious attempt at breaking the silence surrounding the most disquieting aspects of Partition:

> Shall I hear the lament of the nightingale, submissively lending my ear?
>
> Am I the rose to suffer its cry in silence year after year?
>
> The fire of verse gives me courage and bids me no more to be faint. (1)

More lines by Iqbal, quoted at the beginning of the last chapter, close the novel:

> Give me the (mystic) wine that burns all veils,
>
> The wine by which life's secret is revealed,
>
> The wine whose essence is eternity,
>
> The wine which opens mysteries concealed.
>
> Lift up the curtain, give me power to talk.
>
> And make the sparrow struggle with the hawk. (275)

The two epigraph, significantly placed at the beginning and at the end of the novel respectively as a self-incitement and an invocation. Through Iqbal, Sidhwa expresses the urgency of wording the tragedy and the difficulty of doing so. Her feeble voice has to struggle against the numberless voices of official discourses which

make people's suffering speechless. Hence the need for a different narrative that only the strength of the 'mystic wine' or the 'fire of verse' can grant.

On the very last page of the novel, a further sentence throws light on the writer's intentions, "Even the guard ... squats by Ice-candy-man, gleaning wisdom from his comments on life and its ways and the wayward ways of God and men and women" (277). Sidhwa does not stop at the world 'men,' gendered but customarily inclusive of humanity in its entirety; she clearly states that humanity is not made up of neuter but of men and women. Allotting a visible place to women in her statement is tantamount to a declaration that her tale of Partition is gender-conscious. In *Ice-candy-man*, the crux of the novel is the rape of Ayah,

> They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and the bare feet – that want to move backwards – are forced forward instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulder, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seams shows. A sleeve tears under her arm.
>
> The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart and their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, lift her into it. Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces. (183)

Sidhwa presents the whole load of visual images of rape of women – 'intolerable shrieks and wails' of women being raped, 'hairy vengeful demons', 'tangled pile of unrecognizable bodies' and gunny sacks filled with chopped-off

breasts. Hamida, who was Lenny's second Ayah, had many a times wept to herself in the dark recalling her days of abduction by the Sikhs in Amritsar. Many women during the Partition were killed by their men folk who considered honour of the women more important than their lives. If the few women were spared of rape by force, they were alternately forced into prostitution. Hemang Desai in *Re-narrating Partition* says, "Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* is also based on the trope of a woman who undergoes brutal victimization in the communitarian conflict unleashed by partition" (14).

The condition of women is worse. Women in postcolonial countries are marginalised and stereotyped on grounds of gender. The experience of women during Partition cannot be heard in the male-centered terms of the struggle. Sidhwa who belonged to the minority group of Parsees was not a victim of the Partition but she has seen her near and dear ones suffer with whom she could identify herself as a woman. Esther Daimari in *Women, Partition and Memory* says about violence, "Violence is gendered when it emerges from the vicious notions of masculinity that emphasise violence and control" (22).

In India, British colonialism used religious conversations as a tool for dominating and modernising the colonised. As a result of the partitioning of the subcontinent in 1947, we are now contending with ideas of fundamentalism, communalism, and the recovery of the sacred as the form of resistance in many parts of the world. In the modern, secular age of children's rights, the treatment of the child during Partition is of particular interest. Children were exposed to an angry and violent world that was fuelled by religious fundamentalisms. The characters Ranna and Lenny in Sidhwa's *Ice-candy-man* highlights how children who survived Partition were condemned with the memories that forever changed their lives both physically

and psychologically; after such traumatic events, there was no way of returning to the life they had once known. Because Partition infected the children's growing and impressionable years, it forced them into maturity way before their time; they have since been continually reminded of the time they were robbed of their innocence.

Children not only witnessed the brutal deaths of their families, they were savagely beaten, struck down by unimaginable objects—as experienced by Ranna. Partition violence against children resulted in trauma, misplaced identity, confusion, and the loss of childhood; surviving children are still affected, tormented, and horrified with events they endured. A whole generation of children was sacrificed to Partition, their lives and futures were decided for them. As a result of the decolonisation of the subcontinent, children were forced to have their identities shaped, and constructed, by an angry world dominated by fundamentalisms and division.

In her autobiographical novel, *Ice-candy-man*, Sidhwa uses a child narrator, closely connected to her own situation as she herself was a child living in Parsi family in Lahore at the time of Partition. *Ice-candy-man* is primarily about Lenny's education, earned the hard way. K. Yeshoda Nanjappa comments in *Narrating Identity, Gendered Violence and Abduction: Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-candy-man*, "Though her polio-stricken leg puts an end to her schooling, every moment of her time with Ayah is an education by itself" (78). Lenny as a girl suffering from polio is confined to her small world as she asserts in the very beginning, "My world is compressed" (1). Her polio stricken leg is an obstacle in her intellectual growth and development as she cannot even go to school. Yet, she does receive her education through other unconventional patterns. Her attachment to Ayah allows her to enter the lower-class world of gardeners, cooks, ice-cream sellers, etc. The people around her belong to

different religions and communities: they are Parsees, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and English.

Sidhwa reflects how at the core of the Lahore of 1940's, is tolerant, balanced and unprejudiced civil society. The cosmopolitan lexicon of Lahore of the pre partition days is one of the social diversity and political freedom, free from virulent communalism. Ayah's chocolate chemistry draws men of all religions to her – Hari, the gardener, Imam Din, the Muslim cook, the handsome Masseur, the Ice-candy-man, Sher Singh, the Sikh zoo-keeper, Sharbhat Khan the knife garderner and the butcher—and the gatherings of these men in the Queen's Garden, their regular haunt, is one of shared friendship.

As the men compete for Ayah's attention, their love for her is sensual and unconditional, normal and human. It is this kind of a genial and harmonious space that brings Ayah there with Lenny day after day. As she sits there among her admirers, among things which love to crawl beneath her sari – ladybirds, glow-worms, Ice-candy-man's toes and masseur's hands, she dusts them off with impartial nonchalance. As Lenny watches with wonder her beloved Ayah and the power of Ayah's sensuality she learns many a lesson of life.

Sidhwa foregrounds a warm and affectionate relationship between Ayah and Lenny, uninfluenced and unmonitored by the adults in Lenny's family. In spite of the unprivileged position Ayah occupies in the society, she has the potential to exercise her agency and this fascinates as well as educates Lenny. As she follows Ayah to fairs, cheap restaurants and slaughter houses, she learns of human needs, frailties, cruelties and joys. She also learns from Ayah the tyranny magnets exercise over metals. She understands Ayah's strategic use of her multiple subject-positions as a

means to subvert the discourses that inscribe her body in multiple and reliant ways and she knows that it stands in stark contrast to her mother's subordinate position in the gendered and unequal power struggle within the family and the patriarchal and class power structures that govern her marital status. Ayah's agency is fascinating as well as inspiring for Lenny who had often been a witness to her mother's lack of agency, her internalisation of the cultural norms of femininity.

The patriarchal power relations which dictate her family indoctrinate Lenny to internalise a sense of inferiority and believe in her lack of autonomy as a girl. From the beginning she is able to notice the differences between her own skinny, sallow, distorted and ugly body and her brother Adi's beautiful body which appears to be formed of gold mercury. Lenny is aware of Adi's privileged and preferential status as a male and one of light skin which helps him pass as 'British' in Lahore. Ayah calls him as her little English baba. Lenny internalises a hatred of her gender identity and learns to draw connections between femininity and shame. In spite of this internalised sense of inferiority, Lenny learns to exercise her agency. She observes and understands the power relations that operate between her father and mother. Despite the fact that her father exercises his superiority in all matters concerning the household including finances, Lenny notices the restrained and subtle ways in which her mother tries to exercise her agency and has her way.

Lenny's passage from the bliss of childhood to the awareness of the pleasures and pains of the adult world is heavily marked by Partition. To her, Partition does not mean the strategies of politicians, it is rather what takes place among the people she meets: their diversity, which Lenny was used to taking for granted, suddenly takes shape and, while before she looked on people for what they are, Partition forces her to see them for what they represent; it is the refugees coming and going, the fires in

Lahore, the killings, the abduction of her Ayah. Partition is ingrained within the progression of Lenny's growth, as well as within the very texture of the novel, it has crucial role in Lenny's learning about sexuality, community and nation and in shaping the awareness of her identity, of others and of the world.

Lenny also had the opportunity to visit a nearby village a couple of times and came into contact with many other people. She achieves sexual maturity guided by her oversexed cousin. Non-formal access to knowledge enables Lenny's growth and brings her face to face with the harsh realities of society. As communalism invade Lahore, Lenny comes to realise the many differences among people. She says:

> And I become aware of religious differences.
>
> It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves - and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah – she is a token. A Hindu. (93)

Protected by her family's wealth and stability, Lenny herself is not directly affected by the chaotic conditions. She lives in a safe and predominantly woman's world, spending most of her time with either Ayah or the elderly woman she simply call Godmother. To Lenny the world of men remains shadowy on the personal level except for her encounters with her cousin, who is exploring his newly discovered sexuality. Those men on the national level who make the decisions for millions of people remain incomprehensible. As she understands the situation, remote and calculating men create the climate for violence, and ordinary men carry out the acts. Women, she learns, are the victims, as is the case with Ayah and the women who have been raped, then placed in the rehabilitation quarters next to Lenny's family

home. On the other hand, she witnesses her mother's display of strength when a gang threatens their home, and she learns about the risk taken by her mother and electric-aunt when the smuggle gasoline to Hindu friends fleeing Lahore. Godmother also serves as a feminine ideal; she is a powerful personality who can face wrong doing head and correct matters. All in all, Lenny grasps an important truth: Women do not resort to violence to solve problems; men do.

In *Ice-candy-man*, part of the book's interest lies in this faithful rendering of Lenny's daily life with her nuclear and extended family, as well as her adventures with Ayah. Even though Lenny belongs to the upper class, she experiences all levels of society, and being an intelligent observer, she provides a multicolored account of life in the homes and on the streets of Lahore. Also interesting are her revelations about the Parsees, an Asian community of 200,000 or so people who are descended from Persian immigrants and whose faith is Zoroastrianism. As the story progresses, though, the spectre of partition disrupts this cozy life, and Lenny's education gets under way.

First, Lenny watches Ayah's circle of admirers dissolve. Once a number of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Sikh men are drawn together by Ayah's beauty, but not even her feminine allure can overcome religious intolerance. Lenny learns that the little Muslim boy she has played with during her trip to the countryside was the only survivor when a marauding band attacked his village, massacred the men, and violated the women. From the roof of their house, she and her brother watch parts of Lahore burn. They listen to the weeping of women who had been raped and then, rejected by their families, were relegated to rehabilitation centres where few would be restored. Finally, she watches the kidnapping of Ayah by a gang that Ice-candy-man leads.

Moving from innocent to grim reality, Lenny ends her account on a positive note. Caught up in history, the native, spoiled, and fortunate little Lenny gains knowledge about the larger world. It is full of deception, injustice, hypocrisy, religious enmity, and cruelty. At the same time, she has witnessed the resilence of the human spirit and the power of individual courage. She has also realised the role women can play, women such as Godmother. People bring to her sores and swollen joints. Distilling the right herbs, adroitly instilling the right word in the right ear, she secures wishes, smoothes relationships, cures illness, battle wrongs, solaces grief and prevents mistakes. These revelations and the knowledge she has gained from them will serve her well as she enters an uncertain world.

Some reviewers have complained about the narrative voice, observing that Lenny is too precocious for her age. In making such a criticism, they seem to ignore the second narrative voice, that of an unidentified adult who reveals herself rarely. This other narrator stays in the background until Lenny has established her own authority firmly, and she speaks for the first time when Lenny tells how her mother repeats clever remarks the child has made. Such a fictional technique seems all wrong: here is a novel, written at times in an almost lyrical fashion, a historical account told in a present time, viewed from a child's perspective except when an adult adds her comments. Yet the technique, however odd, works. The narrator is not a child after all, but the child in the adult.

But within her own narrative she has also encompassed the narratives of other women like her mother, Godmother, Hamida and even the silence of Ayah towards the end of the narrative. She overcomes the temptation of an ego-centric narrator of an autobiography and sees herself only in relation to the women around her. Lenny, who had gone through the trauma of being sexually abused by her cousin, relates her

coincidence with that of Ayah who had been raped and turned into a prostitute. She reflects, "If those grown men pay to do what my comparatively small cousin tried to do, then Ayah is in trouble. I think of Ayah twisting Ice-candy-man's intrusive toes and keeping the butcher and wrestler at arm's length" (241).

The analysis of *Ice-candy-man* reveals that the female characters pulsate with a will and life of their own. While these characters are unselfconscious of the biological essentialism of their sex, they cut loose the constraints imposed by the gender which is a social construct and which has come into existence through centuries of biased, motivated and calculated orchestration of the aggressive patriarchal postulates. In a patriarchal social set up, 'masculinity' is associated with superiority whereas 'femininity' is linked with inferiority, and while masculinity implies strength, action, self-assertion and domination, femininity implies weakness, passivity, docility, obedience and self-negation. *Ice-candy-man*, though ostensibly a hero-oriented novel subtly but effectively subverts the ingrained elements of patriarchy, privileging female will, choice, strength along with the feminine qualities of compassion and motherhood.

The central consciousness of the fictional world of *Ice-candy-man* is represented by a young girl, Lenny, who is lame. The lameness of the narrator-protagonist becomes suggestive of the handicap a woman creative writer faces, when she decides to wield the pen, because writing, being an intellectual exercise, is considered a male upholder, outside the routine of a woman's submissive domesticity. Her recovery symbolises the overcoming of the constraint on the intellectual activity of writing by Sidhwa. By making Lenny the narrator of the novel, the novelist lends weight and validity to the feminine perspective on the nature of the surrounding reality.

An essential difference between a feminist text and male discourse is that in the latter it is the male who is invested the qualities of heroism, sacrifice, justice and action which generally the female protagonists remain the recipients of the male bounty and chivalry. In feminist text, it is the woman who performs and controls and promotes the action by her active involvement and concern and in the process it is she who acquires the attributes of heroism and glory.

The Ayah is a flame of sensuousness and female vitality around whom the male moths hang constantly and hanker for the sexual warmth she radiates. She acts like the queen bee who controls the actions and emotions of her male admirers: the Fallattis cook, the Government House gardener, the butcher, the compactly muscled head and body masseur and the Ice-candy-man. The measure of Ayah's power is seen when she objects to the political discussion among her multi-religious admirers, as she fears discord the Ice-candy-man defers her wish and says, it's just a discussion among friends and they won't bring it up again. Epitomizing the strength of the feminity of a female, she infuses in Lenny the ideas of independence and choice.

Ayah is fully aware and confident of herself as an individual, who cannot be taken advantage. At the same time, she is fiercely loyal to the interests of the family she serves and is extremely protective of Lenny, as a mother would be, besides being emotionally attached to her. She suffers during the partition riots; she is abducted by the followers of the Ice-candy-man, ravished and raped by the offenders, kept as the Ice-candy-man's mistress for a few months and then is forced to become the Ice-candy-man's bride. Her name is changed from Shanta to Mumtaz and she is kept at a kotha even after her marriage. During the interval between her abduction and marriage, she is used like a sewer by drunks, pedlars, sahibs and cut-throats with the support of Ice-candy-man. But as soon as the opportunity presents itself, she seizes

her freedom and gets away from the man she does not love. She is firm and decisive. She tells Godmother that wants to go to her family and she does not want to live with him. And this decision is in spite of the Ice-candy-man's love for her who weeps, swivels and pleads humbly with the Godmother to let her remain with him as he has married the Ayah. He receives a thrashing at the hands of the burly Sikh Guard at the Recovered Women's Camp gate, where Ayah is admitted and turns into a mad *faqir*, going to the extent of following the Ayah to Amritsar.

Abducted and violated women were often marked as impure and condemned to social death. Thus the woman though physically alive would be deemed symbolically dead. Such women who were violated and rejected may be said to be occupying a zone between two deaths, rather than between life and death. The abducted women are shrouded in many layers of silence and for society still enjoins upon them the silence of dead. Ayah perhaps knew about the fate that awaited her when she returned to her family in Amritsar. Yet she refuses to compromise or reconcile with her abductor turned husband. Ayah by her rejection of her marriage insists on being other to both social space of kinship: nation and patriarchal community and through her willed return to the everyday life of her family's domestic space in India, she troubles and rejects both discourses of suicide and nationalism. Where women like Ayah question the interpretation of their identities by patriarchal community and state interests, they perform an act of resistance that destabilises the dominant order. Thus the narrative as foregrounded from the perspective of the young girl Lenny goes against the grain of hegemonic nationalist discourse.

Lenny's mother conforms to the traditional image of a fidel, faithful and serving wife who seems to be capable only of humouring things out of her husband. She submits to the moods of the man she is wedded to, tolerating in the process, the

conventional hegemony given to the male of the species among human beings. In *Ice-candy-man*, it is Lenny's mother and Lenny's aunt who play the sterling humanitarian and heroic role of fighting the lives and property of Hindus. Clearing herself of Lenny's accusation that she has been helping in the communal inferno, she says, "We were only smuggling the rationed petrol to help our Hindu and Sikh friends to run away ... And also for the convoys to send kidnapped women, like your Ayah, to their families across the border" (242). Thus, it is the two women who undertake the risky job of saving lives in danger and the fact significance in the fictional scheme of things.

Towering high among the women protagonists is the vibrant figure of Lenny's Godmother whose name is Rodabai. Godmother's personality sparkle with razor-sharp wit, her indefatigable stamina, her boundless love for Lenny, and her social commitment. Her sense of humour, her deer-like agility, in spite of her old age, and her power to mould, modify and order not only individuals but even the system, when she so desires, earn her respect and admiration of people around her. But besides these qualities she is endowed with profound understanding of human existence and her wisdom is revealed when she consoles the Ayah, in the aftermath of what has been done to her:

> That was fated, daughter. It can't be undone. But it can be forgiven ... Worse things are forgiven. Life goes on and the business of living buries the debris of our pasts. Hurt, happiness ... all fade impartially ... to make way for fresh joy and new sorrow. That's the way of life.
>
> (262)

The most glorious example of her self-confidence, authoritiveness, and capacity to handle crisis-situations deftly is provided by her dealing with the Ice-candy-man and the rescue of the Ayah she effects after she has been kidnapped and is kept at a kotha. The Ice-candy-man is propped with the power of the pimp-community, consisting of lawless elements. Endowed with a glib tongue, he is not easy person to deal with. I would like to quote snatches of the confronting conversation, in order to bring out, in full measure, the power to annihilate the adversary Rodabai possesses.

Godmother's undaunted visit to the disreputable 'Hira Mandi' and the rescue of the Ayah, once she is convinced that the Ayah is being kept against her will, are commendable indeed. Godmother concentrates in her character what the feminists feel is very important for a woman to realisee her individuality: the feeling of self-worth.

But then we come across the oppression and exploitation of her younger sister by Rodabai. In spite of the younger sister's slaving obedience, she is treated shabbily and frequently humiliated by Rodabai. Slavesister's humiliation in the presence of others becomes unseemly and unpalatable. She is leading the life of a bonded slave, forced to suppress herself in every interaction with the old lady; she is not allowed to experience her discretion or her will in any situation. Sidhwa wants to convey an important message, or warning that the exploitation, manipulation and suppression of one individual by another are not confined to the male-female relationship. These can exist between a female-female relationships as well and become as vicious and debilitating for the victim as when a female dominates and exploits a woman. The feminists, are being made alive to the dangers of replicating the patriarchal principles and thus perpetuating the class of the exploiters and the exploited amongst

themselves. This makes Sidhwa's feminist credo broader, fairer and more responsive to the human condition.

Subhash Chandra in *Ice-Candy-Man: A Feminist Perspective* rightly says:

> *Ice-candy-man* thus, becomes a feminist text in the true sense of the term, successfully attempting to bring to the centre-stage the female protagonists. These protagonists, while on the one hand, come alive on account of their realistic presentation, on the other they serve as the means of consciousness-raising among the female segment of society. (125)

Literature is a powerful tool in the hands of creative writers to modulate and change the societal framework, and Sidhwa through her extremely absorbing and interesting work seeks to continue to the process of change that has already started all over the world, involving a reconsideration of women's right and status, and a radical restructuring of social thought. Sidhwa belongs to that group of women creative writers who have started to depict determined women for whom the traditional role is inadequate, women who wish to affirm their independence and autonomy and are perfectly capable of assuming new roles and responsibilities. Sidhwa wishes to build a world which is free of dominance and hierarchy, a word that rests on the principles of justice and equality and is truly human. Reena Mitra comments in *Gender as Destiny: Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-candy-man*:

> Sidhwa conceives of historical representation not only as a welter of statistical events but as a repertoire of inexhaustible possibilities in terms of happenings as well as human experience, central and peripheral – all merging into an organic totality which forbids a linear

interpretation of the past and offers instead an entirety of existence.

(38)

When the novel was originally published in London, it appeared under the title Sidhwa has intended, *Ice-candy-man*. In the 1991 American edition, the title was changed to *Cracking India*, because the publishers thought Americans would misunderstand "ice candy" and confuse it with drugs. Unfortunately, the new title diminishes Ice-candy-man's centrality and blurs his symbolic role. Sidhwa said that this character represents what she considers the 'icy', unstable quality of politicians who determine the fate of those they rule. In fact, at one point in the novel the second narrator comments, after Lenny relates how her mother took her to see Mahatma Gandhi. Other political figures of the time—Jawaharlal Nehru, Louis Mountbatten, S.C. Bose, Mohammed Ali Jinnah—do not fare much better in the novel, identified as they are with Ice-candy-man. As Lenny realises, it is the ordinary person, a woman like Godmother, who battles wrongs not the remote, icy men in power.

This exquisitely written, tightly constructed novel offers an engaging glimpse into Asian life and a vivid record of a dark chapter in history. At the same time, it follows a child's education, which prepares her for entry into an adult world whose dreadful side she has witnessed at first hand, finally, the novel presents a vision of a place where feminine values will rule and, in Lenny's words, where Ice-candy-man becomes a truly harmless fellow and where the guard lets down his guard.

The analysis of the various female characters, across the novel, reveals a male obsession and fascination with female body and sexuality. The sexual awakening, victimisation, and emotional suppression of female sexuality highlight how women's bodies are effectively controlled and exploited through cultural traditions and the

manipulation of religious rules regarding the position of men and women in society. Consequently, the female body becomes a battleground upon which men fight their wars to uphold national and international agendas and nurture their sense of superiority. The female figure is thus thrown into an emotional battle to fulfill the male oriented culturally constructed duties, guised as modesty and obedience, and an inner urge to rebel and pursue her own desire. This desire can simply be to choose a marriage partner, to attain education or to be simply loved and respected as equal individuals.

Sidhwa remains critical of loveless marriages and allows her characters the liberty of walking out of their oppressive marriages as in the case of Ayah who leaves her husband Ice-candy-man. Lenny worries about getting married due to her dark skin colour and limping leg. Her mother works hard to keep her married life going and Ayah goes through a disastrous forced marriages to her abductor. Similarly, is forcefully married to a middle aged dwarf by her mother. Sidhwa does not entirely highlight marriage as a power struggle where women remain victims, as through the character of Godmother, a dominating house-wife, and her unmarried sister Slavesister, Sidhwa shows how Godmother exercises her influence in her network of friends and over her unmarried and thereby dependent can also be a cause of misery and oppression as much as in the case of an unwanted or forced marriage. In other words, marriage is not always the conflicting confines from which the female figure has to break free to attain agency or authority.

She also points out the physical, psychological and emotional punishments women are subjected to as a routine part of daily lives. These punishments are often given on the pretext of offences, insults and even imagined infidelities. Thus women's bodies become disputed terrorists and men across Pakistan lay their claim over these

wolves in their own ways. In other words, Sidhwa's portrayal of her Muslim male and female characters may seem stereotypical and rather harsh it seems. However, in reality she does attempt to present a balanced picture of a patriarchal world where men are capable of both generosity and selfishness. Sidhwa adopts a daring approach while dealing with issues like female sexuality being a non-Muslim. Furthermore, Sidhwa focuses on her characters as individuals grappling with the unjust social attitudes.

