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ARTICLES

1

Mutual Dependency: The Relationship between William and Dorothy Wordsworth

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Abstract

The argument of this paper highlights the special dependent bond that existed between the poet William Wordsworth and his much younger only sister, Dorothy. As a young orphan girl, Dorothy looked upon her beloved older brother as a caring, protective father-figure. William, symbiotically, found this relationship beneficial and poetically inspiring: Dorothy's instinctive, spontaneous, vivacious response to Nature, and her sharp imagistic descriptions of the natural surroundings of the Lake District evoked lyric lines from the poet's creative spirit. Ironically, however, at a later stage in their relationship, after William becomes a famous public figure, married with a large household, Dorothy is forced by her dire circumstances to become a drudge in her brother's home, toiling in hard physical labour to keep a roof over her head. Tragically, she ends her days in misery and madness.

Keywords: Nature, Grasmere, *The Prelude*, Psychobiographical, Lucy poems.

I

Orphaned at an early age, and separated for many years in their childhood by circumstances beyond their control, William and Dorothy Wordsworth clung to each other in their adult years. Their

strong attachment to each other manifested itself in a yearning for an intimate, nurturing family life together, and in their prose and poetical writing both brother and sister have paid tribute to their mutual love and devotion. More than William, however, it was Dorothy who longed to set up house with her brother. From the age of six she had been shunted back and forth among various distant relatives, and as she grew older, she constantly dreamt of the day when she would be able to live once again with William and her other brothers. In a long letter written to her friend Jane Pollard in 1793, edited and published in 1982 by Alan Hill, Dorothy's "dream of Life" is clothed in warm and homey images of a stable, secure, and mutually fulfilling future. In addition, the letter contains a poignant confession of regret at the enforced separation of the siblings. The letter is an unequivocal affirmation of the ties that united them.

Dorothy writes: "I have laid the particular scheme of happiness for each Season. When· I think of Winter I hasten to furnish our little Parlour, I close the Shutters, set out the Tea-table, brighten the Fire, when our refreshment is ended, I produce our work, and William brings his book to our Table and contributes at once to our Instruction and amusement, and at Intervals we lay aside the book and each hazard our observations upon what has been read without the fear of Ridicule or Censure. We talk over past days; we do not sigh for any pleasures beyond our humble Habitation – The central point of all our joys. Oh Jane! with such romantic dreams as these I amuse my fancy during many an hour which would otherwise pass heavily along, for kind as are my Uncle and Aunt, much as I love my sweet little Cousins, I cannot help heaving many a sigh at the Reflection that I have passed one and twenty years of my life, and that the first six years only of this Time was spent in the Enjoyment of the same pleasures that were enjoyed by my brothers, and that I was then too young to be sensible of the Blessing. We have been endeared to each other by early misfortune. We in the same moment lost a father, a home, we have been equally deprived of our patrimony by the cruel Hand of lordly Tyranny. These afflictions have all contributed to unite us closer by the Bonds of affection… Neither absence nor Distance nor Time can ever break the Chain that Links me to my brother."

Of course, as is well-known, it was Raisley Calvert's timely and fortuitous gift of a legacy to the aspiring poet in 1795 which provided the wherewithal that enabled William and Dorothy to set up house together for the first time. The legacy proved to be a godsend both in the wide world of literature and in the smaller private world of the two Wordsworth's. Freedom from the unsettling anxiety of financial insecurity, and the presence of a devoted sister who took over the responsibility of running the routine household affairs, gave William the time and the confidence to become the great poet that he was destined to be.

Dorothy was not only a frugal and adept housekeeper; she was also William's cherished friend and companion. Moreover, in her role as home-maker and nurturer from the first days of living together at Race down till his marriage to Mary Hutchinson in 1802, Dorothy becomes a surrogate mother for the poet and. eventually came to be associated by him with the sublime, spiritual, feminine principle in nature1. Thus, while she was herself emotionally and economically dependent on William, her presence and her personality were soon beginning to have a profound impact upon her brother's creative imagination. In effect, as Richard Fadem points out in his essay, "Dorothy Wordsworth: A View from 'Tintern Abbey'", "Dorothy played in her dependent capacity an instrumental role in helping to create Wordsworth the poet, certainly the poet he came to be" (Fadem, 17).