Sidhwa's Ice-candy-man transforms Ayah into his ideal image by not only forcing her to change her religion but also giving her a new Muslim name and thereby assigns her a new identity. He falls in love with his creation as Ayah spends her days passively restricted within his house. However, as soon as Ayah gets opportunity she escapes leaving him transfixed in his delusional image of Ayah as Mumtaz. As Ayah shed the forced identity of a new religion and name and reverts back to her old self and identity Ice-candy-man ironically loses his sense of belonging and identity, as discussed before and wanders around like a beggar. It is as if Ayah, captured in the mirror of his imagination, breaks the spell and shows him his ugly picture of corrupt inner-self and double standards. Unable to cope and fathom his own doings Ice-candy-man slips into a delirium.

In this retelling of the partition story, the role of women emerges paramount: first as victims, then as saviours. Historical report show that during the rage of partition violence, women were paraded naked through the streets before mass rapes; their children were thrown into the air and caught on swords as they watched; and their bodies were mutilated, their breasts chopped off. At the same time, women like those portrayed in *Ice-candy-man* performed heroic deeds and possibly brought some

Chapter Five

Summation

Diasporic writing as a creative genre encapsulates the shared social and psychological preoccupations of whole dispersed generations and their offspring. Diaspora, is therefore, a scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which are a new creation and a fight to survive. After independence, the women novelists of quality have amazingly attained new heights both inside and outside India.

Many Indian writers have written about the mass transfer of Hindus and Muslims on the side of the border, plus their loss of property, lives, and women's rape. Such women when rescued were left as unclean and dishonoured. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani Parsi woman, now settled in U.S.A. She is known for her keen perception, sensitive portrayal of characters, diversity in themes, supple style and punching sense of humour. As she was physically challenged due to polio she used to read much. This might have inspired her for writing and started writing novels. She is the member of Parsi Zoroastrian sect, a distinguished community that migrated to South Asia in the 7th century from Iran. As Sidhwa is Parsi by birth, her fiction is dominated by Parsi community. Sidhwa documents Parsi culture, business manners and the way of life in her fiction. Sidhwa's humourous tone, irrelevance to established traditions, sense of fair play, subtle characterisation and firm presentations of events impact a specific charm to her novels. She holds a very special place among contemporary writers of English fiction in the subcontinent.

She is known for her racy style, wit, narrative technique and thematic orientation. A widely acclaimed feminist novelist. She is one of the few women writers who bring theory into practice for in her own life she has done a lot for the

ement of women and children. Her life revolves around writing about women's
es and having their abuses redressed. Sidhwa emerges as a real voice of women of
Asian subcontinent who are expected to have silenced voices.

Sidhwa deals with both the pre and postcolonial period of the Indian
bcontinent. Sidhwa is not alone in her need to explain her heritage, but shares with
her Third World writers, particularly those writing in a non native language, the
mpulsion to explain her culture to an audience unfamiliar with that culture. The
teresting feature of Sidhwa's writing from the postcolonial perspective is her use of
e English language.

The language is the major preoccupation of the postcolonial writer. Even
hough Sidhwa writes in English, it is a new English punctuated with words from the
native language. However it is not a simple addition of words from the native
language to English. While the writer translates a number of words from the native
languages, a large number of words are also left untranslated. The use of untranslated
words is a clear signifier that the language which actually informs the novel in another
language.

This paper attempts effectively with the story of the partition, thus, it is not simply about India and Pakistan; it is about Hindus and Muslims and the wedge strategically inserted between the two communities by British opportunism. It is about the violence perpetrated by a callous patriarchal set-up on the hapless female segment of society. Sidhwa has an abundance of inventive and narrative energy manifested in her fiction, which warrants the careful critical attention of those interested in new possibilities for imaginative prose which restores to viable fictional means—largely realistic—for tracing the compelling force to historical events on individual lives and

presenting a collage of the lives and experiences of men and women caught in the web of history. It is Sidhwa who gave a distinct identity to the Pakistani novel in English.

Sidhwa's novel *Ice-candy-man* is studied from different angles. It is mainly a partition novel. It is a Parsi novel like Faruk Dhondy's or Rohinton Mistry's novels. It is known for its feminist perspectives. It is the novel which brings forth the diverse experiences of women belonging to different communities; their domestic lives, their individual features, their harrowing experiences of sexual exploitation, their resistance and their sexuality at the background of the Pakistani and Parsi ethos. The novel can be deftly approached as an effort in the genre of the women-centered writing where assortments of characters bring out effectively the relationship between the two sexes in the society.

All the novels of Sidhwa exhibit the consciousness of the Parsi community to which she belongs. Her fictional discourses turn out to be ethnocentric discourse which it is a matter of pride to belong to an ethnic identity in the works. The Parsees without being concerned with sectarian politics lead a peaceful life contributing to the progress of the given country. However, all minority groups tend to experience anxiety, when they live in a dominant situation. Ethnocentric discourse is produced because of a lot of anxiety about their community.

Sidhwa's wide exposure has helped her to pen her experiences into a fictional work. Lenny in *Ice-candy-man* is modeled upon Sidhwa herself. The novel *The Pakistani Bride* is based in a real incident. *The Crow Eaters* is a saga of her community. *An American Brat* deals with the theme of marriage, the concept of inter-

ge marriage is still a taboo among the Parsees. Moreover, it also deals with the dships of displacement as Sidhwa herself has shifted from Lahore to the States.

Thus, Sidhwa attempts with renewed interest to write the Pakistani version of rtition narrative presenting it as an aberrations an irrational act that comes as an mpediment to secularisation and modernisation. She has achieved the text's newness nd uniqueness, by not documenting it but rather presenting the communal divide not s an event, but as a process where it treated as an approximation of reality and not he resurrection of reality. The novel also comes out with the representations and xperiences of everyday life and individual memory that had been subsumed and pushed to the margins.

The novel speaks about the Partition and its repercussions. India having been ruled by the British for nearly 200 years got its freedom only in 1947. But the losses it incurred out of its struggle for independence are innumerable. Obviously one of them is Partition. The country was broken down in 1947 because of the Muslim League's misguided efforts and India lost its territories on both its sides. *Ice-candy-man* deals with the partition horror and the lives of the characters in the novel are governed by the event of partition and its consequences. Still a number of characters are affected by the 1947's communal troubles. Bapsi Sidhwa succeeds in elaborating the intercommunity life form Parsi angle.

The partition event sends wrong signals everywhere. It is fierce in the India-Pakistan borders. People in Lahore, Amritsar, Sialkot and Pathankot get devastated due to Hindu Muslim feud and in between the Sikhs through once a buffer state suffer as well. Sidhwa uses Two Nation Theory. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs so they cannot live together. To yoke

together two such nations under a single state, one as numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built for the government of such a state.

It is the adult author behind the voice of the child narrator, Lenny. Lenny's change of national identity coincided with her eighth birthday, though she is more concerned about her neglected birthday. Sidhwa understands that such careless games of political turning cost human lives. The raw statistics of Partition gives us an idea of the toll that the Commission's hastiness and belatedness took on the subcontinent.

Ten to twelve million people have moved within the space of few months, between the new, truncated India and the newly created Pakistan. Between 5,00,000 to one million are believed to have died, hundreds of thousands of children lost and abandoned, between 75,000 to 1,00,000 women raped and abducted. The two nations continue to fight with each other even after more than six decades of separation. This Partition of India in 1947 was an undeclared civil war since then we have had disputed borders in every country of South Asia.

The religion based division of the country anticipated many of the questions that trouble us now across the subcontinent: ethnicity, communalism, the rise of religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism. Partition posed a question of belonging in a way that polarised choice and allegiance, aggravating old and new antagonisms. The way Lenny puzzles over her sudden national belonging as a Pakistani belies the validity of the arbitrary division of the subcontinent based on an imaginary geographical boundary.

Sidhwa, a Parsi writer who was born during the British Raj became Pakistani after partition and now resides in the United States. She occupies a unique position

that allows her to practice a particular kind of border feminism in writing the novel. The Partition of 1947 is fictionally re-narrated in order to construct a discursive site in which one may reexamine the unthinkable violence and atrocity.

Lenny, the eight year old narrator serves as an eyewitness to the national and personal traumatic experiences of Partition. The most traumatic one is the novel's depiction of Lenny's loss of innocence when the violence begins. The marginalised status of the narrator enables her to have the privilege of detachment; she gives us the whole story of Partition instead of the fragments. The authorial voice is a powerful voice of hindsight. Lenny is neither merely an Indian nor a Pakistani, she is much more versatile like her character. Sidhwa deals nicely with the theme of Partition of India assuming it as a subject as harrowing as the Holocaust. She achieves the remarkable fear of bringing together the ribald farce of Parsi family life and the stark drama and borrows of the riots and massacres of 1947.

Sidhwa has carefully orchestrated a narrative balance in her representations of intergroup violence, and she avoids being judgmental about any of the religious groups. She deals with the religious violence in the Post Independence India. The abduction of Shanta, Lenny's Hindu Ayah or family helper and the horrors witnessed by the Muslim orphan, Ranna, stand out as two examples of religious violence in the text. The most horrifying representation of the violence associated with Partition in the novel comes from Ranna's story of genocidal massacres.

This novel not only projects the Parsi perspective but also that of the Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Partition occurs as an offshoot of communal disharmony. Sidhwa relentlessly depicts the rapes and murders of women and children during the Partition riots. This novel is to function as a recording of a

ur history, hoping one might learn lesson from that history. Indeed, in this age
al violence and atrocity, we need to pause and take stock of the lessons we
arned from history and literature as we have to envision a way out of the
ment of categorical singularity and the inevitable, violent destruction of
nity.

The creating of national margins actually marginalised countless innocent
whose hopes and homes were erased because of an act of political will of the
erful. The lives of Hindus and Sikhs in Lahore after Partition, therefore posed an
l dilemma. The identities of ordinary people are increasingly fragmented and
tured. Just prior to Partition, her familiar characters turn into token religious
menclatures, Ayah as a Hindu, Imam Din and the popsicle vendor as Muslim, Hari
d Moti the untouchables, and Godmother and her nuclear family, Parsees.

With Partition, the discourse of secular rationalism and intimacy that reared
enny finally becomes discredited and consigned to the flames. As the Hindu Muslim
onflict gathers momentum, Lenny confesses that her perception of people changed.
The narrator understands that her world has been broken and she will have to work
with the fragments she is left with. Thus *Ice-candy-man* critiques generalised versions
of Partition history by giving us not one but a series of perspectives through the
various character in Lenny's world, which counter one another.

The power of allegiance to any religious ideology to mask human cruelties is
explicated by the Ice-candy-man's role in the novel. The effects of historical disaster
are perhaps brought in most meaningful and human terms in the abuse of the Hindu
Ayah in the hands of the Ice-candy-man. Sidhwa has created some brilliantly Indian
characters with dual faces. At normal times they are peace loving, friendly, kind

reserved and companiable. But when time change they also change to their instinctive quality of violence that is hidden in their unconscious and it rushes to the surface when they see their near and dear ones massacred brutally, young girls are abducted, raped and paraded naked on the streets.

Almost all the characters from the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities are shown involved in the violence. Thus Sidhwa has intelligently reproduced the racial, religious, socioeconomic and political biases which led to the historic bloodshed, plundering, defiling and disintegration of the society.

At the time of Partition, the patriarchal construction of women's identities and in particular, their sexual purity as symbolic of community honour and integrity made them subject to particularly gendered and humiliating acts of aggression as India and Pakistan sought to establish their sovereignty. The physical suffering and displacement "abducted" women experienced at the hands of individuals. their families and communities confronted the two states with one of the first challenges to the seamless presentation of the modern nation as a universally accessible and equitable expression of the social contract.

Sidhwa wants to convey an important message or warning that the .exploitation, manipulation and suppression of one individual by another are not confined to the male female relationship. These can exist between a female female relationship as well as vicious and debilitating for the victim as when a male dominates and exploits a woman.

About 75,000 women were subjected to rape and abduction on either side of the border during Partition. The unimaginable violence perpetrated on women's bodies are pointers to the way Hindu cultural nationalism which emerged in pre

Colonial India dehistoricised women as individual subjects and increasingly relegated them to their religious identities that their bodies are encoded Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims. With Partition emerged a situation where though the Indian state was a secular nation whose identity was not defined by religion, women were defined in terms of their religious identity.

Lenny's awakening to self awareness merges with her awakening to the damage brought about by the Partition; the traumatic events she has experienced have changed her; she feels nearer to adult world even though she does not manage to come to terms with it completely. *Ice-candy-man* becomes a feminist text in the true sense of the term, successfully attempting to bring to the centre stage the female protagonists. These characters come alive on account of their realistic presentation and they serve as the means of consciousness raising among the female segment of society. Sidhwa through her extremely absorbing and interesting work seeks to contribute to the process of change that has already started all over the world, involving a reconsideration of women's rights and status, and a radical restructuring of social thought.

Sidhwa belongs to that group of women creative writers who have started to depict determined women for whom the traditional role of inadequate women who wish to affirm their independence and autonomy and are perfectly capable of assuming new roles and responsibilities. These writers wish to build a world which is free of dominance and hierarchy a world that rests on the principles of justice and equality and is truly human. Sidhwa adopts a daring approach while dealing with issues like female sexuality being a non Muslim. She focuses on her characters as with the unjust social attitudes.

Through her fictional works, Bapsi Sidhwa has touched the pulse of the society. She has diagnosed the problem of the contemporary society. In a true sense she is one of the representative of the contemporary society. Though women soar high, with academic qualification, and economic independence; she has vacuum within herself. To maintain the equilibrium of life along with the juxtaposition of reform the relationships should be revived. Then only a healthy and harmonious man woman relationship will flourish.

The novel has rightly maintained the tension and trauma of the Parsees about the Partition. Apart from the depiction of Partition, religious intolerance, communal discord, feminist awakening there are still more scope for research in this novel. The topics for discussion can be about identity crisis, dislocation and the sense of loss. neutrality, inter community marriage, illusion versus reality.

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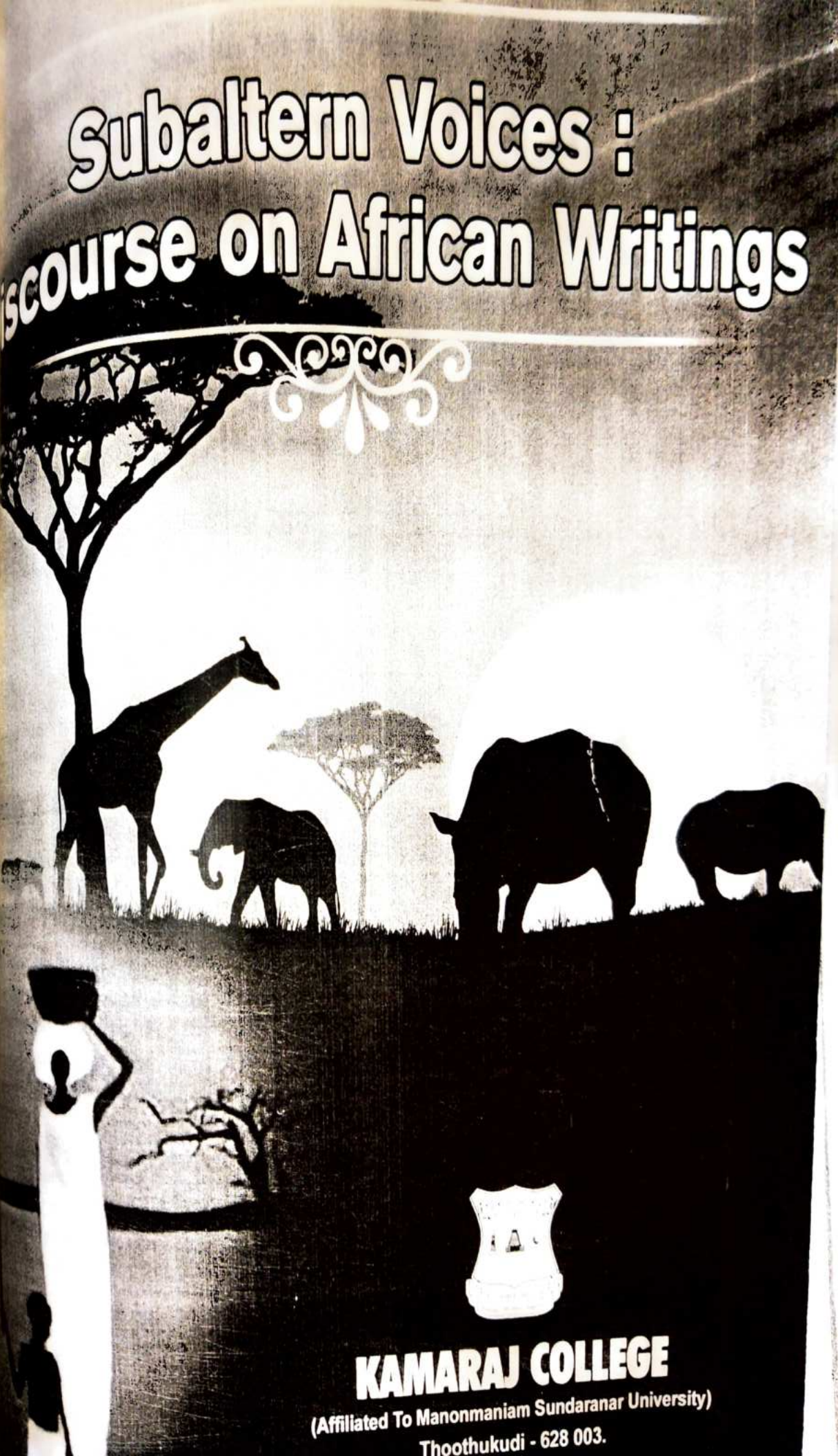
ANNEXURE

Subaltern Voices : Discourse on African Writings



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Horrors of Slavery and Slave Trade in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

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African American literature has been a unication across colour lines, since the earlier ation of the texts during colonialism to works mporary with liberation. On the contrary perceptions rican American voices are silenced and excluded American history, yet they are loud and clear. Within ena of wider culture, African American writers offer ly read and widely appreciated works. Origin of an American literature serves as a strong evidence ow how much the writers involve in communication the society. The origin of African American literature vers the emergence of its literary tradition. It also als about the forces that helped to shape the tradition rican American literature.

The destiny of a continent is shaped by emigrant ple from Africa to America. African American writings elop as a result of troubles faced due to slavery. The rks that were first published was about the condition of very, when the newly recognized citizens of America their freedom to own slaves. This led to a specific re of writing called slave narratives which consisted the experiences and life accounts of enslaved Africans. early six thousand former slaves from North America d Caribbean shared their experiences of being slaves hich happened during the eighteenth and nineteenth entury. These narratives were published as separate ooks. African slaves from North America themselves rote their experiences and the experiences of their fellow eings which came as publications during eighteenth entury. In case of slaves being illiterate, abolitionists served as writers and editors.

Three distinct categories of slave narratives are tales of religious redemption, tales to inspire the bolitionist struggle and tales of progress. Among these three tales to inspire the abolitionist struggle are the most popular. It implements strong autobiographical motif. To support abolitionism, some authors also wrote about fictional accounts of slavery. During the period of the late seventeenth century to early eighteenth century, slave narratives focused on the spiritual journey. They believed that this spiritual journey led to redemption during which the African authors perceived themselves as Africans rather than sketching themselves as slaves.

Socialism became highly prevalent in America at that time. Instead of being loyal to the nation as a whole, the north and south were loyal to their own particular regions. Divisions were on the basis of customs, political, social and economic values. According to Maya Angelou, the segregation was so complete that most Black children did not know how the Whites would be. On the first of January 1863, Emancipation Proclamation was issued by the President Abraham Lincoln which ordered that all those who were enslaved should be let free. Even after the consequences of Civil war, liberated slaves faced discrimination on a daily basis. Maya Angelou says, "My race groaned. It was our people falling. It was another lynching, yet another Black man hanging on a tree, one more woman abused and raped. A Black boy whipped and maimed. It was hounds on the trail of a man running through slimy swamps" (IKWCBS 53).

In spite of offering the right to vote, citizenship to everyone without any bias, and though slavery was made illegal, African Americans did not experience the same level of freedom as that the Americans. Violence, murders, oppressions, inequality in job opportunities, education, and racism still existed.

Black Arts Movement (BAM) was initiated by activist Imamu Amiri Baraka in Harlem. Black Arts

Movement was the stigma of Black Power Movement that was prevalent during 1960s and 1970s. Time Magazine described Black Arts Movement as the single controversial movement in the history of African American literature. Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison were some of the writers of Black Arts Movement. They portrayed different indigenous voices. this movement inspired world literature. The mainstream literature did not value the views of ethnic people and their experiences before the emergence of the movement but establishing theatre groups and poetry performances shed light on the African Americans. They slowly gained recognition in the field of arts and literature. African Americans performed to advertise for their own political uses and other issues. Newspaper advertisements made the Black Arts Movement popular.

Under a dead blue sky on a distant beach,
I was dragged by my braids just beyond your reach
Your hands were tied, your mouth was bound,
You couldn't even call out my name.
You were helpless and so was I,
But unfortunately throughout history
You've worn a badge of shame. (Million Man March 1995)

African Americans sustained all sufferings, depressions and accepted their lives gracefully and writing served as a helping aid for them. Role of African Americans in the white patriarchal society is the main theme in most of the works. Though, African Americans have claimed to get American identity, they were discriminated and were never completely given that identity. African American literature is independent but is also included within American literature's framework. This isolation helped in creating unique styles of storytelling. This voice in the isolation captured a larger audience.

African American women used to describe the multiple oppressions of race, gender and class using the terms 'simultaneous oppressions', 'triple jeopardy', 'double jeopardy', 'interlocking oppressions', since the times of slavery. Women not only faced racial and gender oppressions but also lacked economic power as a consequence of those oppressions which was shed light in Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: "The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught up in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, White illogical hate and Black lack of power" (266).

One of the best example of intersectional feminism till date is Maya Angelou. Love and Pride radiated in her work while implementing the advancement of color and women simultaneously. Angelou used her own experience of violence and abuse to create awareness about all forms of issues. Her testimony served as a strong inspiration because it depicted the self-love and respect of the diaspora African women which enabled her to break out the cage of oppressions and transcend through it. Maya Angelou used the term 'Caged Bodies' in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* which is used to describe the intersectional trapping of the African American women facing multiple violent oppressions. She extended that only self-love for life and love for body could help in overcoming the bitter experiences that rejected their existences. To create freedom, and courage, women should have concern for their body to dismantle the body cages.

Oppressions may not disappear all at once but self-love allows the body to stop being possessed by unjust powers of violence. Maya Angelou kept retelling the bitter traumatic experiences of her childhood which gradually gave her strength, identity and respect. She healed her broken self by talking about her sexual trauma of her childhood through her autobiographical narratives. Angelou said "... I was no longer simply a member of the proud graduating class of 1940; I was a proud member of the wonderful beautiful Negro race (156)". She has changed the perceptions of Whites by her triumphant spirit and successful achievements. Angelou mostly celebrates the power of endurance in her work. She said that she speaks of the Black experience but she was always talks about the human condition about what one can endure, dream, fail and still survive.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings creates a quest that whether someone could survive such a terrifying childhood but the very survival of Angelou obviously remains as the answer to that quest. Her autobiography is on the impact of trauma and physical violation, on eight year old girl who is too young to understand the emotional betrayal and brutal sexual initiation. The title of this work is taken from the great African American poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poem Sympathy which also focuses on transcendence just like Maya Angelou's I know Why the Caged Bird Sings. The author prays for the release of the bird from the trap of oppressions and to fly beyond the limitations imposed by the world.

The book opens with the childhood scene that focuses on the imprisoning environment from which the entrapped self would seek escape. The little African

American girl is caught within the cage. The cage is her own diminished self-image created by the social forces. The physical appearance, the harsh repression of slavery and the perception about beauty creates a self-consciousness on all young girls who must grow from children into women. This self-critical process is a driving demon. But in the experience of African American girl's life this natural bars are further blended with societal bars of racial subordination and other oppressions. The child is imprisoned in the cage of ugliness on being born black in the world ruled by White. "What you looking at me for? I didn't come to stay..." (1), these words of Angelou depicts the most major issue that she struggles within her childhood. It captures the detachment of the girl and the fact that, she feels ugly and awkward. By the age of four or five, Maya Angelou has already started to equate beauty with whiteness which signifies that racism was very much intense in south. People judge her unjustly for her looks but she imagines that she will emerge as a White beautiful blonde girl. Throughout her life, she feels troubled by the feeling that she does not belong anywhere. She is so much disturbed by the sense of displacement on being sent away from her parents and feels abandoned by her family. "If growing up is painful for a southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat" (51).

The prologue does not belong to a specific time because Angelou suggests that this emotional experience is repeated over again and again throughout her life. Angelou says it is like putting a razor on one's throat when the Black girl feels alienated from her own Black community. She feels insulted by her displacement. Angelou's childhood experience in the store depicts about the rural oppressive life in 1930s.

The African Americans in the south entered into the period of slavery after the civil war apart from running the store, Momma also sells lunche to the crowd of African American cotton labourers. Though they do a lot of hard work throughout the whole day, they earn are a meager amount. Angelou also describes their appearance to be weary, pale and their dresses worn out after a hard day. The condition of labourers and Black farmers is very much destructed and worsened when they enter the Jim Crow era. Segregation laws are passed which leads to the development of White racist organization but African American communities are believed to be terrorized. Though before Emancipation, African Americans rarely got opportunities for education, this scenario changed after emancipation. " The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of Power" (265).

Maya Angelou's rapid adulthood is depicted in the final chapters of I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. She achieves significant intellectual growth while staying in the junkyard. She lives in the junkyard along with Mexican and White teenagers. She feels one among the greater human race. She gains confidence and independence while living in the junkyard. She develops a wonderful will power. The autobiography ends with Angelou giving birth to a boy baby. Once Angelou opened herself to self-discovery, she started recovering her lost years. Angelou's autobiography ends with the Black American girl succeeding in breaking out the cage and freeing herself from the trappings of the society and her own diminished self-image. She being displaced finally finds a place by accepting her Black womanhood. With the birth of her child, she is reborn into a courageous and proud African American woman.

This novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is not just an autobiography but also serves as a bildungsroman. Bildungsroman is a genre which explores the protagonist's psychological and moral growth. Character improvisation is essential because it involves development from childhood to adulthood. The women who is initially inferior about herself gains strength and accepts her identity of Black womanhood later. Angelou has broken the ceiling of female stereotypical roles. She was not just a mother but mastered various careers like being a dancer, singer, street car conductor, writer, professor etc. Childhood trauma of Maya Angelou was the reason behind her successful career. She transcended from a young girl to a self-esteemed and prolific writer. Angelou's search and quest for self-discovery, identity, dignity continues and however at the end she gains strength and evolves as a stronger self-conscious woman.

Maya Angelou has overcome the cruel repressions of American slavery and racism by using aspects of resistance, self-acceptance, recreation and love towards self. The whole society of African Americans is considered to be a caged bird which craves for freedom and equality. Angelou's work I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings celebrates the existence of African American people. Maya had a difficult upbringing during her life in the South. She experiences first hand violence and injustices as a young girl. She was raped at the age of seven which affected her very badly leading her to voluntary muteness.

Though she was traumatized, she developed her passion for books and literature which gained her the courage to speak at the age of thirteen. Maya said that she was mute from the time she was seven and half until she was about thirteen. She did not speak but she had a voice; but she refused to use it. Her success became enormous once she started to write about her experiences.

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Department of English (SF)
National Level Seminar
on
SUBALTERN VOICES : DISCOURSE ON AFRICAN WRITINGS

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that ~~Dr.~~ / ~~Mr.~~ / Ms A. Soundarya, St. Mary's college, Tuticorin.
has ~~served as a~~ Resource Person/ Chair Person/ Participated/ Presented a paper titled Horrors of slavery and the slave trade in Maya Angelou's I know Why the caged Bird Sings in the National Level Seminar on

SUBALTERN VOICES : DISCOURSE ON AFRICAN WRITINGS

organized by the Department of English (SF) on 30th August 2018.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

A NATIONAL SEMINAR ON

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Convenor

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Quest for Self: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams

A Dissertation submitted to

St. Mary's College (Autonomous)

Thoothukudi

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

By

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JUNE 2019

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CERTIFICATE

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Quest for Self: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams** 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 Philosophy in English Literature is a work done by Vinista 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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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Quest for Self: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams** 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 Philosophy in English Literature 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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THOOTHUKUDI

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PREFACE

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Asian American writer with her ancestral roots in Bengal, India. She belongs to the new generation diasporic women writers of India whose primary concern is immigrant sensibility. Her works are widely known and has been published in over fifty magazines and it has been included in over fifty anthologies. She has transcended boundaries, negotiating two different worlds from various perspectives.

The first chapter **Introduction** deals with a short biography of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni discussing the general characteristics of her works and her predominant place in the realm of Indian diaporic literature.

The second chapter **Quest for Survival** brings out the self reflection of the protagonist, Rakhi as a mother, daughter and a wife. The mystery of the Indian life is revealed in terms of lessons, stories and dreams. With the translations of journals a rare consolation comes in her life.

The third chapter **Quest for Identity** explores the life of Mrs. Gupta in India and making a position for herself in an adopted country. It also reveals the true self for her through her dream journal.

The fourth chapter **Quest for Relationship** brings out the fruits of relationship through mysticism and magical realism. She also deals with the psychological relationship in today's society.

The final chapter **Summation** sums up all highlighted aspects dealt in the preceding chapters along with the different narrative techniques used in the novel.

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

Chapter One

Introduction

Indian Writing in English refers to literature written in English by Indian authors who have an Indian language as their native tongue. It also includes the body of work in English by Indian Diaspora who are settled in different countries like UK. Canada, USA, Germany, Australia and West Indies. It has a long history of growth and development as it involves several historical events and distinguished personalities. The origin of Indian literature in English is traced back to the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a Bengali social reformer and a master of English prose pioneered the development of Indian Literature in English.

Literature as a mirror image of the society succeeds in lending its uniqueness with its innovative and distinctive way of projecting the change and thereby reflecting the impact of ever evolving society on people, culture and world at large. Because of the ongoing change, confluence of culture and intersection of identities, a new theory emerged in academic field and literature in the form of diaspora studies encompassing an interdisciplinary approach. The deep rooted mixed feelings, sense of belonging coupled with loss, a desire to conform to the pattern of living and also a penchant to contribute to the progress of the home land of the people living in diaspora found an expression in a new academic field known as the diaspora studies.

The term 'diaspora' has been used to describe recent migrants from a particular origin, the term has been increasingly used to refer the ethnic or minority groups in destination countries, even if the group has been within the country for generations. The nature of dispersal is complex, with various factors and compulsions

influencing migration, such as large scale recruitment and individual agency. It involves a wide variety of circumstance. Shaped by forced exile, collective trauma, labour recruitment or other processes, diasporas are not simple or one way. They are also about those who are unable to or choose not to move because of global capitalism. It is the choice of the diasporians whether they decide to stay in homeland or abroad by force, are motivated by transformations in political economies and growing inequalities in region, are inspired by adventure or are motivated by a variety of these factors, diaspora is understood through someone or some group's movement, a consciousness of dispersal.

The sense of alienation, separation, distancing and emotions of anger, confusion, humiliation and fear gets converted into a stream of words. Suppressed distress and anguish brought about by the change in environment creates a distinct and unique sensitivity which gets translated in the writings. The diaspora subject has become metaphorical trying to seek new meanings. Diaspora studies capture the apprehensions, anxiety and concerns of the new people thereby trying to analyse the depth of dilemma and problem of predicament. The problematic puzzled affairs of the mind, the enchanted and captivated generational differences came to the fore reflecting the entire system of growth and realisation.

Diaspora is a complex social formation shaped by political imaginaries and defined by the materialities of national borders and economies. The term diaspora is evoked as an umbrella or catch-all term, an analytical category or a heuristic. Recently, more scholarly attention has been paid to complicate the terms to loosen the stable connection between diasporic communities and places of origin. With radical changes in the conditions of migration under neoliberal globalization, there is also a recognition of the transnational politics and cultural contradiction that frame diasporic

lives. These experiences of the border crossing and relocations raise questions that interrupt assumptions about nationality, citizenship and belonging.

Uma Parameswaran in her book *Trishanku and Other Writings: Current Perspectives in Indian English Literature* has discussed diaspora consciousness and observes:

> The first nostalgia for the homeland, left behind mingled with fear in strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy in adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethno cultural issues. The fourth is when they have arrived and started participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (108)

Diaspora literature explores the basic question of identity, home, memory, space, nation, belongingness, assimilation, acculturation and transmutation. The basic question like who am I? Do I belong here? Am I accepted? What is my identity? are reflected in the works of various writers who form a part of the diaspora. The feelings of confusion, mystification, uncertainty, perplexity are the central objects of study and subjects of writings. It reflects an awareness of being different from majority mainly because of one's own perception and because of the outside world.

Loss and nostalgia constitute the key elements of any diasporic writing. At the same time, it gives vent to a certain alienation due to incomplete assimilation in the adopted society. John Hartley states: "It is this experience that is sought to be transmitted to readers through diaspora literature" (66). The diaspora writers are obsessed with search for identity and their writing displays a poetics of exile and displacement. Diasporic identity can be defined as the identity of an immigrant living

in a diasporic condition. Migration and immigration have directly or indirectly affected several generations of contemporary writers in English engendering hybridism and culture complexity within them and urging them to grapple with multiple cultures and countries and tension between them.

Indian diaspora is the largest within the Asian diaspora as the Indian community scattered around the world is over twenty five million. It is considered to be the second largest diaspora community in the world. In the last decade of the twentieth century the Indian diaspora has increasingly begin to acquire a distinct global identity. With historic settlements around the world and successive migrations in the last two centuries to North America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the Indian diaspora reflects a growing self-consciousness that has been further strengthened by the developments of new communication technologies and rapid globalization. A number of diasporic writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh have been dealing with the issue of diasporic identity in their works. Diasporic women writers also deal with this important issue in a different fashion than that of a male writer in a perspective distinctly different from that of their male counterparts.

The women writers of diaspora have been writing variously upon the lives of men and women. There is cheerfulness in the portrayal of gender which range from old generation to new generation and represents the various situation of women's life in an alien land. These women writers portray the predicament joys and sorrows and the issue of identity of men and women of Indian diàspora in the alien land.

With the rise of women's diasporic writing, the images of immigrant women have often been discussed in literature. Indian women writers in foreign lands are equipped with better themes than the monotonous subjects like rights of women,

injustice, gender inequality and so on. With the alteration in political, social and economical scenario, literature by women writers living in India and abroad have evolved to demonstrate some universal experiences like the contradiction of old and new values, conventions and change, ethics and freedom.

Women writers, those in India and those of the Indian diaspora are moving forward with strong and sure strides matching the pace of the world. In 1960s, the delineation of women characters in novels underwent a remarkable change in Indian fiction. Thus with the advent of feminism, women have strived hard to achieve their identity. Writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Meena Alexander, Shoban Bantwal, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee and several others are still combining to enrich the Indian diasporic literature. At present, most of them have been heavily influenced by the various literary movements around the world such as symbolism, surrealism, existentialism, absurdism, confessional poetry, modernism, post modernism an expatriate writing.

Anita Desai is a remarkable novelist who has experimented with diverse themes like rootlessness, alienation, anxiety, material disharmony, interpersonal relationships and patriarchal dominance. Her protagonists are intelligent and sensible but in an attempt to manage home and children and attain emotional fulfillment, they reach on the verge of emotional crisis. Her early novels focus on the lives of women overwhelmed with troubles in male dominated society. *Cry the Peacock* (1963) depicts the travails and suppressed emotions of a neglected wife.

Desai's *Voices in the City* (1965) depicts the feeling of rootlessness and undue stress faced by a group of women in the busy city of Calcutta. *Bye- Bye Black Bird* (1965) discusses the disgusting issue of Indian immigration in England. In *Clear*

Light of the Day (1980) she presents childhood innocence, affection and guilt in an engrossing and realistic manner. She has been labeled as a great feminist writer of international acclaim for having presented the predicament of sensitive women characters trapped between tradition and modernity.

Mukherjee was best known for her novel *Jasmine* which was published in the year 1989. She had written eight novels, four short story collections, three works of nonfiction and a journal. She explored the experience and dilemmas of being an immigrant. It involves about the cultural shock and alienation. In 1988 she won the National Book Critics Circle Award for her collection *The Middleman and Other Stories*. She considers herself an American writer, and not an Indian expatriate writer.

Bantwal was a popular Indian American writer. She basically focused her writing upon the view of the suffering women due to social evils and also due to the social hazards. Her famous work *Dowry Bride* (2007) won the Golden Leaf Award for the best first book. *The Forbidden Daughter, The Unexpected Son, The Full Moon Bride,* and *The Reluctant Matchmaker* are some of her notable works. She writes stories about contemporary Indian women and romance. Most of her plots deal with women's issues like arranged marriage, cross cultural clashes of Indian Diaspora.

Kiran Desai is one of the most celebrated authors in the country. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* won the Man Booker Prize in 2006. The novel was also awarded the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award. Though she is a citizen of India, Desai is the permanent resident of United States. The art of writing comes naturally to Desai being the daughter of the noted writer Anita Desai. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was published in 1998 has received many praises from distinguished writers like Salman Rushdie. Her first book won the Betty Task

Award, a prize awarded by the society of authors for new novels by citizens under the age of thirty five of the Common Wealth Nations.

Lahiri is a well known personality among the Indian diaspora of second generation. Her works explores the Indian immigrant experience in America. Her debut short fiction collection *Interpreter of Maladies* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the Pen Award. Lahiri's writing is featured in her plain language and very clean, neat and engrossing narrative technique. Her characters are mostly Indian immigrants, navigating between the cultural values of their birth places and their adopted nation. Her writings are autobiographical and frequently draw upon her own experience as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances and others in Bengali communities with which she is familiar. She also translated some of her own writings and those of other authors from Italian into English. In 2014, Lahiri was awarded the National Humanities Medal. She is currently a professor of creative writing at Princeton University.

Meera syal is a diasporic writer growing up with a dual cultural heritage. Her first novel, *Anita and Me* and *Life Is n't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, identifies her with the funny public image developed through her television work. Her novel deals with the issues of cross culture, betrayal, marriage, sex, race, family relations. She has made important contribution in cultural terms writing the screen play for the critically acclaimed *Bhaji on the Beach* in which she starred the book for the musical *Bombay Dreams* and the first ever play by an Asian woman to be produced by the BBC, *My Sister-Wife*. Syal has won the National Student Drama Award, Betty Trask Award, Nazia Hassan and Foundation Award. She was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Divakaruni with her fairy like zeal and ease has enlightened the horizon of Indian fiction with the possibilities of establishing new dimensions of narrative idiom. She was born in India in the year 1956. She is a prominent writer and poet who currently lives in Houston, Texas. Her writing is fueled by her own experiences as an immigrant and a woman between culture and traditions on one hand and the new found freedom on the other hand. As a writer, she has been invited to judge notable competitions such as the National Book Award and Pen Faulkner Award. She is a regular guest of literary festivals and conferences mostly in the United States and in her home country.

Divakaruni has received many honors and awards. In 1995 she received The American Book Award and PEN Award for the short story collection *Arranged Marriage*. In 2009, she was given the Cultural Jewel Award from the Indian Culture Center, Houston followed by Light of India Jury's Award for Journalism and Literature in 2011. She was awarded the Premio Scanno Award for Literature, Italy in 2015. She has also won awards like the Hackney Literary Award, Barbara Deming Memorial Award, Editor's Choice Award, Gerbode Foundation Award, Pen Syndicated Fiction Awards, Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, American Book Award; she has also won many prizes like Paterson poetry Prize, Pushcart Prize and Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize.

Divakaruni is a potent voice of Indian origin that has influenced the realm of diaspora literature by expressing the colours of immigrant experiences and has secured a credible place in the genre of South Asian Diaspora literature. Both of her works, fiction as well as poetry affirm that diaspora is not merely scattering, but a prototype of consciousness that encompasses various conflicting characteristics. She belongs to the first generation of Indian immigrants with all its colours.

In Divakuruni's writings, the diaspora with its shifting boundaries and encounters between different cultures is an important focus. She locates her texts at the troubled intersection of female subjectivity and national identities. She focuses upon sensitive protagonists who lack a stable sense of personal and cultural identity and are victimised by racism, sexism and other forms of social oppression. Although she captures different aspects of the cultural encounter, the ways in which identities are ordered from common matrix in her writings.

The most important feature of her literary creativity in her delineation of gender combined with acute sense perception. The feminist themes of man-woman relationship in marriage with a cultural conflict, female bonding, migration of elder generation women in diaspora, construction of selfhood and identity and female resistance against the patriarchal oppression and marginalisation find expression in her fiction. All her women characters belong especially to Calcutta because there are women of all classes from upper to lower working class and majority belongs to hindu religion. Most of the diasporic women characters are educated women with career and Divakaruni's personal experience of migrating for higher education and career is reflected in them.

The theme of capturing the Indian immigrant experiences in the United States pervades each of her novels and short stories. Her main focus is on her women characters, their struggle for identity, their bitter experience and their final emergence as self assertive individuals, free from the bondages imposed by the relationship. One of the key problems that a Diaspora community faces is the dilemma with regard to identity. On speaking about her gender portrayals K.S.Dhanam writes:

> Divakaruni's books are directed mainly to women of all races and faiths who share a common female experience. All her heroines must find themselves within the contrasting boundaries of their cultures and religions. She also contrasts the lives and perceptions of the first generation immigrants with that of their children born and raised in foreign land. And inevitably it includes the Indian American experience of grappling with two identities. She has her finger accurately on the diasporic pulse, fusing eastern values with western ethos. Her writings course with her identification is with a brave new world forging to life. Her sensitivity to contemporary voices, today's issues are threaded through with an ongoing search for identity beyond anthropology, beyond sociology and academia. (62)

In 1976, at the age of 19, Divakaruni immigrated to the United States. She continued her education in the United States by earning Master's degree in English from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio and a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. Divakaruni's initiative and her experience as a cofounder and a former President of Maitri, a helpline founded in 1991 to deal with the domestic abuse faced by the South Asian women, discrimination and cruelty suffered by these women finds expression in her very first collection of short stories *Arranged Marriage*.

Divakaruni's short stories and poems have been featured in magazines such as The Atlantic Monthly and The New Yorker including fifty anthologies. They were translated into twenty languages which include Dutch, Hebrew and Japanese. Most of her work is partially autobiographical and based on the lives of the Indian immigrants. Her first works were books of poetry, *Dark like the River (1987), The Reason for Nasturtiums (1990) and Black Candle (1991).*

India is a land of culture and people have had a strong belief in superstitions. Preserving the culture is the prestige for all countries. Her novels are an evidence to prove it. Her novels portray the possibility for establishing a bicultural identity. Her works are largely set in India and United States and it often focuses on the experience of South Asian immigrants. She writes for children as well as adults and has published novels in multiple genres including realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism, myth and fantasy.

Divakaruni's major works include *The Mistress of Spices (1997), Sister of my Heart (1999), The Unknown Errors of our Lives (2001), The Vine Desire (2002), Queen of Dreams (2004), The Palace of Illusion (2008), One Amazing Thing (2010), Oleander Girl (2013), Leaving Yuba City (1999)* is unique because it includes series of poems based on and inspired by various art forms, including paintings, photographs and specific Indian films. With these poems, Divakaruni once again shows how boundaries can be destroyed

In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is a shopkeeper born in India who helps the customers to satisfy their needs and desire with the mysterical properties of spices. Her life changes when she falls for an American man Raven, whom the book strongly implies is a Native American. She chooses to ignore the rules of her training in her search of romance and her decision to seek out customers outside her shop, which result in the spices inflicting punishment on her and those she cares about. To save Raven from being another victim of spices powerful magic, she decides to leave him after the night they were united in love. Afterwards she accepts the punishment for disregarding the rules of her training which results in the store being destroyed in an earthquake. At last, Tilo and Raven reunite and decide to help rebuild the city.

Sister of my Heart is written in the realistic mode and describes the complicated relationship of a family in Bengal. Born in the big old Calcutta house on the same tragic night that both their fathers were mysteriously lost, Sudha and Anju are distant cousins and are brought up together. They both were closer than sisters. They share their clothes, worries and dreams. A family crisis forces their mothers to start the business and they arranged marriages for the girls. Sudha moves to her new family in rural Bengal while Anju lives with her husband in California. Both were trained to be perfect wives, nothing has prepared them for the pain as well as the joy that each will have to face in her new life. At last Anju saves Sudha from the plan of her husband and in law to kill the child she has conceived and brings her to America.

The novel *One Amazing Thing* draws on a direct link with calamitous incident in *Mistress of Spices,* as a group of strangers hit by an earthquake confine to a common place to interrogate as to who they are and their expectations from life. With no character charted out to lead, Divakaruni brings them all on an equal plank, a new paradigm with horizontal connection, an interdependence overpowering the vertical hierarchy. This wells up from the formidable ethical stance of the writer to recognize other people's suffering and closely guard secrets as equally important.

The Palace of Illusion is a retelling of the greatest and longest Indian epic parades a tide of human emotions and feelings of abstraction such as pain, overpowering anger, revenge, humiliation, pride, despondency among many on the general canvas of life which means philosophically to be Maya or illusion according to Hindu mythology. The major shift in Divakaruni's narrative is the novel centering on Draupadi or Panchali who is clairvoyant of her life's changing the course of history and her courage to rise with dignity when met with subordination and shame. It is the wounded pride of Draupadi that leads to the cataclysmic decimation of the

kula vrukshas (dynasties) on the *Dharmakshetra* (the justice rewarding) Kurukshetra. Draupadi (Panchali) also suffers through the loss of her brother, five sons and her father. An intuition generates whether Draupadi can avoid the self loss and self waste transforming herself through forgiving her humiliation. Lord Krishna, her guide and mentor enlightens her wrong doing inspite of good intention results from anger and desire, the two direct enemies. From the resulting carnage of the battlefield the truth dawns upon her that the desire for vengeance should not be stronger than the longing to be loved.

Vine of Desire is a sequel to The Sister of My Heart. The novel picks up where Sudha, now a divorcee comes to America to visit Anju and her Husband Sunil, who has an early crush on Sudha. The happy reunion is again marred by Sunil's passionate feelings for Sudha and by Sudha succumbing to his desire. Sudha leaves Anju, works as a nursemaid to earn a livelihood. Anju seeks divorce from Sunil and starts a new life, sheding her old value system. Having gone through the story of the two sisters, it can be said that whatever be the cause of immigration, the diasporic community faces the problem of displacement, rootlessness and marginalisation. Anju and Sudha demonstrates the female independence that women writes to celebrate, although such independence is achieved not without too much trauma and pain.

Divakaruni's *Oleander Girl* is an astounding masterpiece. It is the story of Korobi's journey of finding herself. She is an orphan and lives in her parental house in Kolkata along with her grandparents. Korobi is a modest, smart, and unworldly college student who is engaged with a wealthy, stylish and jaded Rajat. One day her deceased mother appears in her dream. She comes to know the truth about her own father. She goes to America to enquire about the hidden secrets of her family and her father. In United States, Korobi discovers liberal lifestyle and mode of thinking that

breached all conceivable barriers. Torn between the Indian and Western culture, she oscillates between the best of both cultures, but has to choose whatever is apt for her. As a girl of immense strength, she reorients her identity in the foreign land and reshapes her destiny in the process of quest for her true self. She confronts enemies, fiends in her journey and faces temptations, but she overcomes all obstacles in her way. Atlast she meets her father and finds the secret of her birth. Her visit to American in one way was more helpful to Rajat's family in resolving their business struggles. With much satisfaction Korobi returns to India. Rajat's family too after substantial battle appreciates the courage, honesty and simplicity of Korobi and finds contentment in their union.

In the novel *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni spins a fresh, enchanting story of transformation that is as lyrical as it is dramatic. Rakhi, a young artist and divorced mother living in Berkeley, California is struggling to keep her footing with her family and with a world in alarming transition. Her mother is a dream teller, born with the ability to share and interpret the dreams of others, to foresee and guide them through their fates. This gift of vision fascinates Rakhi but also isolates her from her mother's past in India and the dream world she inhabits, and she longs for something to bring them closer. Caught beneath the burden of her own painful secret, Rakhi's solace comes in the discovery, after her mother's death of her dream journals, which begin to open the long closed door to her past.

As Rakhi attempts to divine her identity, knowing little of India but drawn inexorably into some painful history she is only discovering her life which is shaken by new horrors. In the wake of September 11th , she and her friends must deal with dark new complexities about their acculturation. Haunted by nightmares beyond her

imagination, she nevertheless finds unexpected blessings about the possibility of new love and understanding for her family. Wenying Xu in his *Reading Feminine Mysticism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams* says

> "*Queen of Dreams* is a mature exploration of feminine mysticism which centres on Mrs. Gupta's persistent effort in recovering and retaining her power at all expense. Unlike ordinary women, a woman possessing power and talent cannot be happy with love alone" (204).

Divakaruni astonishes her readers with her exquisite individualistic styles, themes and techniques. Being an expatriate women writer she vividly portrays the lives of immigrant women, their loss, their alienation, social inequalities and ideological structures of Indian and American societies, assimilation and acculturation in the diasporic realm. Her women characters emerge as new women who claim their own space. She is a representative of the Indian women's liberation, autonomy and independence in a new society. The questions of identity, recognition, self-construction and adaptability are given equal importance in her literary endeavours.

With her writings, whether in a novel, short story or poem, Divakaruni casts a spell with her words flowing swiftly and sweeping all readers along with the current. Her works are full of vivid vibrant caricatures, the microcosmic representations of the lives lived by women who are caught in the cross roads of a cultural shift. By giving voice to these women, either California, Chicago or Calcutta, Divakaruni redefines the age old notions of women hood making them perform acts of agency and resistance, adapt to their new and changing culture and as a result they discover their own sense of self amidst joy and heartbreak. This awareness leads them to rethink

about their own lives as women and instills in them the confidence and strength to go ahead.

The novels *Queen of Dreams* is realistically autobiographical in a sense. The story is a reflection of female quest for identity and space. Identity is the most appealing fervor of the dispersed societies in an established institution. Many socialists have given their views regarding the issue of identity which is a social concern and demands to make effort for its remorse. Paul Gilory says that: "Identity is a central to discourses of diaspora and, in turn, diaspora has been crucial in unshackling identity from territoriality" (229). Thus identity is the fundamental theme of the novels *Queen of Dreams.* The next chapter deals with difficulties faced by the second generation immigrant Rakhi and how finally she manages to survive in an foreign land.

Chapter Two

Quest for Survival

The novel *Queen of Dreams* is a multilayer, evocative, wrenching novel, presenting a fine texture of fantasy and imagination in the background of harsh realities of postmodern society. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni with the power of her pen accomplishes the task of synthesising the dream world of imagination and the corresponding realities operating on the consciousness of the characters. In controlling the narrative at two parallel levels with fine descriptions of geographical and emotional turmoil reflects mature narrative skill of Divakaruni's art.

Family relations, cultural identity, national consciousness, dilemma of contradictory ideologies, substantial ethical ideologies and glimpses of Indian cultural heritage are presented with exceptional ease of prose. The cultural concern constructed in *Queen of Dreams* is closely related with the idea of the psychological transformation of the immigrants moving with the shifting spectrum of cultural diversities. The idea of cultural diversity also encompasses the issue of how it unifies the sensibility of the past with the present and the alien with the native.

In *Queen of Dreams* Rakhi, the chief narrator turns back her consciousness to the past with the curiosity to decipher the meaning of the entries of dream journals of her mother who was endowed with the ability to make interpretations of complex dreams. In the very first entry of dream journal, Rakhi comes across the dream of a moving snake and this moving snake becomes a symbolic representation of the suppressed consciousness of Rakhi herself. Through these journals, she feels an innate bonding with the dreams of her homeland. The reflections of these memories have strong link with the suppressed Indian sensibility of Rakhi and in this respect, it

becomes the reality of her life. Divakaruni in *Queen of Dreams* seems to make experiment with projection technique that helps to bring out the real self of the narrator.

The dream journal works as a stimulus in the life of Rakhi to recall the memories of her mother, to find justification for the hidden complexity of her relationship with her mother and also to have a realisation of the impassioned longing for Indian life. She makes a confession that her mother slept alone and simultaneously exhibits her longing "I would have preferred the stories to have come from my mother and to have been set in India, where she grew up, a land that seemed to me to shaded with unending mystery" (4). The stories and dream journals of her mother exposes before her eyes the exotica of the east and India as the land of dreams and mystery. Through Rakhi's nervousness and curiosity, Divakaruni moves in the direction of how children possess a private world of their own to discern the mystery of the life of their parents. With her curiosity, she was forced to conclude that her family is indeed weird and more than that the realisation of the position of her mother as dream fellow was a great surprise. She expresses her curiosity for sleeping alone but mother makes her position clear, "I don't sleep with you or your father because my work is to dream... I dream the dream of other people, so I can help them live their lives" (7).

Rakhi's father informs that her mother used to feel herself different and did never share her private world with others. Her father made a desperate revelation, "She didn't love me, not really. She never let me that close. The place right at the center of her - was reserved for her dream gods or demons, whoever they were. She never shared that with anyone" (8). Rakhi like her mother maintains autonomy of her own and reveals her private sensibility only through her paintings. She finds painting as a method to seek an outlet of her secret powers and expectations. However "Until

now, most of her paintings had been about India – an imagined India, an India researched from photographs because she'd never traveled there" (10).

Divakaruni selects the thread of narration through the conflicting pulls of emotions operating on the psyche of Rakhi. After the selection of the theme of paintings, her consciousness shifts to redefine the nature of her relationship with her husband. Rakhi inspite of being a mother of a young girl child plans of her divorce from Sonny. At this stage Rakhi survives in two different mental spaces making an unconscious and desperate search for wholeness and happiness. She searches for a real female self comprising the sensibility of a mother, sensibility of a woman, sensibility of a wife and the sensibility of a painter. The novelist points out the whole scenario:

> Rakhi likes the comfortable clutter of her life, the things she loves gathered around her like a shawl against the winterliness of the world. It surprises her that she used to be such an anxious housekeeper when she was married to Sonny, arguing with bitter fervor about picking up her wet towels from the bathroom floor and replacing caps on toothpaste tubes. She feels a certain pity when she thinks of that time, that self. Such an earnest wife self, waiting so much, her stance one of perpetual leaning forward, as though perfection was a town just a little farther down the road. She didn't know then that perfection had nothing to do with happiness. (16)

The self reflection of different characters in *Queen of Dreams* provides a richness and depth to expressions. In these self reflections, if Rakhi perceives the shadows of her past, she simultaneously evaluates the hidden message of dream

journals and on the other hand, in the present context her reflections are centered on her own dilemma of personal relationship. The quest for emancipation from the bandages comes in the form of divorce but her innate bonding with her maternal instinct and native tradition prevent her from taking such a drastic step. The personal dilemma of Rakhi contains an exceptional speculative tone that imparts profundity and richness to her thoughts. Realisation comes to her:

> If I'd ruined Jona's chances of a happy childhood by separating her from a loving father. I'd tell myself they didn't know the whole truth. They didn't live with Sonny, they didn't know the way he'd raised his face that night at the party and looked at me, eyes glazed, without recognition. But then I wasn't sure. So many people loved Sonny - even my own mother. How could they all be wrong and I right?" (24)

Belle's negation of American life and socially constructed images for her assimilation becomes a background and foil to the personal dilemma of Rakhi. They collectively manage a Chai House that provides them a platform for their own survival. Rakhi has a romantic longing for Indian life but she also negates the burden of conventional Indian life. With desperate realisation, she accepts, "I can just see myself ten years from now shrouded in fat and polyster salwar kamees, a passel of snot-nosed brats hanging onto my dupatta, rolling out makkhi ki rotis for my in-laws" (27).

The consistent emotional longing for the past, imparts a rare richness to its expression. Beena Agarwal in his *Voices of Indian Diaspora* says that:

> The mingling of East and West, haunting of past and present, the crisis of identity, allurement of West and consolation of East imparts a rare quality of richness of profundity to the writings of Divakaruni. The perennial current of

> human sympathy and the longing for human love emancipates her diasporic sensibility from being localized and leads it towards the current of globalization and universality. (149)

For Belle, the idea of Chai house becomes a mechanism to escape the burden of domesticity but for Rakhi the idea of domesticity still brings consolation. Mentally, it seems difficult for her to come out of the responsibility of Jona and Sonny. During these moments of crisis, she gathers her consciousness for female identity, and recalls the teachings of her mother, "Women need something of their own to make them independent. Something to give them a sense of self" (28). Rakhi's curiosity about her mother gradually converts into the dilemma of her feminine consciousness.

Sonny has mesmerizing effect on her mother and also tries his best to impress Rakhi but in this relationship, she fails to support the vision of her mother and declares, "Now that you and I don't have a relationship anymore, don't you think you should back off a little" (30). As a foil to Rakhi's consciousness, her mother always supports her son-in-law and looks in the direction of a more balanced mode of personal relationship. Her mother's contention is, "Since when did you start wanting to eat my Indian food, it is always pista and pizza... I love you both, you should know that. You're not in competition, even though you did decide to get a divorce" (31). On the other hand, there are drastic changes in the attitudes of Sonny and her mother, "A kinder, gentler, Sonny that only your mom can see, the way she sees her dream people" (31). Rakhi still considers that her idea of divorce is the most crucial decision of her life involving the emotions of her daughter as well as her parents.

Rakhi remains obsessed with the mystery and personal life of her mother. She recalls the words of her mother, "a dream is a telegram from the hidden world" (34).

The hidden power of dream interpretation makes her aware of the inner power of Indian saints and prophets who can look into inner life of things. Her quest of Indian life inspires her:

> "To be an interpreter of the inner realm seemed so Indian. I hungered for all things Indian because my mother never spoke of her past. But if I could be a dream interpreter like her, surely I would understand her without the need of for words." (35)

Rakhi express her curiosity and anxiety to unveil the mystery of the secret of power of her mother who could have seen the existence of truths beyond their physical presence. In context of the hidden mystery of her mother, she reveals her own conflict, "But here's what's crazy. I'm thankful, and then, the next moment, I'm filled with regret. Because I will never enter my mother's underground domain, those caveS peopled with possibilities, what may or may not come to pass, where one plus one can equal one hundred - or zero" (42).

In Rakhi's dilemma, there are gradual revelations of her childhood insecurity. Her mother used to be busy with her clients. In spite of Rakhi's innate Indian consciousness, her mother deprived her of her birth right and doomed her to bland her like of suburban America. In her over absorbance with clients, she ignored the needs and existence of her one and only daughter Rakhi. This silence and over indulgence of her mother generates discontent in her life. She expresses her apprehension, "How can she be so unnaturally self-possessed, so different from everyone else? Is it because she already knows what people are telling her?" (44).

In context of Rakhi's consciousness, mother's vision is the reaffirmation of her creative self as a painter. It comes as elation and transports her to get consent of

the exhibition of her paintings by Atelier. She expresses her determination to exhibit the bulk of paintings inside the art gallery. Rakhi feels a sense of guilt and shame at the fate of her romantic shelter in her paintings. The invisible zones of her consciousness counter act upon one and another. She suddenly gets a realisation that Jona's personal life is a secret book in the same manner as the private and isolated existence of her mother. Once she saw her daughter examining her paintings. this secret examination of the paintings strikes her, she admits:

> It strikes me suddenly that I don't know her as fully as I thought I did. She who had come out of my body, tiny and crumpled and containable – even she now has parts to her life that I can't enter. It doesn't matter whether they're real or imagined. I feel excluded all the same. Like the rest of my family - my mother, my father, Sonny - she too has become an enigma. (65)

Through such a realisation of Rakhi, Divakaruni intends to establish that a woman has an instinctive affinity with family traditions and it is hard to escape its impact not only at physical level but also at the level of mental contentment. Rakhi's sentiments for Jona, affects her sensibility as a wife and in a state of silence and isolation, she confesses:

> Later that night, lying sleepless in bed, thinking of all the things that were going wrong in my life, I'd realize, I'd included Sonny in my family list. And with chagrin I'd admit that he was still family, much as I wanted to disown him. Because only family filled you with such exasperation. Only family could irritate you like a hangnail that you couldn't chew off, no matter how much you tried. (65)

The escape of Rakhi's mother in her dream journals was an attempt to escape her own isolation and cultural alienation. Divakaruni develops the plot of the novel contextualising it in terms of the feminine psyche. Mangla Ismat says that "the Indian woman is depicted as a passive victim suffering at home and abroad. She attempts to weave the elements of myths, magic and ancient culture alongside contemporary culture" (12).

Such a dilemma helps Divakaruni to present a comprehensive dimension of relationship within the family that works as a leitmotif in the progress of the narrative in context of narrative mechanism. Even in her paintings, unconsciously Rakhi seeks an outlet for the recollections of the memories of purposeful courtship. Her dream of painting a grove with all its foliage becomes a symbolic background of her suppressed sensibility. Divakaruni makes a reference to a particular event when she paints spectacle of nature but finds it difficult to paint a man with equal care and ease. It is her failure not with the man in discussion but a female to cope up with obscurities of male psyche. Her frustration as a painter becomes a frustration of her personal life. Making an elaborate analysis of her perception, she comments:

> She has been trying for days to complete the painting but she hasn't had any success. She's pleased with foliage, the sky the quality of light. It's the man that's giving her trouble. His body seems stiff and posed; there's something fake about the angle of his neck. And his face – she's been unable to draw it at all. Sometimes frustrated, she's tempted to cover him over with a rhododendron bush. But that would mean a major defeat, and she isn't ready for that, not yet, even though the show opens in three days. (67)

In projection of images in these paintings, Rakhi unconsciously seeks remedy for the conflicting pull of ideas. She reveals her inner mind. Her conflict suggests home as a concept which is integrated in the psyche of Indian immigrants. Her quest for familial relationship extends even in her expectations and reactions of customers in the Chai house. She reminds her of regular customers like Professor Roger and Laurel Street Book Club members. With these tremendous human sensibilities, she contemplates her relationship with Sonny on the grounds of human considerations. Besides of a common heritage of Indian origin, she realizes that her creative sensibility got nurturance only with the support of Sonny. She acknowledges his support, "Sonny is the one who made her take art seriously. Until then, she'd puttered around. But seeing his passion made her want to have something like that of her own. And he'd encouraged her. He'd been the first person she believed when he said she had something special" (70). It is only in the company of Sonny, that gets the realisation of her individuality and feminity.

In *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni presents the national consciousness as the sub text of the novel. The reason behind her preference for Sonny is her added taste and commitment for Indian culture and Indian climate. With pride she confesses that in America in the company of Sonny, she will be able to popularise Indian culture. She admits, "The American Public will learn what a bhangra remix is, and it will electrify their souls. Sonny will make more money and more. More than she can imagine at this moment" (72). Sitting in the eucalyptus groove, she only broods over Bengal monsoon, "How the skies grow into the color of polished steel, how the clouds advance like black armies or spill across the horizons like unwound hair of beautiful maiden" (81). The mind remains occupied with the images of Indian festivals. She enjoys the company of Belle because "she told me that her parents - and the parents of

other desis, she know loved to go on and on about India, which in their opinion was as close to paradise as you could get" (82).

Her elation observes no bounds when she comes to know that in the company of Belle's family, she can learn her native tongue Bengali. "I'd have been happy to give up my allowance for a chance to learn more Bengali" (82). She is crazy for a trip to India. She associates herself with Chai house to compensate for the pain of her lost mother. The only dream in the life of Rakhi is to go back to India and to reclaim her original identity. For her, the mooring in Chai was a mechanism of assimilation and the mechanism of preservation of her national identity. She declares, "I am moored to the Chai House by hope and responsibility and, increasingly anxiety. Still, I think that before I die, I would like to go to India - if only to lay to rest the ghosts that dance in my head like will-o'-the -wisps over a rippling sea" (82).

Her Indian consciousness becomes a metaphor of the quest of survival in the life of immigrants who with their stay in the land of their adoption survive with uncompromising loneliness. She expresses her frustration on her own western sense of Indianness. She considers that the separation from motherland is the result of the apathy of mother who left India for her personal pleasure. In the frustration of Rakhi, Divakaruni establishes that the psyche of displacement goes beyond the periphery of time and space. Her frustration is painful when she pour out her agony, "And whose fault is it if I don't know who I am? I have wrapped western sense of what's Indian" (89).

Mother has realisation of her error and makes a confession that her mission was to give Rakhi an exclusive American identity but it proves an illusion in her life of natives and its impact is difficult to eliminate. She admits:

> You're right. It is my fault. I see now that I brought you up wrong. I thought it would protect you if I didn't talk about the past. That way you wouldn't be constantly looking back, hankering, like so many immigrants do. I didn't want to be like those other mothers splitting you between here and there, between your life right now and that which can never be. But by not telling you about India as it really was, I made it into something far bigger. (89)

Rakhi is every time apprehensive about the life and sensibility of her mother, particularly her private life. The private life of the mother and the hidden exotica of Indian life both become unresolved puzzle in the life of Rakhi. She expresses her anxiety, "How was she protecting herself by not telling me about India? What did she see - or think she saw- inside the coffee shop? And finally: if she drank the cup that was meant for me, the bad- luck cup, what would it do to her?" (90).

Divakaruni in order to provide desired suspense and spell bound attention that contributes to maintain the sweeping flow of consciousness, captures internal and external pent up emotions of the characters. Amid the dismay and dilemma of Rakhi, the news of the accident in which Jona and her parents have been injured, are of in great troubled. The news contributes to modify the perception and sensibility of Rakhi. As soon as she enters the hospital, she follows a passage to a room where she finds someone lying covered with a white sheet. At this juncture, Divakaruni takes exceptional care in presenting the descriptions that are quite suggestive to decode the inner and outer layer of the consciousness of Rakhi. The writer mentions her position:

> Under the sheet, she can see the outlines of disconnected tubes, like the freeways of an abandoned city. Sonny is there, his eyes red-trimmed. She wants to pound her fists against his chest, shout that he no right, that she has

> no tears left because he's cried them away. She knows he would grab her hands, hold her, murmuring like one does to a child or an animal. But finally, she doesn't. It wouldn't change the things she needs to change. (108)

In such impassioned reactions of Rakhi, Divakaruni captures the inner core of the sensibility of Indian woman. Looking at the dead bed sheet of her mother, her dream that her mother had protected her from all these years, suddenly crumbles to pieces. The shock of mother's death brings her in a state of stupor. Belle requests her to cry, to scream or to do something. But out of fear and shock she is left speechless. This creates an unsurpassable distance from her daughter. She admits, "When Sonny bought Jona over, I held her, but absentmindedly, as though she were someone else's child" (111). Such stoicism develops exceptional sense of guilt in Rakhi and she becomes unmindful to all other commitments of relationship. What Rakhi confesses in context of the death of her mother, makes it evident that the quest of relationship gets new meaning with time, space and circumstances. She makes a confession of her own dilemma:

> My whisper voice raised its serpent head to remind me that I, too, was to blame. I could have stopped my parents from driving home. I could have insisted that they spend the night with me. But I'd been too busy fantasizing about the man in white. (111)

The image of man in white is a symbolic representation of Rakhi's preoccupation with the idea of death. The occasion, even when she is not in a position to listen the voice of her daughter, reminds of the turbulent flow of emotions affecting her sensibility. Her focus remains at the unit of the small family consisting of Jona, Belle and Sonny. Family unity works as the only possible consolation in the life of

Rakhi. In the parting funeral ceremony, Sonny reveals, "how she'd guided him through tough times and loved him even when he hadn't deserved it" (113). Divakaruni describes the scene of Rakhi's efforts to revive the life conditions of her mother provides delicate texture to the novel exposing the emotional burden on the consciousness of Indian woman. The entire description of the moment when Sonny is driving his silver BMW with Rakhi and Jona carrying the urn containing the ashes of Rakhi's mother is poignant. Jona in her innocence makes efforts to unite her parents.

It seems to be her unconscious effort to save her parents from being lost in dismay and depression. Such situations in the novels of Divakaruni, provides philosophical background to the narration and helps to generalize human condition. Rakhi admits, "I feel the old words hanging between us like unfinished business, though they shouldn't. Our business was finished long ago, and this isn't even the same car" (131). Jona becomes point of synthesis of contradiction and the focal point of family unities. Rakhi like Jona is crazy to get her mother's journals translated inspite of the absence of dates and entries. Rakhi appreciates the impersonal qualities of the content hidden in those dream journals and unites the sensibilities of two worlds in the form of the context of the consciousnèss of Jona and Rakhi. The search for the wholeness in the familial relationship seems to be the cardinal core of the whole affair. Thousands of unanswered questions haunt the consciousness of Rakhi to peep into the secret spaces of her mother. She interrogates, "What had my mother meant for him that he should cry now? And stitched into that, another question: what did my mother mean to me that I cannot?" (134).

However in this revelation, the realisation of the fact that Sonny was encouraged, trained and supported by her mother, rocks her suppressed rage. The matrix of mother and daughter relationship becomes a foil to the relationship of Jona

and Rakhi. As soon as she contextualises the love of her mother for Sonny, she seems to fill with terrible rage. She accuses Sonny, "You always tried to worm your way into my mother's good books, to win her over to your side" (137). In this contempt of Rakhi, Sonny finds reflection of Oedipus complex and feels himself humiliated in an unconscious manner. Like a dramatist, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni traces the power of the conversion of passion in the life of her characters. Sudden reactions of Sonny, suggests that inspite of his love for Rakhi, he retains his independence and self respect, that stirs a rare fury. "You can't stand the fact that your mother loved me. You never could. You've always wanted to control everyone in your life, what they do, how they think, who they love. That's why you left me - because I wouldn't let you control my whole existence" (137).

Rakhi survives with her own insecurity in which she finds that Sonny in the form of the recipes of her mother has got hold of the real self of her mother but it still seems to be beyond her control. If distinctively suggests that her quest to get into the mystery of the journals of her mother is her desperate effort to seek consolation for her own butchered self. She makes a confession "I'm still stewing over the fact that by having her recipes Sonny now possesses a part of my elusive mother, leaving even less for me" (139). Rakhi's desire to posses the real self of her mother becomes a symbolic justification to have to control over the exotica of the mystery of Indian life revealed in terms of lessons, stories from old books, dreams, clients and the people she knew. With the translations of journals, rare consolation comes in her life. "Somehow I've entered my mother's world. I must stay in it as long as I can" (140).

In *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni's vision of personal relationship and cultural dynamics has come close to the observation of Salman Rushdie who accepts: "What deflects us from the subject is the loss of those we love, of the orient, of hope, of our

place in the book. Loss is more than love or is it more than art or not" (202). Divakaruni takes specific care to frame the fabric of dreams of private life of characters that become a metaphor of the complexity of post modern society. If Rakhi has a dream to prepare the dishes as per the desires of her mother, Belle has a real dream of serving the community of immigrants through her Chai Shop, father aspires to fulfill the dreams by his assimilation in American life, Sonny dreams of seeking the extension of his sensibility of Indianness symbolized in the form of his passion for Indian dishes. In all these dreams, the one common passion is the quest to seek happiness through the merger personal relationship.

In the character of Rakhi, Divakaruni exposes children's anxiety to investigate the life of their parents. For Rakhi, the stories of the parents have special charm because it was her method to dive deep into the real mystery of Indian life. Through the stories that denote the retrieval of the past, she gets opportunity to go back to Indian life. With exceptional enthusiasm, she makes a mention of the importance of these stories.

> He told us about his early days as a student in America, about the odd jobs he held to make money – a janitor in a hospital, a slot-machine repairman in casino. ...My favourite stories are about his life in India. But so far he has not told us any societies involving my mother, though he does not mention her - loving, ruefully – in passing. (180)

Simultaneously she focuses in the progress of the journals. She feels a loneliness of her mother, love for Jona, curiosity for the father and an unexpressed reverence of Jona because Sonny takes care of Jona without any complaint. The change of time makes her realize the new commitments of the life conditions. "I feel

detached from the work I did before - as if it were painted by someone else, and not someone I particularly admire. There's a static feel, particularly, to my paintings about India. As my mother would say, they're not authentic" (197). For Rakhi, paintings became the background for the projection of the life images, an objective manifestation of her suppressed sensibility. Through her paintings she revives her past but at the same time she weaves the dreams of life that are not today but of tomorrow. She mentions her dream, "I want to create something new, something different and magical, only I'm not sure what it will be" (197). She fills the colour of her life in her paintings and feels herself isolated without them. With a deep anguish she confesses, "How can I explain to her that each day that passes without painting has a hollowness to it, a sense of waste" (197). She finds a wide gulf in the dreams of her paintings and the dimensions of her dreams. She reveals:

> I'm dreaming every night, but I remember nothing. It's as though there is a wall inside me, constructed to protect me from something too painful to bear. My dreams take place from the other side of the wall. I wake in the morning with vague recollections of colour, whispered laughter, the smell of food or beaches, a sense of loss. I'm convinced the two are related, my not-painting and my not-dreaming. But I don't know how to break down the partition, and in truth, I'm afraid. (197)

In the dreams of her future she discovers the solution of her relationship with Jona and Sonny. The dilemma of Rakhi is a symbolic representation of the dilemma existing in the life of each woman, the realisation of self identity and the realisation of the commitments of motherhood. Jona and her illness becomes a connective link to save their relationship from further being lost in oblivion. She finds it difficult to deny the calls of Jona and admits: "Being in this house with Sonny is gone difficult enough.

Being here when he's around will bring up too many painful memories... but most of all, I don't want to give Jona false hopes about the two of us getting back together" (210).

However against her dreams and choices, she wants to make her realize the reality that Rakhi for her decisions has to depend on the choices of those who want to paint together. She intends to put her life in painting but it was essentially of no avail. However this revelation of dreams on canvas brings no consolation in her life. She gets so confused that she intends to rub that painting for no substantial outcome. She feels that it is difficult to fill the difference of painting and real life, and her failure to put the reality of life in painting becomes an unconscious betrayal of her own dreams of life. Her dilemma is evident in her confession:

> Even when I use best technique, I can't seem to put life into the painting. The mother and child stand stiff as wooden cutouts, the wildflowers are lined up in regimented rows. The anguish I felt in my dream, the sense of loss and fear - I just don't know how to convey that, no matter how I slash my strokes or pile paint on paint. Finally I take turpentine-soaked rag and wiped off the canvas. (213)

With this realisation, a transformation takes place in the consciousness of Rakhi and she gets a realisation that the emotional refuge in the company of Sonny is the only anticipated solution for what she had already done. The fulfillment and happiness comes not from outside but from the very inner core of their own consciousness.

The narration here moves in two diverse direction – one Rakhi's reconciliation with Sonny that mark the beginning of better tomorrow, a consistency of family unit, and secondly at the professional level her dreams are re-casted in the form the

rehabilitation of Kurma House. The customers rush increase and it contributes to intensify the expectation of the life, "If business continues this way for another month, we'll hire a chef's helper" (216). She considers Jaspal fit for that purpose. Belle's proposal for Jaspal as chef is a prelude to another mode of involvement in personal relationship. At this crucial moment, Belle's fascination for Jaspal becomes a passive and suggestive foil to strengthen the relationship of Rakhi and Sonny. Belle says, "I'm not sure, I'm crazy about him and I know he's attracted to me. But I didn't think he was serious, not in this way" (218). Belle thinks seriously about the gravity of these relationships. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni exhorts:

> In a serious relationship people have to think alike. He believes in living according to the Granth Sahib: physical purity, disciple, putting the family first, being a respectable gurudwara-going member of community. Rules my parents pushed down my throat every day of my life until I escaped in college! (219)

Through this observation Divakaruni intends to establish that the stability in martial relationship is conditioned in accordance with the ritual and faith of native cultural identity. Belle expresses her doubt, "He loves me but if I'm too serious about our relationship, he feels there's no point in continuing" (220). However in the conflict of Belle, she unconsciously seeks a consolation for her dilemma. She admits. "I don't know, I find it quite terrifying to contemplate. And yet I think of breaking up with him, all the independence in the world doesn't seem worth it" (220).

Divakaruni construct the world of immigrant experience through the experience of women characters. Through her women protagonists, she defends the

cause of fantasy, sentiments, emotions and personal relationships. In one of her interview she mentioned:

> Women in particular respond to my work because, I'm writing about them, woman in love, in difficulties, women in relationships, I want to relate to my characters to feel their joy and pain because it will be harder to be prejudiced when they met them in real life. (152)

The entries in the dream journal provide a deep insight into the anguish of the mother with whom Rakhi used to feel some unexpressed hostility. In the dream journal mother has mentioned,

> "It worried me to see my daughter idolizing me this way. There was so much she didn't know about me, that I couldn't tell her. My mistakes, my betrayals, my cowardices. Sooner or later, she was going to find them out and then she'd feel betrayed, too. I wanted to stop that from happening but how? (230)

In this confession, her mother has her dream, the dream of keeping Rakhi all through her life inside her body. Her mission was to push Rakhi into her own body which seems to be impossible. She should do it before her body wakens or else it would be a pregnancy without end. This particular entry of the dream journal has a deep significance to set an argument of Chitra Banerjee's feminist vision and to settle down the riddle of the life of Rakhi. The tentative suggestion in mother's fantasy of taking Rakhi inside her body has two important suggestions. First it shows that a child has an inseparable bond of kinship with the mother. Secondly it might denote her unconscious desire to save her daughter from the gaze of the world that might prove apathetic to a woman's existence as it had been witnessed by her. In context of the

narrative, mother's desire also becomes the unconscious desire of Rakhi too. She wants to take Jona inside her real self.

Amid this realisation, there occurs a fire in the store and she becomes impatient to seek shelter in the company of Sonny. She wants deliverance not in emancipation but in the involvement in personal relationship. She develops a modified perception of her own life condition, "I once heard my mother say, Calamity happens so we can understand caring. I refused to believe it. The calamities in my life caused by the failure of caring, I felt. But after the fire at our store, I begin to glimpse, just little, what she might have meant" (237).

In *Queen of Dreams*, the philosophical undertone imparts an exceptional richness to expression. The three dimensional thread of the idea of involvement of personal relationship, Rakhi through dream journals of her deceased mother gets involved in her life, subsequently it helps her to come out of her own dilemma and to make a reaffirmation of the involvement in personal relationship through Sonny and Jona and in the third place with fire and reconstruction of Chai shop, there is an involvement of Rakhi and her father in the life of customers. These changes presented in the novel justify that Divakaruni retains the idea of hospitality and personal relationship and that is the only mechanism to ensure happiness in life. Rakhi mention how her father is passionate to run Chai shop without least consideration of financial gains.

Divakauni makes a specific emphasis on the issues of hospitality that is a part and parcel of Indian spiritual life. Her earlier passion for the painting converts and her unconscious wiping of the colours for canvas and the selection of new idea of painting in the form of the portrait of Jona, indicates the growth of the consciousness of Rakhi.

If in the process of painting of Indian landscapes of India, she makes an open expression of her suppressed sensibility. In portrait of Jona, she seeks the roots of her own frustrated and confused motherhood. She confesses, "I was now trying for a portrait of Jona in an abstract style but the colour clashed, the composition lacked energy and the figure in the centre didn't possess my daughter's spirit" (251).

In Rakhi's life national awareness overcomes all other consideration. Such realisation of national identity is an integral part of human consciousness and not an externally imposed cover. Peter Heehs in his idea of National consciousness mentions:

> India the possessor of the truth of the spirit must resist that arrogant claim and aggression and affirm her own deeper truths in inspite of heavy odds from all corners. For in, its preservation lies the only hope that mankind instead of marching to a new cataclysm and primitive beginning with a constant repetition of the old blind cycles with at last emerging into the light and accomplish the drive forward which will bring terrestrial evolution to its next step of ascent in the progressive manifestation of spirit. (285)

In *Queen of Dreams,* in the later part of the novel, the whole focus remains on the precarious position of immigrants in the hybrid society of America. Sonny brings the copies of e-mails that are being circulated by Indian organizations. The warning contain in these newspapers suggests that immigrants can never achieve a safe mooring in American society. She feels herself both frightened and vulnerable, "The notes caution them not to go anywhere alone. Don't wear your native clothes. Put up American flags in prominent locations in homes and businesses" (274). Overnight all the bonds of fraternity and national belongingness shatter to pieces. Rakhi is

anguished to realize "how her neighbourhood has changed. The Pakistani women barely come out of their apartment. The Afghani men take turns resounding up the children of their community and driving them to the neighbourhood school although it is only two blocks away" (276).

In *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni maintains a fine balance to tie several lose ends of the novel in a contented and holistic realisation of the narrative idiom. The final revelation in dream journals justify the guilt of her mother and help her to understand the real nature of her relationship with Sonny. The novel *Queen of Dreams* ends with a twine note of self dense and self justification. Rakhi finally admits:

> She's content to enjoy this moment, this transient mode of glitter-dust on the web of the world where Sonny and she have touched orbits once more. She dances back to the centre of the room, its nexus of energy, feeling his gaze like a silk dupatta on her shoulders as she goes. (307)

The novel *Queen of Dreams* is a complex novel covering the multilayers of human sensibility beyond the terrains of caste, gender, race or national consideration. The succeeding chapter throws light on how Mrs.Gupta through her dream journal establishes her identity and Rakhi finds the true identity of her mother.

Chapter Three

Quest for Identity

Quest for Identity traces the identity crisis faced by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's women characters and their search for a new and an independent self identity in the diasporic context. Identity crisis is a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to change in their expected aims or role in society. An identity crisis is a period of serious personal questioning where the individual makes an effort to determine one's own values and sense of direction. When a person goes through a period of identity crisis, that person begins to create a number of self satisfying illusions and starts rationalising the failures or constructs a new self.

Women in diasporic situation have to undergo the pain of struggling with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile in addition to fulfilling the demands of family and work with the claims of old and new patriarchies. As a result they have to go through a period of identity crisis. This crisis of self identity is a preoccupation for diasporic women writers and what comes out of their writings is a blend of concerns with migration and diaspora for the immigrant women.

The female characters in the fiction of Divakaruni question the nature of their lives, and their roles as mothers, wives, daughters and professionals. This awareness leads them to rethink about their own lives as women, and instills in them the confidence and strength to forge ahead. Divakaruni focuses on the diasporic Indian women caught between two opposing worlds. They find themselves in an in between state, struggling to carve their identities of their own.

Divakaruni's novel *Queen of Dreams* will be under critical focus to reflect upon the tensions and conflicts that arise out of the familial settings in the diasporic

context. As the women in these novels struggle to define themselves as South Asian and American, they are experiencing a conflict of consciousness. In the private realm, the traditional Indian culture requires specific duties of women, and strict norms of morality are held in high esteem and are transgressed only by those considered daring and depraved. Sandra Ponzanesi in her essay In *My Mother's House* states:

> As far as the condition of migration and diaspora is concerned, women are often called to preserve their nation through the restoration of a traditional home in the new country. The idea of home entails the preservation of traditions, heritage continuity; there is even an intense emotive politics of dress for some communities. (245)

In the public realm there is a freedom of self expression on many levels but at the same time the pressures from family and career often begin to clash, South Asian women begin to experience a conflict that leads to the fragmentation of their selves. This is how they psychologically cope with the cultural conflict they face in their everyday life in their adopted country. Affected by the feminism of America that emphasis on women's independence and equality, the Indian women in America begin to move towards the process of assimilation of the American culture.

Divakaruni's latest novel *Queen of Dreams* combines the elements of Indian American experience and magical realism, which she is known for. The story deals with the search of identity both individual and communal and a sense of emotional completion. It embodies a portrayal of a clash of cultures and it has been described as containing Divakaruni's signature fusion of the realistic and the cosmic. The intensity with which she deals the terrorist attack and its repercussions of the Indian community in America makes it one of the most politically searing novels to date. Apparently it's a simple story of a young enterprising woman in America, but it

delves deep into the questions raised by immigration which is so common in the age of globalization. Rakhi is a single mother and a struggling artist. She has always been vaguely aware of her own mother's unusual ability to interpret dreams, about which she learns only after her death. She also runs a Chai house with a friend, which is endangered by the Starbucks super café, Java which moves in across the street. The effect of September 11th, a vicious attack on her family and friends calls their notion citizenship in to question and how her relationship with her husband and father changes after the attack has been vividly brought out.

Women can also suffer from too much identification. Yet an aspect of any feminism information is that collective self consciousness of being women and to deny the force of that elective identification would be mistaken as the supposition of its necessary fixity. From this it is understood that feminism depends upon identity and identification. It is within the realm of the culture that woman exists and feminist identities are sought to be constructed. A woman's identity cannot be dissociated from the religious, national, ethnic and cultural context of her existence. The complexity of her situation and the multifarious nature of women's role in different parts of the world make the claims about the universality of gender become redundant. Both men and women have grappled with the question of identity but with time woman's quest for recognition as an individual has got complicated due to her realisation of her abilities and inability to delink from culture and assert herself. In the words of Veena Noble Dass:

> The Indian woman caught in the flux of tradition and modernity beating the burden of past and the aspirations of the future is the crux of feminism in India. A search for identity and a quest for the definition of the self have

become prime features of women in literature under the sway of feminism. (11)

The changing times have affected the roles of woman outside the home, but the concept of family still remains traditional in India. The Harvard Philosopher Hugo Munsterberg states: "From whatever side we look at it, the self assertion of woman exalts her at the expense of family-perfects the individual but injures society" (95). While the burden of the family is borne by the woman she is also expected to preserve the traditions of her ancestors and culture, even at the cost of her personal interest.

Her individuality is ever endangered because of her efforts to strike a compromise between the burden of legacy, and the need to preserve roots to establish a position for her. Placed in the patriarchal context she tries to readjust her conventional role to suit present requirements and makes an effort to combine the two. Self sufficiency is tempting her to live life on her own terms but patriarchal dominance makes the prospects of leading a problem free independent existence bleak so she does not dare to defy the norms. She is capable of surging ahead but is pulled back by the do's and don'ts deeply imbibed in her psyche.

It is this dilemma of being at the in between state where she is no longer the submissive domestic creature she used to be and still not completely free of past influences. Indian culture demands specific duties of woman and strict conceptions of morality are held in high esteem. Outside home, in the public realm, she has begun to experience a sense of freedom and self expression at many levels which is conflicting with her domestic role and duty. This clash results in the creation of the fragmentary self of a woman. The development of a divided consciousness is largely due to circumstances, but it is also a psychological mechanism created to cope up and

respond to the cultural dissonance that surrounds her. Indian woman is weighed down by social relationships and communal identities that prevail both in her pre and post marital life. Her behavior is determined by her community affiliation, religion, caste, class, and gender, and this becomes one of the significant concerns of most women's writings.

Divakaruni in her novels the identity issue takes on another colour, that of making a position for themselves in their adopted country. She tries to resolve the matters between their circumstances and environment and put the pieces of fragmented selves together. As Divakaruni's states in an article:

> We draw from dual culture, with two sets of world views and paradigms juxtaposing each other ....Expatriates have powerful and poignant experience when they live away from their original culture – and this becomes home, but never quite, and then you can't really go back and be quite at home there either." (Rediff Chat)

In her novel *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni brings out the multifaceted problem of identity through her characters. Her characters develop multiplicity of consciousness in viewing themselves. One basic consciousness with which they understand is, a minority class living in America whether they are the first generation Indian Americans or the second generation. Mrs.Gupta, Rakhi's mother who is the first generation immigrant is torn between her desire for individual existence, familial responsibilities and her life as a saviour of people. The sections that are entitled Dream Journals, in the text, are the diary entries of Rakhi's mother who has withdrawn from her family in order to pursue her dream telling. As an orphan Mrs. Gupta is brought up by an aunt, who recognizes her talent of dream telling and takes

her to caves where she learns the art completely. But her visit to Calcutta to improve her art, results in falling in love, which is forbidden to dream tellers but she has no regrets that she has broken the vows. It is only after she comes to America, she is pricked by her conscience and realizes that her gift of dream telling has begun to fade after coming here.

The memories are with her day and night, reminders and warnings of the past stream into her thought creating a conflict in her present life. She is like those who live border lives. Homi.K.Bhabha talks about it in *The Locations of Culture* according to him "living on the border, the edge, requires a new art of the present". This depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the border and using it to rethink the dominant ways we represent things like history, identity and community. Borders are important thresholds, full of contradictions and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. They are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier. As Bhabha defines it,

> the beyond is an in between site of transition, the beyond is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind the past... we find ourselves in a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. The space of the beyond is often described in terms which emphasize this transitory, in between sense such as liminal, interstitial or hybrid.

As time passes Mrs. Gupta finds the past inescapable. She finds she cannot let go of her life as a dream teller and is constantly plagued by the guilt of leaving it half way. She sacrifices her marital joy to continue as an interpreter of dreams and serve the people and ultimately withdraws from her family, in order to preserve her identity

as a dream teller. Her loneliness in a new country, her attempt to earn money to finance a return journey, her pregnancy, and her decision not to return to India is all recorded in these diary entries with the story of her early life.

The conflicts that Mrs.Gupta must resolve between her marriage which comprises of a daughter and a husband and a life of a dream teller, which keeps her within strictly imposed limits, are a reworking of the very same conflicts that all exiles experience between past and future. Mrs. Gupta's journey through the redefinition of the self in the exile is also an extension of the same conflicts that Indian women experience in establishing their identity and selfhood. She is torn between her spiritual commitment and love for her husband, this is the essence of her struggle, her gift demands total dedication, allowing no space for love. But she is not willing to give up that very human part of herself. It is like a struggle that artist face, who have to be committed if they want their work to blossom.

The title *Queen of Dreams* is in itself ironical. It is a phrase out of one of Mrs.Gupta's favorite songs, Mere Sapnon ki Rani Kab Aayegi Tu. She is the queen of dreams because she sees dreams, interprets them and warns people of impending dangers to their life. It is also suggestive of the fact that the woman who interprets and helps to fulfill other people's dream is herself unable to attain happiness and contentment through the dreams she sees for herself. Mrs.Gupta has to pay a big price, which in a way all immigrants pay when they leave their homeland, give up the comforts it offers them and come to a new land where they have to work hard to make two ends meet.

Mrs.Gupta's dreams of a happy married life are shattered because she has broken the vows of celibacy which dream tellers must take. Her frustration on her

arrival in America is explained by the snake that visits her in her dream and clarifies that she must give up her love for success in the professional sphere. Her withdrawn behavior makes her daughter and her husband unhappy and curious. Mr. Gupta resorts to drinking heavily and Rakhi wishes for some communication which her mother who will help her understand her mother's mysterious life and death. Braziel Jana Evans and Anita Mannur in *Theorising Diaspora* observes, "The older generation cannot afford to invoke India in an authoritarian mode to resolve problems in diaspora and the younger generation will be ill advised to indulge in a spree of forgetfulness about where they have come from" (42).

Rakhi's parents have been typical in not telling her much about India which causes her to hunger for it. India becomes looming and mythical in her imagination. She is deliberately deprived of her heritage, which she longs to recreate for herself. Rakhi is denied of the knowledge of the home land because Mrs.Gupta does not wish her to feel the pangs of separation and nostalgia for Indian heritage as she herself does. And these are factors which describe her identity as similar to the second generation Indian. Avtar Brah in *Cartographics of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* describes this condition of Diasporas in the prevailing culture "All diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces even as they are implicated in the construction of common" (192). This living in between condition is very excruciating and marginalizing for the diasporas. There is yearning for home to go back to the lost origin, and imaginary homelands which is created from the disconnected and fractional reminiscences of their motherland. Salman Rushdie in Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, states that

> The immigrants stand bewildered and confused, and show resistance also to the discourse of power in various forms. In the following generations, these

confusions, problems and yearnings become less intense as they get influenced by the culture of that country and also adapt themselves to it. (18)

Movement among cultures, languages, and complex configurations of meaning and power has always been the territory of the colonized. American born Rakhi, artist and co-owner of a funky Berkeley tea shop, is a daughter of Indian immigrants and is haunted by their silence as she confesses that she hungered for all things Indian because her mother never spoke of the country she had grown up and she never spoke of her past which made Rakhi all the more curious about her roots and disappointed for not been able to inherit the gift of dream telling. Rakhi who is already burdened with the problems at her shop and recent divorce finds it all the more difficult to define herself when her own mother is so successful. For a very long time she feels she is in her mother's shadow and yet strangely neglected by her. But Rakhi certainly doesn't understand that for every gain, there's a loss. For every additional facet in life, there are more things to juggle.

Rakhi's mother had to let go of her intimacy with her husband and her love for her only daughter. She once awakes crying from her dream and confesses: "I knew how much my link with the dream spirits meant. I couldn't give it up. I wept, too, because I realized the price I would have to pay never again to spend the night with my husband. Spend. For the first time I realized the weighted accurateness of the verb, for dream tellers cannot squander their nights as ordinary women do" (178). Dream journals in the text are vehicles for depicting the interior life and private struggles and anxieties which Mrs.Gupta faces but cannot talk about to anyone. They also become a bridge after her death allowing her to explain herself to some extent at least to her loved ones. "Each word she'd set down in the journals was a gift and

wound. It could be healed only by being read" (301). These are translated from the vernacular into English by Mr. Gupta for his daughter Rakhi.

The journals help them both understand the dead woman, whom they both loved and who had withdrawn from her family to pursue her dream telling. She also recorded her visit to Calcutta that resulted in her marriage and her expectation of her life abroad and all frustrated by reality. She has to learn to cope with them and the writings enable Rakhi to understand her mother more than she has ever done before. The dream journals transport this book to another realm. The book does not draw a firm line between reality and dreams. When reading the dream journals, Rakhi and her father speculate whether Mrs. Gupta only imagined it all and her extraordinary past were simply another dream. This deliberate blurriness suggests a sleeper awakening; mirroring Rakhi's gradual understanding of herself and her mother. All her grudges against her mother vanish with the help of the lessons she learns through the legends and myths described in the journals.

Renunciation, humility, acceptance are the traditional values that helps to face all crisis in life. Rakhi's daughter Jona also confuses reality and fantasy she makes up a story of another woman in her father's life and ironically it is not Rakhi but, Jona who inherits her grandmother's powers of dreaming. Divakaruni blends the daily lives of Indian Americans with the myths of a distant homeland. She effectively takes the reader into an immigrant culture but she also shows the common ground that lies in a world that some would find foreign. She shows how individual and communal identity is shaped by loss and creation. *Queen of Dreams* is a story of Rakhi a multilayered complex woman who is facing her own inner challenges and peace, contentment and happiness in a world that is steeped in the ramifications of diversity, cultural identity and the importance of family.

experience a similar identity crisis in the capitalist society of the super power America.

The predicament that Rakhi faces after the attack is again typical of the second generation immigrants who do not feel they are an outsider and are yet considered outsiders. She refuses to flaunt her patriotism and love for America by pasting posters on the glass window of her tea shop because she is a natural citizen. In the wake of Sep 11th, Rakhi and her friends have to deal with the dark complexity about their acculturation, as second generation immigrants. They are so much a part of that American world that September 11th comes as much a shock and loss to them as to have any other American. Rakhi when told to put a flag outside the Kurma House to show her affinity she says, "I don't have to put up a flag to prove that I'm an American I'm an American already. I love this country hell it's the only country I know. But I'm not going to be pressured in to putting up a sign to announce that love to every passerby" (264).

Rakhi feels doubly displaced after the September 11th incident, she is neither Indian, nor is considered American by her fellow countrymen. She is insecure in this new and threatening environment, where Jespal the young Sikh suitor of Belle is mistaken for Muslim fanatic and beaten up badly. This is when Rakhi's acceptance of the American identity or being an American is questioned and she begins to wonder as to where she belongs? When she feels the need for prayer she doesn't know towards which deity, American or Indian, should she aim her supplication? She looks for a sense of community, togetherness and affinity, which she only acquires through the revival of her relationship with her husband Sonny who always stood by her when she needed support. September 11th introduced terrible conflict and confusion into the Indian American community.

Rakhi at this moment admits to a little identity crisis and finds it difficult to consider America in terms of home. There was a lot of prejudice and people were viewed with suspicion and in many cases, blamed and attacked as non American. The Kurma House becomes the target of brutal attack by self possessed patriots. Kurma House which has become a gathering for the music lovers, is a place of mixed races. But Rakhi suspects that the listeners keep coming back because they are drawn to the old men. There's enigma about them where they've come from, why they left those distant places. Watching them pull us out of the cramped familiarity of our own lives into a larger possibility, once upon a time, in a large land far, far away. "It's what I wrestled my mother for, even as she'd insisted that the only magic lay in now" (196).

On the day of the attack Rakhi keeps the Kurma House open and even after being warned by her neighbour Mr. Soto, the owner of Mexican restaurant next door. But Rakhi waits for her father's musician friends to arrive. They start arriving with stunned look on their faces. They are dressed in jeans, T-shirts and caps and not in their usual kurtas and loose pants because deep down they realize that their clothes also identify them as south Asians. So to show solidarity and avoid attacks of the angry people they were dressed up the American way. They discuss about the awful attack and what the government will do in response and how ultimately this would affect their home countries. Though these people have been settled in America, adopted the American way of life and feel and mourn at the loss that the country has undergone but at the same time are worried about their own existence in the host country.

In migrating from one country to another, migrants inevitably become involved in the process of setting up home in a new land. This can also add to the ways in which the concept of home is disturbed. Migrants tend to arrive in new places

with baggage both in physical sense of possessions or belongings, but also the less tangible matter of beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values. This can have consequences for the ways in which others may or may not make migrants feel at home on arrival in new place. Migrants may well live in new places, but they can be deemed not to belong there and disqualified from thinking of the new land as their new home. Instead, their home is seen to exist elsewhere, back across the border. Robert Cohen in Global Diasporas: An Introduction describes diaspora as a community of people living together in one country who acknowledge that "the old country is a nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions" (9).

Diaspora thus subsists in one country as the society but look across time and space to the other. The immigrant diasporas and their descendants experience dislodgment, disintegration, marginalization and discontinuity in the cultural dialogue and involvement of subject countries. But unlike these men, Rakhi, Belle, Jespal who have not experienced enough of India as children, have little or no memory of a home overseas. They are not in the same position as their parents. The only home they know and attached to is the country they are living in. It is the circumstances like these that make these people question their identity, when they are not readily permitted to belong and having born and grown up in the same country are still called terrorists. This is where the descendants of migrants suffer similar experiences to their parents. Identity is still a concern with young Indians. Rakhi, Jespal, Belle, Sonny belonging to the second generation of Indians adapt very well to their environment, as America is not alien to them. Rather they become and want to be Americanized like Belle. She doesn't like the idea of arranged marriage and fears that her parents would arrange her marriage to an upright young Indian farmer they usually buy their supplies from for

the produce store they run. She wants to escape from all the pressure her parents put upon her to be Indian. But ultimately she develops a liking for Jespal, a young turbaned, software engineer, sent by her parents to meet her.

Jespal has a distinctly American accent, he is also like Belle second generation Indian but who unlike Belle, chooses to keep his affinity and connection to his roots through his turban. R.S Pathak in *Indian English Literature: Marginalized Voices* says "The quest for identity refers to the spiritual odyssey of the modern man who has lost his social and spiritual mooring and who is anxious to seek his roots" (22). Rakhi's complacent acceptance of the American home is shattered and she begins to feel an outsider. Though Rakhi cannot imagine herself anywhere else in the world she needs the sense of community, togetherness and affinity. Rakhi also ultimately releases herself of all her crises by visiting a discotheque where Sonny invites her. All the inmates are involved in playing some kind of a dancing game which she becomes a part of and that instills in her a feeling of community, which she is most looking for at this time; someone to hold her or someone she can hold on to.

Dancing she knows will not last forever, but she's content to enjoy that moment where Sonny and she touch orbits once more where they once separated. She further releases herself by her contact with Emit Maerd whose name when reversed spells Dream Time. His identity remains a mystery to her. He comes as a kind of messenger, for whom Rakhi waited long to get answers to the questions that crowded in her mind and cannot get herself to ask them, in turn she learns an asana in yoga which calms her disturbed mind.

Rakhi who feels doubly displaced, insecure and threatened after the September 11th attacks looks for a logical explanation of everything and it is through dance and

yoga that she is finally able to revive herself and her relationship with her husband and her father. It is the faith and spirituality that the Indian background has instinctively headed down to her that helps her in tiding over difficult times and provide solace. Bell Hooks observes in *Yearning: Race Gender and Cultural Politics* "In times of estrangement, home is no longer just one place. It is locations... one confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become" (148). The other option open for Rakhi to find solace is to accept the fact that there remains something that is always incomprehensible. One cannot answer all questions and it is the Indian background which is full of faith which helps her in tiding over difficult times.

Divakaruni seems to suggest that it is necessary to k eep up hopes and have faith in the future and not to concentrate on the gaps between logical statement. This is what one has to compromise with to make survival less difficult in the diaspora. The collective chanting of prayers in the Kurma house on the evening of the terrorist attack and the effort of all the visitors to the Kurma House to alleviate the feeling of antagonism generated by the attack is all reflective of the Indian fortitude in the face of distress. Divakaruni on being asked in one of the interview about Rakhi falling into the victim's role and what must she do to change the direction of her life? Divakaruni replies that she wants her heroine to stop blaming themselves. She needs them to find their way as an artist. She needs to learn to feel ok about unsolved mysteries. She needs them to forgive and trust again and Rakhi does learn all of this.

Divakaruni in *Queen of Dreams* brings out the importance of the family. She reunites the broken relationship and this happens only after the death of Mrs.Gupta. In each and every incident that took place after her mother's death was unbearable, but

the fact was that Rakhi was not left in any situation, she had her ex husband, her father and friends to support. It was then she realised the importance of being with them. The following chapter throws light on how Rakhi saves her relationship. It also deals with the theory of mysticism and magical realism.

this former life of sisterhood, Mrs. Gupta observes certain vestiges of the worshiping Mother Goddess and abides by women's knowledge system. For instance, she opens herself up to communication with a snake at the darkest moment of her life. As she writes in her journal, "Thoughts of suicide filled my mind like rain clouds till everywhere I turned I saw only blackness. It was at this time the snake came to me" (283). The snake reveals to her that "each time I had sex with my husband, or even slept in the same bed, my powers already weakened by being so far from the caves- dwindled further. Soon they would die altogether" (283).

Divakaruni's choice of the snake as a messenger evokes the snake symbol in Hindu tradition. Johnson interprets in *Lady of the Beasts,* "her symbolic threat, known as Kali's Snake, signifies the umbilical cord, basic to creation" (172). Although in *Queen of Dreams* the snake is referred to as a he, its description as green, shining like rainwater and a raindrop on an ear of maize evokes the feminie imagery of regeneration and earth itself. Divakaruni's choice of a man as a human form of the snake messenger seems to verify Tate's argument that serpents long associated with feminine deities have been usurped by patriarchal traditions. Tate thus ponders about Hindu references of snake Gods: "That is perhaps why the popular culture has the Nagas represented by male Gods" (194). What is illuminating is the realization that the transvaluation of snake Goddesses to evil serpents is very site of warring signification between two opposing system of belief, the Mother Goddess versus the Father God, and the result is the destruction of the religion of the Mother by that of the Father.

The Christian tradition orginates the fall of man from the serpent that tempted Eve. In the *Talmud,* it is predicted that Leviathan, the sea serpent will be killed and fed in a feast to the righteous. Divakaruni, writing from the Hindu Culture that has

sapped by her sexual relationship with her husband. She chooses to preserve her power as a dream interpreter over her love and duty towards her husband. This fact that she refuses to share their martial bed and insists on sleeping on the floor in a separate room gestures towards a feminist statement about the liberating effect of women's solitude.

Mysticism in *Queen of Dreams* centers on Goddesses and their lexicon that cultivate a radically different culture from the empirical and materialist. The Hindu culture background in the novel, uniquely different from U.S and European cultures enjoys a living tradition of the worship of Goddesses. Francis Clooney in his *Divine Mother* explains "the cult of Goddesses is not exotic or esoteric, and has not been passing phase in Indian culture, replaced or about to be replaced by other forms of religiosity" (6). Divakaruni's exploration of exceptional female powers in her novel evokes this living tradition and its relationship to the diasporic Hindu community in United States.

In *Queen of Dreams*, Mrs. Gupta, as a young girl in India, lives with a group of women in caves, whose symbolism of the womb has been established. This women's society is independent and self-sufficient, living with the earth rather than living on and against the earth. Her dream journals begin with the caves. They introduce Rakhi in an ancient tongue to the women's society in the caves. The condition of its membership is the exclusion of men in their lives. Mrs. Gupta told her daughter: "The first question that the gate keeper asked us novices before we were allowed to enter the caves was whether we were willing to give up all thoughts of husbands and lovers too" (146).

Marilyn Frye explains the word virgin as "a woman one not betrothed, not married, not bound to, not possessed by any man. It meant a female who is sexually and socially her own person" (330). The society of dreamers living in the caves can been seen as willful virgins who regard their talent and work to the most important of all. Mrs.Gupta's aunt initiates the young women into the society of dream readers "One life is too little to be divided between the outside world and the inner one, the world of daylight and that of shadow...a man's kisses will suck your life force from you. You will have nothing left to offer the dream God" (147).

Life force is a lexicon of the mother Goddess whose sanctity comes from regeneration and renewal. This does not simply entail the power of creation, but also suggests energy, vitality and autonomy. Through Mrs. Gupta's aunt, Divakaruni projects a feminist tenet that a woman's life force or creative energy is greater than life itself. A female dream reader loses her life force when he yields to the demands of the institution of heterosexuality. Against the social background of hegemonic heterosexuality, the aunt's warning implies a systematic chain of consequences originating from a kiss between a man and a woman, which can strip away a woman's name, property, creativity, energy, autonomy and even her life itself. The women's society in the caves offers young women protection and support, renders marriage unnecessary, valorizes loyalty to one's art, and prioritizes communion with deities.

On the contrary, it is the intrusion of men into the women's world that brings about the turmoil and exile. In *Queen of Dreams*, the women dream readers take a field trip to Calcutta to test their abilities, and it is in Calcutta that Mrs.Gupta breaks her vow of virginity. She chances upon a man in a garden, who mesmerizes her with love songs. The two met in secret and consummated their love. When found out, the elders were disappointed and chastised her for having betrayed her art and gift for a

mere man. Unlike a secret male society that is most likely to exact physical punishment or death for a member's violation of rules, the mothers in the caves offer the culprit three option.

Choice one was to remain the cave with the elders for the rest of her life and be a teacher. An elder would dream walk into her memory and remove the man's image. Choice two was to give up her talent and live her life as that of the ordinary women, as a wife. The elders would adjust her memory so that she would not remember anything about the caves. The third was that she will be allowed to keep her powers, the lesser ones, so that she might help other in the world. In return, she could live with the man, but she must promise not to marry him.

Choosing the third option, Mrs.Gupta believes: "In the eye of the Great Power, then, my spiritual essence would not be joined to his. The door for my return to the sisterhood would thus be closed completely in case I saw the folly of my choice and wished to come back" (176). However, she regrets this choice much later "I did know that my choice would suspend me for the rest of my days between a world inexplicable forces and the love of a man who insisted that such a world did not exist" (176). However loving and kind Mr.Gupta is, he does not understand or appreciate Mrs.Gupta's talent and power, and he expects her to be no more than a loving wife and mother

In *Queen of Dreams,* Divakaruni makes a feminist statement by endowing matter with greater power than reason, and matter in the novel is symbolised by earth. At the time Mrs. Gupta leaves the caves to be with Mr. Gupta, her aunt gives her a small pouch that contains a handful of red earth from the walkway in front of the caves, literally "grounds that centuries of dreams tellers has stepped on" (176). The

red earth not only represent the pathway between the outside world and the secret sisterhood inside the caves but also materially represents the lives of women whose bodies have returned to the red earth after spending their lives among other women who is disavow heterosexuality to give themselves totally to the development of their talents. The red earth clearly is a potent parting gift. What is peculiar about this parting gift is that the aunt does not explain its purpose and allows the recipient's intuition to guide her use it. Mrs. Gupta takes the red earth with her to America without a clear idea what she is to do with it, but she deeply trusts its power.

In California, Mrs.Gupta feels increasingly alienated from her talent. Dreams do not come to her. She begins to experiment with the red earth. At first she scatters a little in her garden. It makes her flowers bloom but does not help her dream. Then she mixes it in her food, but it gives her cramps. Finally, she places the pouch of red earth under her pillow, and her sleep "was filled with colours and scents of home" (177). But her husband wakes up with a headache, complaining that "his sleep had been filled with terrible images, blood and rubble and dying animals" (177). She realises that in order to have her dreams, she will have to stop sharing her husband's bed, "for dream tellers cannot squander their nights as ordinary women do" (178). To her dismay, the red earth in the pouch becomes less each time she uses it. But by now she recognizes her mistakes and realizes that she must break off all ties with her husband and find a way back to the caves.

Mrs. Gupta's contemplation about leaving her husband on the sole ground that living with him prevents her from practicing her power to read dreams examines the current discourse of marriage. In this discourse there is a double standard for a successful marriage between a man and a woman. While it is understandable when a man desires autonomy and space, a woman desiring the same is often deemed

unnatural. Even worse is the glorification of confirmed bachelors in the interest of art or science versus the stigmatization or vilification of spinsters. The fundamental presumption underlying such a discourse comes from a related discourse of female sexuality and fertility that women's biological destiny is birthing and raising children, and therefore women's natural desire is heterosexual. Marilyn Fryn critiques the naturalness or inevitability of female heterosexuality. She contests:

> Female heterosexuality is not biological drive or an individual women's erotic attraction or attachment to another human animal which happens to be male. Female heterosexuality is a set of social institution and practices defined and regulated but patriarchal kinship system, by both civil and religious law, and by strenuously enforced mores and deeply entrenched values and taboos. (329)

Frye's challenge to the rigidity of female heterosexuality in discourse and practices exposes the vocabulary of biology, inevitably and laws of nature as a discursive camouflage for a social construct created to legitimate the patriarchal system. In the case of Mrs. Gupta, now having experienced the erosion of self and art by participating in the institution of heterosexuality, she decides to disobey the injunction to be a good wife. Doing so is particularly hard because she loves her husband and enjoys their intimacy. This state of women is of two epistemologies, with one being the patriarchal system of knowledge and the other the understanding of the Mother Goddess.

Raised and nurtured by the elders in the caves, Mrs. Gupta does not perceive heterosexuality as a compulsory system. She regards celibacy as an indicator of devotion. Her rejection of heterosexuality in order to regain her powers as a dream reader is motivated by her memory of that women's society in the caves. Because of

preserved certain vestiges of Mother religion, manages to recuperate the feminine and oracular powers of the snake by making the snake a messenger of Mother Goddess. In *Queen of Dreams*, although the snake is textually marginal, its ample symbolism of the feminine divine is evident. For instance, the novel's first line is: "Last night the snake came to me" (1), and the snake is immediately associated with the caves where women dream readers live. Mrs. Gupta clearly knows the snake:

> He was more beautiful that I remembered. His plated green skin shone like rainwater on banana plants in the garden plot we used to tend behind the dream caves... The last time he'd appeared was a time of great change in my life. He had not returned after that, though I'd cried and called him until I had no voice left. (1)

Another instance of the snake's symbolic connection with female deities is achieved through Rakhi. After the terrorists attack, when her life has become ashes, Rakhi receives four paintings from an unknown sender that finally inspires her to resume her life as an artist. One of those paintings depicts "a many-armed purple being with a moon like face floating above the nest of serpents" (244). This image can be compared to the image of Mother Durga, who is often portrayed with ten arms, a quarter-moon on her forehead and a meditative smile. Instead of riding a triger or a lion as Durga is traditionally portrayed, Divakaruni floats her over a nest of snakes to deepen the connection between the Mother Goddess and the snakes. The colour purple in the image of Durga echoes back to the snake's first appearance, whose "body glowed with light. A clear full light tinged with coastal purples" (2).

The snake messenger reveals to Mrs. Gupta that she must leave her husband and return to the caves in order to re-energize her powers. However, soon after this

realization she finds herself pregnant. Although she is no longer able to return to the caves, her pregnancy with her daughter restores some of her lost power in dreaming, and as if the power of fertility recuperates some of the power in dreaming, and if a female fetus offers a kind of sisterhood that protects and nurtures her powers. Mrs. Gupta decides to have the child and stay with her husband in California, but she leaves her marriage bed and never returns to it. She learned from both the snake and the women in the caves that a female dreamer should keep her body and soul to herself. In order to maintain her powers, she should retain a strong sense of self, despite the demands of marriage and motherhood. In order to do her work, she must have a room of her own. Years later, her daughter finds this reflection in her mother's dream journal: "I was not a good mother to Rakhi, I loved her, but not fully. To love someone fully is to give up selfhood, and I could not risk that" (297). Mrs. Gupta regards her talent and her work as too important to be sacrificed for the sake of marriage and motherhood.

Mrs. Gupta ends her sexual relationship with Mr. Gupta and moves into the sewing room. Her daughter has always wondered what her mother does in that room since her mother does not sew. Divakaruni uses the homophone of sewing to equate dreaming with sowing. In her dream journals, Mrs. Gupta reveals to Rakhi in the sowing room the seeds of dream fall into her. This agricultural image distinguishes the Goddess language from the God language, with the former built around flourishing and the latter around salvation.

At the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Gupta learns from the snake of her impending death. Instead of reacting with fear, she welcomes this prophecy because death connotes rebirth in the cosmology of the Mother Goddess. She contemplates calmly, "death end things, but it can be a beginning, too. A chance to gain back what

you'd botched" (3). The view of death as a new beginning projects the philosophy of life and death as coexisting with the same cycle. For instance the messenger in *Queen of Dreams* is a shape shifter, a trickster appearing as a messenger of the Goddess in the form of snake, a man in white, diver of the black seden, art collector and policeman.

The biggest puzzle in this novel is the man in white, who has no name, no history and no voice. His first appearance signal mystery. Rakhi notices two surprising things on the morning she finds this man in the eucalyptus grove paniting. First the eucalyptus grove is wet with puddles of water when there has been no rain anywhere else. Second, there is a man in the grove, "a rare occurance, so early on a weekday" (10). Rakhi who has come to paint the grove, begins to watch the man practicing his art. Divakaruni describes the man's motions as underwater movements and offers the first clue to this mysterious man.

As Divakaruni makes it clear at the very first start the snake is affiliated with rainwater and the coastal. The second time Rakhi sees the man in the grove, it is raining again, and the man seems to have appeared and disappeared like magic. To Rakhi's surprise, she finds it hard to sketch this man though she can skillfully capture Bharatnatyam dancers: "Sketch after sketch turns out wrong, wooden, spiritless" (83). Only after he leaves, she feels the energy he had left behind: "I see an orchestra of movements in the emptiness, the shape of his body carved into the space between the tree trunks. Presence and absence, they form a flickering pattern" (83).

Time and space begin to lose their solidity as if different times and spaces had melted into each other. inspired by this experience, Rakhi does her best work in painting the presence and absence of the man in the eucalyptus grove. The mysterious

man purchases this painting from the gallery where Rakhi has a show, and the gallery manager takes down the name as Emmett Mayerd. Only much later does Rakhi realize that his identity is Dream Time, Emit Maerd spelled backward.

The snake who prophecies about Mrs. Gupta's death, who as a mysterious man instructs Rakhi to surrender herself to the forces of nature, who as a policeman, protects Rakhi and her friends from the skinheads and who as a driver of black seden leads Mrs. Gupta to her death. Mr.Gupta remembers the night after he and his wife left the gallery. Mrs.Gupta drives too fast, unlike her cautious driving habits. When urged to slow down, she says, "I mustn't lose him... He's my only chance to get back what I've lost" (117). Mr.Gupta recalls, "When the bend in freeway came up, she sailed into it without hesitation, as though it were the route she had intended to take all along. I think she was smiling" (117). The night Rakhi comes home from scattering her mother's ashes, she encounters a black car that fits her father's description:

> I feel its approach before I see it- like a heavy-metal vibration, an earthquake gathering its forces underground...when it appear, it is slim and black, an ebony arrow whizzing past me... I'm certain it's the one my mother followed into the end of her life... I catch a glimpse of the license plate EMIT MAERD. (139)

Dream Time suggests a time and space that simultaneously separate from and connected with the dreamer's waking life, time, and space that are both remote and intimate. Dream Time according to Jane Caputi, also implies "a state of consciousness characterizes by the play of mythic imagination" (4). Dream Time is also relative to Real Time. The Dream Time has led Mrs.Gupta through the gateway into a dream

time space that seem both remote from and intimate to this world where her husband and daughter live. Thus she found death as the only gateway for what she was seeking. Near the end of the novel, Rakhi revisits the eucalyptus grove where she first saw the mysterious man in white. She meets him again and learns a few motions of yoga from him. It is through this man that Rakhi finally reconnects with her mother. He instructs her to look up:

> I stare at the white aperture in the sky, but this time I'm not dizzy. I feel the warmth from his palms passing into my hands. Between two eucalyptus branches, laden with silver dew, it is the most intricate thing I've ever seen... and for a spilt second I have the strangest sensation, as though I were a dewdrop on a web that I can't see, a web huge beyond imagining. The man in white is another dewdrop. and for a slipt second I have the strangest sensation, as though I were a dewdrop on a web that I can't see, a web huge beyond imagining. The man in white is another dewdrop. (289)

This profound epiphany completes Divakaruni's accomplishment of depicting the mysterious ways of the Mother Goddess and of posing a fascinating challenge to the empirical and scientific patriarchy that had usurped the power of the Mother Goddess and suppressed her system of knowledge. Divakaruni also uses magic realism through mysticism.

Magical realism is an aesthetic style or narrative mode in literature in which magical elements are blended into a realistic atmosphere in order to access a deeper understanding of reality. These magic elements are explained like normal occurrences that are presented in a straight forward manner which allows the real and the fantastic to be accepted in the same stream of thought. In essence, a writer of magical realism

portrays a character or place with realism but, as the writer develops the character or place, one or more elements of magic are added to that specific character or place.

Magic realism as a technique of transforming the fantasy into reality is represented by Divakaruni. She has the ability to turn the unbelievable into the believable, as demonstrated in *Queen of Dreams*. Through magical realism she conveys a reality that incorporates magic, superstition, religion and history which are unquestionably infused into the world. Hence magic realism is an aesthetic style or genre of fiction in which magical elements blends with real world. *Theo D'haen* says that "Magic has also become a perennial source of themes for literary writers like Divakaruni. Magical occurrences become part of everyday life, the supernatural... is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence which is admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism"(193). In her novel, Divakaruni depicts the mysterious world of fantasy in realistic ways to show the psychological reality of modern man of today.

There are so many magical elements which comes true in *Queen of Dreams* that the snake is introduced as a symbol to remind Mrs. Gupta's duty as a dreamer who dreams about the dreams of others, sacrifices to sleep with the family and contacts them to foretell to take precautions. She learnt this skill when stayed with the other novices:

> We novices were learning to read the dreams of beggars and Kings and saints. Ravana, Tunga-dhwaja, Narad Muni But I'd given it up halfway. Mrs. Gupta would not sleep with her family and she explained the reason to her daughter: I don't sleep with you or your father because my work is to dream. I can't do it if someone is in bed with me. I dream the dreams of other people, she said. So I can help them live their lives. (7)

Mrs. Gupta informs the secrecy of the fore warning through her dreams to help the humanity and she was reluctant to reveal about it even to her daughter Rakhi. Rakhi says:

> The first, as she had reluctantly told me was when someone came to her with a dream, and she explained to her what it meant. A dream is a telegram from the hidden world, I heard her say once. Only a fool or an illiterate person ignores it. The second kind of interpretation was more complicated. I'll get to it later. (34)

Rakhi's effort to be a dream interpreter like her mother is a strange whimsical idea of her. So she slept with her mother to imbibe the quality. But her attempt proves a failure. In return, she finds it difficult to get the skill. What she could understand from her mother was being a dream interpreter is not as glamorous as one thinks. Mrs. Gupta asked her daughter to bring a box. It was a Tupperware box, it was filled with little rows of glass bottles, each the size of an index finger. She waited to see what she was going to do with the bottles but she sent Rakhi to look up a number of a person, Raghavenra, S.P in the phone book. She spelled out the name that her daughter was to look for. Mrs. Gupta gave precaution to a person over phone and it occurs later: "Mr. Raghavendra, my mother said, I'm calling to inform you that your life is in danger. One of the people living in your house is planning to kill you" (40).

Mrs. Gupta could sense with her extra sensory perception, and informed Rakhi about the likely rivalry shop over phone, her words simultaneously came true. Outside the new store, two workmen have unpacked a large Java sign in a jubilant, ominous orange. She knew that wasn't exactly a dream, Mrs.Gupta though it was a kind of a

nightmare, she felt Rakhi could know what to do. Mrs.Gupta also warned Rakhi about the impending danger through Belle who was in the Chai House:

> You must act fast, her mother says, before they expect you to. They're going to try to steal your customers, lure them with deals you can't beat. You can succeed only if you do something different. Create a special attraction, something that means more to people than money. (46)

Within a few days, according to her words, the Chai shop met its decline. It lost its attraction but with the constant support and new ideas of Rakhi's father Mr.Gupta they were able to regain their Chai shop. Once when Rakhi was sleeping with her mother, she had a disturbed sleep. She dreamed that she was followed by a man in a lingerie shop, who touched her waist with his fingers. She woke up and hugged her mother. Dreaming is natural but dreaming others dream is a strange thing which is prevalent in Divakaruni's novels. Mrs.Gupta saw the dreams of others and warned them. When she understood the frequent disturbance of her daughter's dream, she decides to dream her dream herself. So she lies down beside Rakhi and put her head on her pillow, though she'd promised herself she would never try that again she kept thinking of what had almost happened the last time, when she had been trying to teach her to read dreams:

> When Rakhi awoke weeping, I was weeping, too. It was a hard fact to come to terms with – that I, who interpreted dreams for a worldful of strangers would never be able to explain to my daughter what her dreams meant. I'd never be able to warn her away from the disasters of her life. (52)

Inspite of Mrs.Gupta's foreseeing about the disaster in her daughter's life, she was unable to prevent it. It happened in Rakhi's life when she decided to leave the

music club where her husband Sonny was a musician. When she was about to leave it, a strange man who were sitting on the way laid their hands on her breast. Even though she could escape from them, she developed hatred towards her husband who was ignorant about the incident. In some other occasion, Rakhi's mother informed over phone to Belle about a happy news for which Rakhi was waiting. Her vision came true that Rakhi was allowed to display her portrait at the Altelier. Belle was the first person who received the news over phone and she told:

> As soon as I hang up Belle flings herself at me and hugs me tight. Congratulations! Your first show – and at the Atelier, too! Why, it's just like your mother predicted! It hasn't even been an hour since she said one of us would receive good news! (54)

Rakhi had the view that dreams are like kites cut free from cause, from the ground-glass-dipped string of guilt. She explained how her dream was bought by her mother for a dollar. Such strange occurrences are accepted as normal in magical realistic novels: "Dreams she hasn't had a single dream since her early teenage years, since those recurring nightmares that her mother finally bought from her with a dollar and a string of Bengali words she didn't explain to Rakhi" (69).

Years later, Rakhi started to dream again. In the dream they were in an underwater café, filled with a deep, bottom of the ocean blue. There was no one in the room except her mother, Belle and Rakhi. She turned to speak to them and found that they had turned into sea creatures:

> We are in an underwater cafe, filled with a deep, bottom-of-the ocean blue. Everything sways and shivers in this space, and words echo like sonic booms. The table we sit at is made of coral – or is it porous bones? There's no one in

> the room except for my mother, Belle and myself. I turn to speak to them and find that they have turned into sea creatures. Belle waves her pink anemone tresses at me. My mother turns to me wither intelligent seahorse eyes. The manager swims in, but she is outside my line of vision, and I'm not sure what kind of creature she is. (90- 91)

The drinks they ordered came floating through the water. The coffee was black as squid ink. Rakhi reached for it, but her mother was quicker. She took her cup in her mother's fragile seahorse hands and drinks.

> The colour seeped, into her, staining her like Shiva of the dark throat, who took in the world's poison to save it from destruction. But my mother, well intentioned though she was, was not as strong as a God. She began to crack apart. Little bits came off her like branches of coral. She's trying to tell her something. The water grows turbulent; the booming is a huge echo in her ears, the manager smiled at her with her shark mouth. (91)

The dream comes true when she came to know about the death of her mother by an accident. She feels: "the dreams that her mother had protected her from all these years, positioning herself between her and them like a fortress wall, crash over her" (108). Jona, Rakhi's daughter, herself was much interested in painting. She showed some of her paintings to her mother. Rakhi appreciated her drawings and even felt a little jealous on her painting. On the paneled wall were Jona's new paintings, that she had done since her grandmother died. "They all depicted fires. Some were simple wood fires; others showed homes burning. Still others showed birds with women's faces diving into flames. One was a painting of the earth glowing like a coal, chunks of it breaking and flying off like meteors" (136). Earlier her mother could not

understand it as the fore-warning of an accident at the Chai House. Later she could find out and she realized the extra sensory sense of her daughter.

Jona once took her parent's hands in hers and linked them over her chest. Jona was dreaming. But she knew that it was not her dream. The mother called out in her dream, trying to warn the girl, but she's only able to make a strangled, meaningless sound. The mother explained that she had the same dream. She says,

> It made a special bond between us that night, I guess, when I lay down with my head on your pillow... I was really scared. I wanted to buy that dream from you, like my mother did with me. I even took the coins out of my purse. Did I ever tell you I used to have a nightmare, the same over and over, until your grandma bought it from me? (205)

The child nodded her face pale. She complained that there weren't any girls in her dream, but there was a burning building, with people trapped inside, but they were all adults. That was how the mother learnt that what she dreamt wasn't her daughter's fear. It was her fear.

From the matters that Mrs.Gupta had written in the Dream Journal, it is obviously revealed about dream which she learnt it in the cave. According to her view, the spirit would tell about one's truth. Although it might have to speak many times before one learns to listen through dreams. Unless one observes a life of service and compassion and cultivates the six treasured virtues:

> You may never learn this skill. You will see the intricate web of love that binds existence together, and you will never need anything else in order to be happy. The more fortunate among you, blessed by dream, will live long in the

world after, and help many souls. But for others the message will come at the moment of death, and will be inseparable from it. For those who need extra guidance, a messenger may appear at the time. Do not lose him or her- it will be your last chance to grasp the truth of the dream time. (208- 209)

After the fire accident in the Chai house, Rakhi realized what her daughter's painting tried to convey: "Is this what Jona dreamed about, us being trapped in here burning to death? The flames are hotter now, sheets of them flaring out to grab us. Was the dream sent to her to warn me? Is my daughter a dream teller, then?" (224).

Through the dream journal Mrs. Gupta shared her past experience that in the third year of her training, the trainers were put in the care of elder Jahnavi, a bent-backed woman who could walk only with the help of a staff. For in Jahnavi's presence they were able to dream these ancient dreams again. They would lie down on the soft floor of her cave and close their eyes, and the dream would appear to each of them, though each saw it differently, based on the level of her understanding, and coloured by her desires and fears. Once Jona had seen the accident at the Pentagan, a many storied building. Without knowing this fact, her mother felt hesitant of how to explain her child that someone deliberately slammed a plane full of people into a building full of people, three times in three different places. That might be the beginning of a planned terrorist attack across America. But Jona replied:

> I already know. She says it in a flat voice without turning to me. The buildings exploded and burned. People died. Some of them jumped from windows. They were screaming. We couldn't help them. My heart pounds in agitation. I should have been the one to break this traumatic news to my daughter. Who told you this? This time she does look at me. Her face is expressionless, and

that frightens me more than if she were hysterical. I saw it in my dream. Don't you remember?" (254)

The gift Rakhi had longed for all her life had passed over her and lighted on her daughter. After she became a dream teller she could use them to help people, but Jona could not eat and sleep. All day Rakhi paced up and down the threadbare carpet of the apartment, trying to think of a remedy. She knew that there were no dream tellers in America. She thought: "Perhaps there were none in this land that believed technology to be the cure for all ills? Her husband didn't know I was a dream teller" (281). During the separation of Jona's parents and after her stay in her father's home she would return to her mother's home. At that time she mentioned about her friend, Eliana who was an imaginary person in reality. Later Mrs.Rakhi found out the truth: "She'll go far, our daughter! What was that name again? Eliana – with flowers in her hair? Wow! What an imagination that kid has!" (62).

But it happened in reality at the last chapter when Rakhi participated in the dancing game. She didn't know how she found herself inside the circle and she thought that she stumbled. She felt that someone has caught her already. It's a woman in a loose dress, flowers woven into her long brown braid. She's wearing a coronet of feathers. "Eliana? Rakhi whispers. Is that you? but the music erases her question" (306). In this way, Divakaruni could beautifully blend magic and reality through extra sensory perception, vision and unusual occurrences.

The major technique magic realism includes various other techniques. Divakaruni's use of different story telling techniques like the third person narrative, interior monologue, epistolary exchange, diary entries, stream of conscious, dream sequences powerfully convey the pain and confusion of the protagonists feel during

their moments of life changing awareness. Her skillful use of these different techniques and styles allows a unique access into the complex consciousness of each of the characters including the men.

The following chapter gives a detail study of Divakaruni's as a diasporic novelist, her experience of living in an alienated land and the problems faced by the immigrants. The narrative techniques and the style of Divakaruni's writings are presented in it. It also gives a scope for future research scholar to work on the other aspects of Divakaruni's works.

Chapter Five

Summation

Literature is an excellent platform to point out the natural and interdependent relation among all the creatures in the world. Technologies and science have paved way for the betterment of humanity. The problem begins when the domination starts with the humanity. Many writers have talked about the betterment of humanity. Indian literature mainly focuses on this world keeping perfect its cultural rules. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one such dedicated writer voicing her concern towards the betterment of humanity.

Journey through the passage of novels written by Divakaruni starting from the last part of the twentieth century has led to an in depth study of the complexities, conditions and challenges faced by the immigrants. with an added focus on women protagonists who brave it doubly as they struggle not just with their inner fears but also the external conditions. Divakaruni's novels tried to explore critically the question of women identity, mother daughter relationship, immigrant experiences, multicultural society and complexities, dissolving boundaries, issue of female self expression, inter generational conflicts and relevance of the folk legends and epics in the contemporary modern world, in the broader context of diaspora consciousness and experiences.

Belonging to the group of young Indian writers that emerged on the literary scene with a post colonial diasporic identity after Salman Rushdie. Divakaruni's position as a South Asian writer in English is distinct and well established. As someone who has spent more time outside India than in it. She has been accepted as an Asian American writer. Nostalgia of her stories set in the Bay area of California

deals with the experience of immigrants to the United States whose voice is rarely heard in other writings.

Divakaruni defines her motives of being a writer in lucid terms. Her unique perspective on what it means to live in the United States has influenced her work as an author and a women's right activist. A feeling of nostalgia emerges in her novels she has truly concentrated on her creative impulse that she has expressed in such unequivocal terms. Divakaruni's narrative brilliantly underscores the possibility of salvaging relationship.

Much of Divakaruni's work deals with the immigrant experience which is an important theme in the life of every Indian American. Her writings often centers on the lives of immigrant women. But when a writer from Indian subcontinent also makes sisterhood a major theme in all her fiction insisting that female bonding goes deeper than conventional familial ties and which insistently surfaces in women relationships despite all patriarchal conditioning, the situation becomes rather unique.

The women characters have their share of adjustments and compromises but these adjustments are made to live life on one's own terms. They try to defy the norms and taboos but they also set their own boundaries suited to their choice. The support which they get from women in particular is significant. Divakaruni has given voice to rise of women community to fight for their rights. On one side she has delineated their male counterparts as an obstacle to their growth but has also shown them as supporters and motivators. The male characters in the novels have not just been criticized but also justified many times. The men in the novels of Divakaruni do not come across as symbols of male chauvinists. They are emotional, sensitive, caring but they are also shown to carry the seeds of patriarchy which have been sown in their

psyche. So most male characters are stubborn as well as sensitive, caring as well as obstinate, emotional as well as indifferent. Just as a woman has its weakness and her strengths, novelist has presented both the negative as well as the positive aspects of men. In a way the novelist seems to have adopted a humanistic attitude in dealing with characters as human beings rather than being gender biased

Divakaruni's originality and talent lie in her technique of narration. She has used various techniques in writing such as alternative narrative, first and third person narrative, stream of consciousness, letter and diary writing, myth and magic realism particularly to express disordered and tragic condition of Indian immigrants while establishing themselves to the new civilization. As magic and myth has been a perpetual source of themes for literary writers all over the world since times immemorial. Therefore, magic realism is an artistic genre or style of fiction in which magical essentials combines with the real world.

Magical realism attempts to capture reality by way of a depiction of life's many dimensions, seen and unseen, visible and invisible, rational and the process, such writers walk a political tightrope between capturing this reality and providing precisely the exotic escape by some of their western readership. Divakaruni's magical realism is to bridge the gap between present and past state of affairs and its prolific entreaty for Indian immigrants who suffers from miscellaneous kinds of tensions is actually a phenomenon

In *Queen of Dreams* also Rakhi's mother can forecast people's future with her dreams and assist them to get out of the most awful situations. While describing the common experiences of the Indian diasporic society, *Queen of Dreams* creates an Indian American experience with magic realism. The narrative of this novel presents

the connection between the subconscious and wakefulness. The author has whirled a delightful story of a second generation immigrant Rakhi who is trying to discover her identity with her dream interpreting mother contributing to the mystery and magic. The essence of the whole novel rests on the words of Mrs. Gupta as she explains the dream and construes the meaning of it. Thus, this novel portrays an amusing typical tale of self discovery which is full of supernatural elements, mystery, suspense, and real experiences of an immigrant.

This novel clearly depicts the Indian American's experience of struggling with two identities or cultures. *Queen of Dreams* marks a growth in Divakaruni's vision of immigration. The narrator focuses on the conflict and crisis of survival of a Bengali immigrant family living in California at the beginning of new millennium. The protagonist wants to spare her daughter Rakhi from the tales of her strange and painful past, in spite of her innate bonding with Indian life, Indian scenery and Indian culture. Rakhi fails to get desired contentment in her married life however her six year old daughter Jona remains a link between her and her husband. Besides her fascination for painting, Rakhi in association with her father runs a Chai Shop and this Chai Shop becomes the meeting point for all distinguished immigrants. It provides a natural feeling of fraternity for the immigrants. After the death of her mother in a car accident, her father tries to make financial support to save Chai Shop and supports Rakhi in translating her mother's dream journals from Bengali to English to reconstruct the mystery of the life of her mother. The novel is structured as the post modern narrative and the narrator moves between past and present.

Displacement and dislocation make them distant from their homeland but their thoughts, ideas and liking towards simple things create a sense of nearness. In an

attempt to retain the part of what they have left behind they end up creating an artificial and an abstract presence of homeland for years. The dilemma boggling the second generation and the third generation is quite distinct from the first generation. They are already assimilated into the new environment which is not new for them but face a kind of pressure to adhere to old ways from their elders. The generation which is born not in their country of origin has to face the pressure from the older people and their conflict is in a way trying to strike a balance between their parental expectations and the societal conditions. For most of the second and third generation immigrants their place of origin is a place to which they do not feel belonged. A few have an imaginary view of the society and a few wish to explore it to understand a society which their elders label as their own.

Queen of Dreams integrates an Indian American experience and the major problem faced by the emigrants in their search for individuality and a sense of emotional fulfillment. Mrs. Gupta can be considered as a highly dysfunctional in all aspects. The marital relationship between Mr. Gupta and Mrs. Gupta is strained. The family somehow stays together without falling apart because of the love they have for their only daughter Rakhi. The second generation, Rakhi and her husband Sonny also leads daughter Jona keeps shunting her parents. Rakhi earns her livelihood by running a small business and painting to satisfy her creative and artistic potentials. Moreover she also has to contend her loyalties between India and America.

Divakaruni in her novels present a woman in a multi cultural American society and the struggle of women in United States as to claim their identities and self works. It depicts increasingly through the struggle of Rakhi. The novel brilliantly claims and reveals the question of traditional identity, family and redemption through the characters. According to Viney Kirpal the lived experiences of these immigrant

writers reflect the existential realities of geographical displacement, since "For modern or traditional , it is the eternal quest of man to seek, to put down roots somewhere, to possess some point of space to which he can relate emotionally or physychologically" (Kirpal 45).

The novel explores not only the question of identity of the diaspora but also racial issues. Rakhi, Mrs. Gupta's daughter frequently encounters the crisis of identity, which is tied to her inability to reconcile her parents Indian identity with her American identity. She is born with a hyphenated existence Asian American.

Rakhi observes the Indian clients coming to her cafe and notices their dresses. Some wear western clothes and some were in kurta pajamas. Each and every person gives hints about their living in an alien land with many difficulties and less triumphs. Rakhi feels that though they have adopted the western lifestyle, they still do not consider themselves as foreigners, which is ironic. They are her countrymen sharing the same skin colour. Rakhi caught between two worlds of experiences, that of America and India, and connects her roots through these people. It becomes a therapeutic process for her. If identities continually morph, what seems constant is mutability in other words, as Avtar Brah suggests, such variable identities are "constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life, in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively" (183). Rakhi constantly negotiates her identity, connecting on the one hand with the Indian community settled in California, while adopting the culture and lifestyle of America.

Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* utilises the magic realistic mode. Mrs. Gupta an Indian immigrant dreams the dreams of others to help them in their own lives. This gift of vision and the ability to guide people through their fates fascinates her daughter, Rakhi. They live peacefully without assimilating to the culture of their

adopted land. Minority discourse is characterised not only by an eagerness to adopt and assimilate but also by a culture of protest and resistance. Culture is not nearly an organisational principle holding together the members of a community. It is also a means of establishing its separateness from and resistance to other communities. As a second generation immigrant Rakhi adopts an American life style easily. It started as early as her birth but her assimilation to American culture is a highly difficult one and she feels that she is in a land that seemed to me to be shaded with unending mystery. Divakaruni's novels deal with the theme of East west encounter through individual relationships and experiences. Its central characters are Indian immigrants in America who belong neither to India nor to America.

The novel is a psychological study of the problems of alienation and rootlessness. The novel *Queen of Dreams* clearly says that the multiple oppressions are not confined to only one class or community, it is universal and large due to the individual and community's lack of response and participation in its own native culture. This soft but firm voice of Divakaruni has forced the world to recognise her, not as a marginalised Indian woman writer but as an important voice in the mainstream of world literature. Her novels are a celebration of the strength of women and not her weakness. In a language of emotion and meticulous metaphor using images provides by the woman protagonists, the novelist has articulate the manysided pathos and rebellion of contemporary Indian woman. *Queen of Dreams* act as a bridge between transformation and migration which pile up with meticulous details and information as she recaptures history in the most aesthetic sense. The common aspects of all her novels are the journey from subjugation to emancipation through conflicting issues. The oppression of the Indian women, their education, and the effect of westernization are the development of their culture.

Rakhi attempts to define her identity after knowing about India and its cultural heritage. She longs to have her mother with her when her life is shaken by new horrors. In the wake of the terrorist attack on 11th September 2001, her family members and her friends deal with dark new complexities about their acculturation. They are punished just because of the colour of their skin or the fact that they were a turban. As their notions of citizenship are questioned, Rakhi's search for identity intensifies she is haunted by her experiences of racism. During the struggle she finds unexpected blessings of the possibility of new love and understanding for her family members.

The novel *Queen of Dreams* is concerned with the real issues confronting the second generation of today's Indian American community. The Chai House is presented as a living entity sensitive to its environment and capable of dialectical relationship and progress. As a space proper it draws at its level the mental perceptions and the lived existential experiences it together into a coherent ensemble. The Chai House becomes an ethnic production as it subsumes in its space the complex interrelationships, which are marked by ethnic sensibility, between Rakhi, her friends and relatives. Rakhi, her parents, her ex husband, Belle and her parents and her fiancé who intervene in its affairs in different ways from a closely knit community despite their estranged relations and occasional bickering. None of them are individuated characters. They are mutually dependent and think and act in community. The modern views of Rakhi and Belle about life are in no less measure marked by their ethnic behavior and sensibility, beliefs and passions. Rakhi has a strong longing for the Indian past, its social and cultural practices, fables, seasons and mystic and religious fables.

In her mental processes Rakhi thinks of it in terms of kinship which claims as much of her care and attention as her daughter, Jona. In the background of magic and fancy, Divakaruni deals in her novel *Queen of Dreams* the post modern issues like racism, terrorism, painting dreams and the conflict of dislocation and relocation affecting the life and sensibility of immigrants. The characters retain their right to self growth and self affirmation against the eternally imposed limitations.

Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* portrays the possibility of establishing a bicultural identity in spite of Mrs. Gupta's initial refusal to transmit her culture. Generally, there is a great conflict in the mindset of the characters in her novels to disown their traditional culture of their motherland completely or to alienate from the new. In fact, they are not able to disown their native culture fully. As Klarina Priborkin has put it, "Divakaruni's approach to ethnic identity is condiment with the view of South Asian Diaspora that believes in the necessity of integrating the Indian heritage with its American experience" (South Asian Review).

Queen of Dreams runs along parallel lines where on one side Divakaruni narrates the ethical, moral and psychological complexities of Rakhi's life while on the other side, she unfurls the world of dreams experienced by Mrs. Gupta who leaves behind her on account of her secret life in the form of the Dream Journals. The journals are in Bengali, an Indian language, which she has never learnt. But her father promises to help by translating them. This gives both father and daughter a chance of understanding the turmoil of Mrs. Gupta who had always been an enigma to them. Rakhi discovers herself comes after going through the Dream Journals, it is clear that Mrs. Gupta was not satisfied with the choices she had made in life. She tells that she was unable to do justice to both her relationships in life and her dream world. But she

was unable to be happy in her marital life because to dedicate herself completely to it would mean the loss of her abilities.

Dreams, dream journals, and dream telling in the novel *Queen of Dreams* germinate from the oriental cultural belief system. In the novel dream signifies the female defense psychology, a safe space or refuge or retreat from which the female resists or liberates the anxiety, fears and feeling of insecurity associated with the fragile sensibility of sex which is the characteristic of the Indian female mind. In the diasporic situation of internationalization the fragile female sensibility of sex is shaken and it ends in a divorce as in the case of Rakhi or seeks asylum in the vocation of dream telling that prescribes negation of sex as a necessity. The dreams, dream journals and dream telling implicitly and explicitly demonstrate the anxiety of the female over her sexual integrity which she fears would be spoiled and despoiled by mixing with females and males of different national and racial identities.

The dream invokes anxiety and feeling of insecurity. The abstinence from conjugal love and migration to a dream space protected by the vow of celibacy and the business fare of dream telling are all interlocked parts of a system by which Mrs. Gupta organises her survival in the immigrated space alien to her. She finds it difficult to locate herself in a foreign space of living, where the mixing and mingling with the males and females of different races become necessary and to a certain extent inevitable. Mrs. Gupta who is psychologically affixed to Indian tradition creates a space of her own within the foreign space of her material life. The dream telling space is absolutely Indian, a space unreal which thrives upon the feeling of insecurity and anxiety that subsist in human minds with regard to future.

The magical charm of dream depicted is not consistent with the general nature of dream. In the novel the symbols of which are deciphered in definite semantic terms. The dream and dream telling in the novel is rooted in anxiety which is identified as an innate variant of fear. The dreams in the novel are ornamental but it is only the outer shell which deceives its content. The dreams smell anxiety, fear and death. In the opening dream episode Mrs. Gupta feels that the snake foretells death. In the dream episode in chapter four Mrs. Gupta deciphers the dream of a woman as a signifier of cancer. In chapter six, Mrs.Gupta calls Mr. Rakhavendra and tells him that the people living in his house were planning to kill him. In her dream semantics each object surfaces a definite meaning. The messages proceeding forth from the dream symbols are negative. They are the object images that communicate the feeling of insecurity latent in the female mind. Rakhi is impressed by the mystery element that dominates Indian dream concept as her mother never spoke about India.

Divakaruni is stylistically different, she uses the combination of first person and third person narrative joined with flashback devices to provide realism and force in the novel. The writer used the flashback in time using a type of methods such as retelling of memories and dream sequences. Flashback breaks in a narrative's linear time flow. She deals with the heroine's self analysis and also tries to include several other themes. Divakaruni's novels begin in the present but for a while move back and onward in time. She usually portrays women characters as a protagonist. Her story focuses on the life of a woman specially an immigrant. Through them she tries to depict their inner feelings and experiences. Though we know the characters and their dialogues play a very important role to narrate a story.

Characters can be approached from a lot of theoretical points of view each one yielding a different theory and conception of the characters. Not only the characters

but their dialogues also play an important role regarding to the narrative technique. On behalf of the voices of characters in a story is an effectual way of stimulating a narrative. The first person narration also permits the author to investigate deep into the mind of the protagonist, exposing her frustrations and fear. This narration is a style where a tale is narrated by one character at a time, talking for and about them. First person narrative may be plural, singular as well as a reliable, authoritative or illusory voice.

Apart from the focus on diaspora consciousness and experience, dreams and desire, quest for identity, magical realism and quest for relationship in Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*. There is however a wide scope to cover other critical aspects and explore different socio cultural issues which have not been explored. This novels has opened up inter disciplinary approach where psychology, sociology, literature, environmental science are combined for a better understanding of the human conditions.

In conclusion the immigrant existence seemed to come true with the reference of Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*. The novel is embedded with ample evidences to make it firm that the novelist has experiences of living in diaspora. She is quite successful in presenting situations, event, verbal and non verbal encounters between characters. These characters in novel have gone through such a projection which an immigrant really faces in the host culture or in foreign country. Adaption to cross culture setting enables the numerous consciousness to ultimately create a positive psychological elements. The women of Divakaruni's world are presented with the ability to adjust to a world which is true and individualistic.

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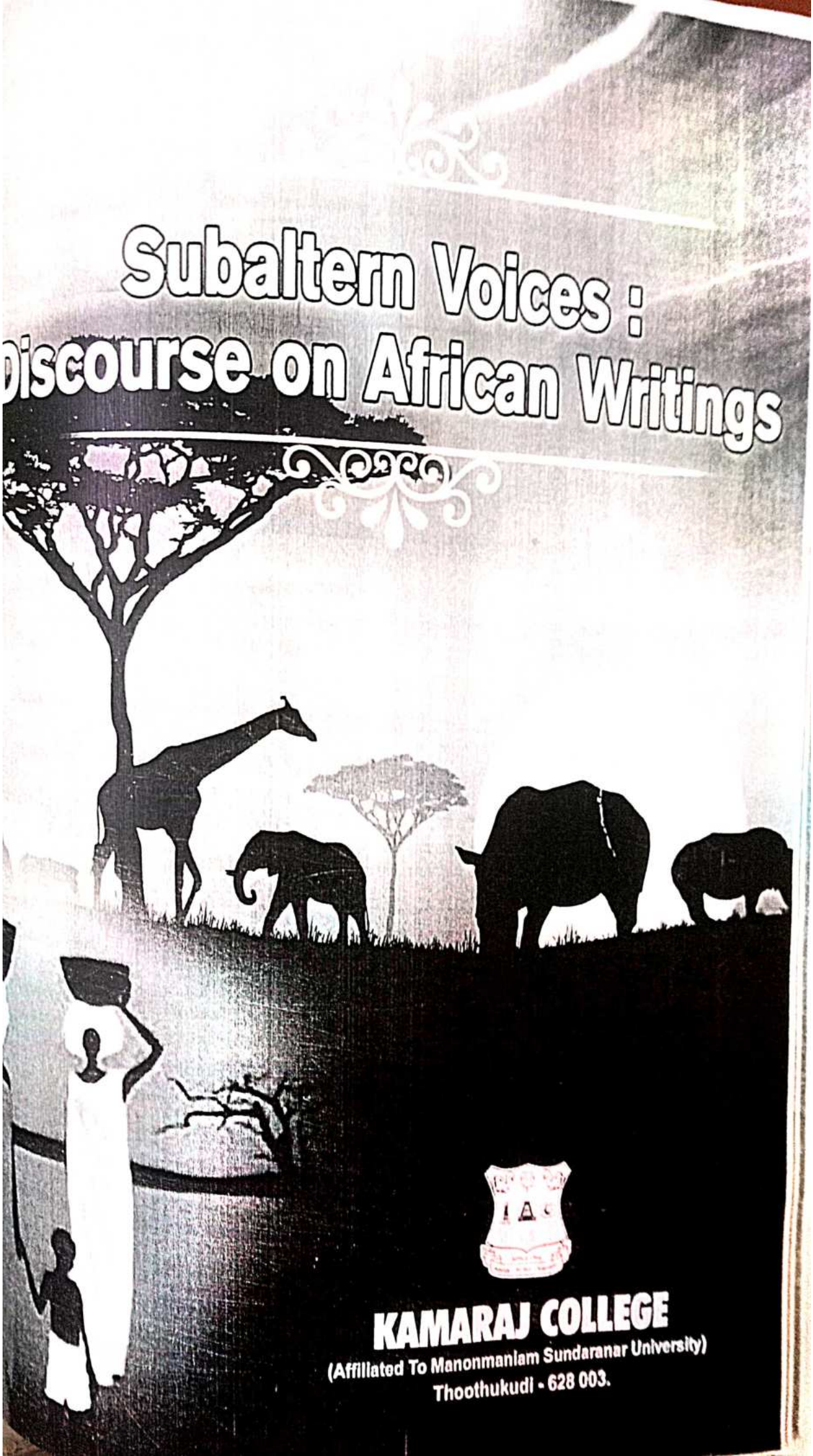
ANNEXURE

Subaltern Voices : Discourse on African Writings



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A Female Slave Narrative in Harriet Ann Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

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From 17th century until the 19th century, almost twelve million Africans were bought to the New World against their will as slave under terrible conditions. This shifting or selling of people from their native to another land for the sake of labour is called slave trade. In the field of literature, the issue of slavery has traditionally been discussed through slave narratives. They have witnessed and undergone the horrors of slavery throughout the lives. Many slaves from different regions wrote narratives, but the focus of this paper is to discuss about the slave narratives written by the African slaves. This forms the major part of African literature in the nineteenth century. The autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Ann Jacobs deals with the horrors of slavery like rape, abuse, sexual harassment and also the theme of slave trade. This paper brings out the difficulties of the author as a women and a mother. Slavery is more terrible for women than men, says Jacobs and it is proved so by analysing the incidents in her autobiography.

Slave narrative is an account of the life, or the major portion of the life of the fugitive or former slave. Slavery in America was introduced by the Spanish. At first they wanted native Indians to work on their fields and mines, but soon they realised that the Indians were not used to that kind of labour. Then they decided to bring black people from Africa as they were strong and hardworking. They started working hard at factories. But even the strong African people could not bear the inhumane conditions and actions of their supervisors. The whole world was bombed by the stories about the death of black slaves, and the outrageous behaviour of white masters. These slaves who suffered under the hands of the white, after gaining freedom stared to write their sufferings and publish books which were termed as slave narrative.

A slave narrative focuses on the author's journey towards freedom from the chains of slavery in the South to the free life in the North. In these narratives, slavery is described with brutal images that are hard for the readers to comprehend. After the slaves had managed to escape, freedom did not only mean reaching the North, but also appointing themselves a new name, complete dedication to the abolishment of slavery in the United States, and devotion to the anti-slavery movements. One of the narratives that supports these statements and facts, is the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, written in 1845. Douglass later wrote another autobiography called *My Bondage and My Freedom*.

In addition, there are more authors whose autobiographies greatly contributed to the African literature like Harriet Jacobs and her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, William Wells Brown's *Fugitive Slave*, Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*, Richard Wright's two narratives *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *Black Boy*, and *Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, which was the best seller during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

This paper focuses on the slave trade and the horrors of slavery in the autobiography of Harriet Ann Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Horror, the word itself has a terrifying and dreadful image. Only by experience can anyone realize how deep, and dark and foul is that pit of abominations. The experiences of the slaves reveal how awful it would have been. This one is from the perspective of a woman, who suffered the cruelties of her master, and was taken away from her children, forced to hide and struggle with every atom to get them back, while at the same time searching and fighting for freedom. She states that the purpose of this work was to make women of the North realize the cruelty and the awful situation of the women in South. It also gives a detailed description of

a slave's struggle with abuse, sexual harassment, and her role as a woman and mother.

Linda Brent (Harriet Jacobs) was born into slavery in Edenton, North Carolina, in 1813. Till the age of six, she had a happy childhood with her father, who worked as a carpenter, her mother, her younger brother William, and her maternal grandmother. When Brent is sold and has to live with Dr. Flint, she experiences whippings, sexual harassment, and the constant threat of rape. Here comes the concept called slave trade. Slave trade is the selling of people from one place to another for the sake of labour. Here Linda is sold at a very young age to be a slave, also in the later part of the autobiography Linda's children is sold by her master into slavery. This pains the narrator, so she wishes her children to be dead rather than to suffer her pain.

When Brent is sold she has to live with Dr. Flint, she experiences whippings, sexual harassment, and the constant threat of rape. He tries to force her into a sexual relationship and so, moved by despair, Brent starts having a relationship with Mr. Sands to escape from Flint's assault, hoping Sands will protect her from Flint. Together they have two children, but it does not hold back Flint, which gives Brent no other choice but to hide, leaving her children behind. In 1842, Brent is able to escape to the North, where eventually she reunites with her children. The terms like hide, separation and reunion elicit the pain and sufferings of any common women in the society. It is more in the case of a slave woman.

When Brent turns six, her mother passes away. Brent has to live with her mother's mistress Ruth Nash, who teaches her to read, write, and sew. This is remarkable, because many slaves were not allowed to read or write, as it was seen as a form of freedom. Dunaway in her work *Slavery in the American Mountain South* says that most of the slave-owners were afraid, slaves would spread messages to slaves on other plantations and start a revolt against their masters. In addition, slaves were considered as a property and therefore did not enjoy the same rights as other human beings, such as the right to talk, eat, smile, study or even marry. Jack Lynch says that "Although the specific reason is never mentioned in Jacobs' narrative, some slave-owners who were Christians did teach their slaves how to read the Bible, as an act of religious obligation, so slave-owners could go to heaven"(67). In *Incidents*, Jacobs writes the following: "While I was with her, she taught me to read and spell; and for this privilege, which so rarely falls to the lot of a slave, I bless her memory" (Jacobs 15). This is not the kind of description one would expect to read of a slave-owner, but Jacobs later knew she was blessed for this situation, for only few slaves were taught to read and write.

Six years later, Nash dies and her niece Emily Flint becomes Brent's new legal master. However, Emily Flint's father, physician Dr. Flint is much more interested in Brent and so he becomes her master. Compared to her former owner, Dr. Flint is cruel, vicious, and careless. "The cook never sent a dinner to his table without fear and trembling; for if there happened to be a dish not to his liking, he would either order her to be whipped, or compel her to eat every mouthful of it in his presence. [...] cramming it down her throat till she choked" (Jacobs 19).

Flint takes pleasure in having absolute power, forcing his will on his servants. Then again, Brent is already aware that she will never find another master as kind as Nash. Especially the wife of Brent's master, Mrs. Flint, is mean and merciless and often takes advantage of her dominance, for example when she spits in all the pans to prevent the cook and the other slaves from eating the leftovers. This event shows how cruel the masters are to the slaves. Gerstle says that "Slave-owners were mostly driven by the desire for prosperity and power, as owning slaves gave them wealth, standing and reputation" (92).

Although she is still young, Brent begins to understand his intentions, but she does not stop him, as she fears Flint and the possible consequences: "He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things" (Jacobs 39). After a while, Mrs. Flint senses something is going on between her husband and Brent, which further gives rise to her feelings of jealousy. Mrs. Flint often has heated arguments about Brent with Dr. Flint for one because she believes Brent is not punished enough. After Mrs. Flint forces Brent to tell her the truth about Flint's intentions, Brent now fears Mrs. Flint, afraid of what she might do to her in an act of jealously (Jacobs 48). As such, besides the constant risk of sexual abuse and bodily threats, slave women also had to deal with jealous mistresses. As a result of Flint's foul words and the angry and jealous outbreaks of his mistress, Jacobs becomes "prematurely knowing in evil things" (Jacobs 41).

When Brent becomes an adult, Flint forces her to have a sexual relationship with him. "He is building a secret house for Brent in a hidden place, as Flint plans to have sex with her" (Jacobs 76). However, Brent finds ways to escape his attentions and thus gets into a relationship with Mr. Sands a free white lawyer, hoping that this will hold back Flint. But she was wrong Dr. Flint started giving more attention to her as he knew she was trying to escape.

Brent becomes pregnant with Mr. Sands baby. Although Brent considers having children as her last resort, she feels extremely bad about her pregnancy, because she knows slavery is no way to live. She believes having children and an illegitimate relationship will anger Flint so that he might sell them to Mr. Sands, but her plan fails. Instead, Flint demands Brent to stop seeing Mr. Sands ever again, because he is a white man.

Mr. Sands is a free man and Brent feels sure their offspring will be made free. However, because her baby boy Benjamin is born to a slave mother, he is still considered a slave. Benjamin is one year old when he gets sick and Brent wanted the child to be dead. This is because she fears that the horrors of slavery would be severe for her children too. "I could never forget that he was a slave. Sometimes I wished that he might die in infancy. [...] Alas, what mockery it is for a slave mother to try to pray back her dying child to life! Death is better than slavery" (Jacobs 88). Once Flint throws her son across the room because Flint attacks Brent verbally and physically and Benjamin begins to cry. When Benjamin wakes up after being passed out, Brent questions if she should be happy that he is still alive.

Four years later, when Brent is nineteen, she gets pregnant again. After Flint is informed of Brent's second pregnancy, he is furious and cuts off all her hair, knowing it will upset Brent. In 1833 she gives birth to a baby girl, named Ellen. This saddens Brent even more, since "slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women" (Jacobs 110). Eventually, Flint gives Brent an ultimatum: either be his mistress or get sent off to his son's plantation, where she will have to endure hard labour. Despite Flint's threats that "your boy shall be put to work, and he shall soon be sold; and your girl shall be raised for the purpose of selling well". (Jacobs 112). Brent chooses to go to the plantation. Again, Brent struggles to combine motherhood with slavery: "When I lay down beside my child, I felt how much easier it would be to see her die than to see her master beat her about, as I daily saw him beat other little ones" (Jacobs 123).

In the meantime, a speculator, who secretly represents Mr. Sands, buys Brent's children and Mr. Sands promises to Brent that they will be free. Dr. Flint agrees to sell them, because earning money from it would be better than the risk of them escaping too, as he believes that Brent has fled to the North. However, once he finds out it is Mr. Sands who now owns the children, Dr. Flint is outraged. But Brent is happy because she has not experienced freedom since childhood. She successfully escapes the South by boat, but this time Brent is constantly reminded of her race. She has multiple experiences of racial prejudice when she is working as a nursemaid for Mrs. Bruce, an English woman. For example, when they are on a steamboat, Brent is the only nurse who is not offered tea by the waiters. On another occasion, when Mr. Bruce asks Brent to have meals delivered at their room, the white waiters refuse to wait on black people. When Brent stands up for her rights, she is treated like the others. In England, where Brent works for ten months, she never experienced racial prejudice. Sadly, Brent's employer Mrs. Bruce dies in 1845, but Bruce's second wife is just as kind. Towards the end of the novel, she secretly pays for Brent's rights, thus giving Brent her freedom. Although Brent and her children are now free, her ultimate dream of having her own family home is just a dream. Thus the impact of slavery and its fears still remains among the readers.

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DIASPORA AND FEMINISM IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *ARRANGED MARRIAGE* AND MAYA ANGELOU'S *I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS*

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bstract

Diaspora, in a sense is a condition of being and becoming a different way to live with sameness and solidarity. itra Banerjee Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage and Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings are two fferent genres which deals with difficulties of the feminine diasporean. This paper is a comparison of three characters mita, Maya Angelou and a young girl, who as women faces many challenges in life. They also wanted to find an entity for themselves through their marriages or love life. But it is made clear that diasporeans has to undergo some allenges throughout their lives. Furthermore, the identities of the coloured women could be a result of individual oices. Diaspora as such, appears as a site of various cultures, which can both empower or disempower the women.

The word "diaspora" comes from the Greek verb 'speiro' which means "to scatter" and the reposition 'dia' means "over". Diaspora refers to the dispersion of a group of people from a centre to wo or more peripheral places and the collective memory and trauma involved in such dispersion. iasporic members often feel a sense of hatred or alienation in the host country because of systematic acism and socio-economic exclusion. Diasopric culture involves socio-economic, political and cultural ansnational exchange among and between the separated populations of the diaspora.

The Indian Diaspora is now a vital and inseparable part of American life, culture and literature. ndian-American writers have made a simultaneous and substantial contribution to both Indian and merican literatures. As Prof. Jasbir Jain writes, "Expatriate writing occupies a significant position etween cultures and countries. It generates theory and defines positions as it constructs a new identity hich negotiates boundaries and confines and relates to different temporal and spatial metaphors. ultures travel, take root or get dislocated and individuals internalize nostalgia or experience amnesia. Writers living abroad live on the margins of two societies and cultural theory are today being created by eople who live on the margins" (Jain 11).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a prolific and versatile writer is an acclaimed Indian-American writer. She has won several prestigious awards for her poetry, short stories, essays and novels. She writes for both children and adults and her fiction covers multiple genres - realism, history, magic realism and fantasy. Divakaruni's works deals with two problematic areas of contemporary post-colonial theory - 'diaspora' and 'feminism'. The Indian diaspora is caught between a sense of homelessness on the one hand and a sense of networking and solidarity on the other hand, in a virtually endless attempt to bridge the gap between native and adopted cultures. This paper focuses on few of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's characters from the first popular collection of short stories *Arranged Marriage* (1995).

Mrs. Sumita Sen, a young girl from Calcutta is married to Somesh, a store-manager in California. Sumita testifies that marriage in India is the centre where girls are forced to embrace the unknown and where marital rape is accepted by the society. She is relocated in an alien country where everything

goes on well. But soon she finds an ugly side to life in America after the death of her husband. She decides to stay back in the country hoping to recover soon from her husband's death. Clothes play an important role from exquisite sarees from India to bold dresses from America which symbolizes the strengths and weaknesses of each culture. Sumita is confused about what to wear after her husband's death. Colors like red, orange, pink which shows new beginnings on one hand and white which symbolizes widowhood on the other hand. Finally, she decides to live her life in her own heroic way. She yearns to go back to her native land but still she says.

> ...I cannot go back. I don't know yet how I'll manage, here in this new, dangerous land. I only know I must. Because all over India, at this very moment, widows in white saris are bowing their veiled heads, serving tea to in-laws. Doves with cut-off wings. ... I tilt my chin, readying myself for the arguments of coming weeks, the remonstrations. In the mirror, a woman holds my gaze, her eyes apprehensive yet steady (*Arranged marriage* 33. All quotation from the text will be cited as AM along with the page numbers)

This shows how an Indian widow is treated or even ignored sometimes in her own country, by her own people. Thus the concept of "diaspora"- living in an alien country and wanting to go back to her native makes her life further complicated.

The next character is from the fourth story of *Arranged Marriage*, it is a young girl who is born and brought up in Calcutta but a PhD scholar in US. The story depicts the emotional conflict in the mind of the young girl. She is caught between the love for her widowed mother who has worked hard to make her successful and the love for her boy friend that has lost his parents at a very young age. She is horrified to break her relationship neither with her affectionate mother nor with her passionate lover. Finally she reveals her live-in relationship to her mother as a result of which her mother disowns her. Surprisingly life gives her a twist; she is also abandoned by her lover. Now she is in a state where she can neither return back to India nor live in US. When life seems to be miserable she stays strong and still wants to live her life. Finally she decides to live a life for herself not for her mother or for her lover, neither the Indian society nor the American way of living for both treats women as an object to be controlled or enjoyed as she says

> ...Surely there's another choice. .... your new life, the one you're going to live for yourself. And a word comes to you out of the opening sky. The word love, You see that you had never understood it before. It is like rain, and when you lift your face to it, like rain it washes away inessentials, leaving you hollow, clean, ready to begin (AM 70-71).

On exploring both the characters it is clear that people face many difficulties being located in an alien country especially women. Her both the women fight hard to find an identity for themselves. It was not that hard when they where under the identity of their husband or lover. But once they were abandoned by their partners, it was necessary for them to have their own identity to lead their lives. Chitra Banerjee clearly brings out the conflict in the minds both the characters. They neither wanted to go back to their native fearing the rejection as a window and abandoned girl nor wanted to stay back in the alienated country.

Afro-Americans also referred as Black Americans are an ethnic group of Americans with total or partial ancestry from any of the Black racial groups of Africa. In past there have been events and issues such as slavery, racism, reconstruction development of the Afro-American community participation in the great military conflicts of the United States, racial segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Black activists became play wrights fuelling the Civil Right Movement with their representations of black life on the stage. This paved the way for Afro-American literature. Afro-American literature is the body of literature produced in the United States by writers of African descent.

Maya Angelou was an Afro-American poet, memoirist, novelist and Civil Rights activist. The ublication of Angelou's novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in 1970 explores the representations of e black women in diaspora. The novel deconstructs some of the typical notions of "blackness" and eminine" which are propagated in the idiom of the colonizer. The novel explores how marginality is eated on the axes of race, gender and class. It is pertinent here to highlight some of the issues involved diasporean and gender studies. Colour plays an important role Maya's life. She was humiliated, olested, betrayed even neglected in front of everybody because she is black. Even the institution of aw was not supposed to be respectful to the black women. When Mrs. Henderson was called in the ourt to provide information about the man who took refuge in her store, she was called "Mrs" by the udge mistakenly, because a black woman was not supposed to own the store.

> The judge had really made a gaffe calling a Negro woman Mrs. But then he was from Pine bluff and couldn't have been expected to know that a woman who owned a store in that village would also turn out to be coloured. The whites tickled their funny bones with the incident for a long time, and the Negroes thought it proved the worth and majesty of my grandmother. (*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* 48. All quotation from the text will be cited as CB along with the page numbers)

Like every black girl growing up in diaspora, Maya suffers from intense depression and frustration at her black skin and unattractive body. Furthermore, growing up in a racist community was a trauma for every girl like Maya because the standard of beauty was 'white skin' and the sense of belonging to her race could be affirmed by 'black skin' only. Consequently, Marguerite had developed a split personality where she desired to be white but loved the black people. Her black skin consequently becomes a symbol of her confinement by a specific set of laws, which results in a lesser self-esteem.

> "Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty had turned me in to a too big negro girl, with nappy black hair broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number two pencil."(CB.3)

Diasporean experience makes the protagonist more aware of her own body and sexuality. Her mother gives her the courage to speak out of her private parts which she would not dare mentioning in Arkansas. "Ritie, do you mean your vagina? Don't use those Southern terms. There's nothing wrong with the word "vagina." It's a medical description." (CB.275). Marguerite exercises a self-imposed control over her sexuality, which originated partly from her brought up according to the orthodox black values, and partly because of her rape in a tender age. Her grandmother had always taught her to close her legs. "Keep your legs closed and don't let nobody see your pocketbook." (CB.73). When she is located in diaspora, she tries to define her identity by having sex with a man.

> What I needed was a boyfriend. A boyfriend would clarify my position to the world, and even more important, to me. A boyfriend's acceptance of me would guide me into that strange and exotic land of frills and femininity. (CB.281)

The genius of Angelou lies in the fact that she represents diaspora as a space where multiple identities of the women are contested placing her in the subject and object positions.

As a result of exploring both the short story *Arranged Marriage* and the autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* it is clear that they are in search of an identity. Whatever countries they belong to women are in need of an identity. In all the cases they find marriage as a solution for their problems. While comparing all the three diasporic characters Sumita, the young girl and Maya they have one thing which is similar, fear; fear of rejection, fear of failure. It becomes true in all the characters, their marriages end in failure. At the same time they stay strong and decide to live their lives and create an identity for themselves.

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