William both loved and needed his sister. However, his attitude towards her in his poetry is not always one of unequivocal affection and adulation. Although in his major autobiographical poems – noticeably in Tintern Abbey and The Prelude – he celebrated her as a restorative and curative force in his creative life, he is more ambivalent in the Lucy poems. As Richard Matlak has pointed out in his essay, "Wordsworth's Lucy Poems in Psychobiographical Context", the relationship of William and Dorothy was not "exempt from normal strains" (Matlak, 51). Matlak writes: "Wordsworth's relationship with Dorothy was probably stifling and inhibitive at the time of the Lucy poem's composition. During this extremely intense and concentrated period (October 1798-February 1799), when Wordsworth was writing so much of importance in addition to the Lucy poems – the Matthew poems, "Lucy Gray", most of part I of

The Prelude, 1798-99, together with its associated passages, "Nutting" and "There was a boy" – the poet's relationship with Dorothy and Coleridge figured prominently in the psychobiographical context of his work, Wordsworth was depressed at Goslar, mainly because he was separated from Coleridge and was growing uneasy about the constancy of Coleridge's friendship and devotion.... Dorothy could hardly be of comfort in this situation because it was the added cost of keeping her that prevented Wordsworth from joining Coleridge, first in Ratzeburg and later in the expensive university town of Gottingen. The consequence of Wordsworth's depression for his work was the fantasy of Dorothy's death in the Lucy poems. (Matlak 46)

Apart from the kind of ambivalence recorded in the Lucy poems, Wordsworth was generally very grateful for Dorothy's constant companionship. He may have felt somewhat "stifled and inhibited" during his trips abroad with his sister, but for the most part he is unequivocal in declaring that he considered his relationship with her to be artistically restorative and generative. For example, in Tintern Abbey – which prefigures The Prelude in both style and subject matter-the poet is especially appreciative of Dorothy's spontaneity and her ability to respond to Nature with the innocence and wonder of a child. Her presence in fact restores within the poet his earlier, lost self, and the reflection of his own "former" self in Dorothy's instinctive, animal response to Nature helps him reaffirm his faith in himself and his art:

> "…. thou art with me, here, upon the banks
> Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
> My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice, I catch the language of my former heart, and read My former pleasures in the shooting lights
> Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while May I behold in thee what I was once, My dear, dear Sister."

The double emphasis on the word "dear" underlines the intensity of the emotion felt by Wordsworth, and it serves to accentuate his overwhelming gratitude for Dorothy's beneficent influence at a critical juncture in his journey towards self-discovery.

Of course, Wordsworth's fullest expression of gratitude for his sister's soothing and healing presence is to be found in his autobiographical epic, The Prelude. In Book VI ("Cambridge and the

Alps") Wordsworth confesses to Coleridge his immense delight at the reunion with his sister in the summer of 1787. In the following passage, the poet is, not only celebrating Dorothy's active participation in his life, he is also celebrating the opportunity to share his innermost thoughts with a person who loved and appreciated him. In addition, the young poet's joyous discovery of the beauteous face of Nature is made more wonderful by the knowledge that his sister finds as great a pleasure in Nature as he does:

> "In summer among distant nooks I roved, Dovedale, or Yorkshire dales, or through bye-tracts
>
> Of my own native region – and was blest Between those sundry wanderings with a joy Above all joys, that seemed another morn Risen on mid-noon: the presence, friend, I mean of that sole sister,. .. Now after separation desolate Restored to me – such absence that she seemed
>
> A gift then first bestowed...
>
> My sister and myself, when, having climbed in danger through some window's open space, We looked abroad, or on the turret's head Lay listening to the wild-flowers and the grass
>
> As they gave out their whispers to the wind."
>
> (11. 208-32)2

In Book X ("Residence in France – Continued"), Wordsworth acknowledges the fact that it is Dorothy's love and devotion which helps him to recover from the disillusionment and despair he had felt in the years following the French Revolution. The confused and troubling events of the period between 1792-95 – which included, among other things, the rise of the tyrannical Robespierre, the Reign of Terror, and the war between England and France-had shattered his idealistic vision of a new egalitarian society. Furthermore, Godwinian rationalism had not only failed to provide solace, it had led to the "paralysis of his creative life" (Fadem, 17). It was at this time in September 1795 that Wordsworth and Dorothy moved into Racedown house in Dorset, and it is here that Wordsworth's recovery and his discovery of renewed poetic vigour are brought about in the company of the dedicated and loyal Dorothy. As in Tintern Abbey, the mere presence of his passionate and vivacious sister enables the

poet to imaginatively recapture his past and thus connect once again with Nature:

> "… the beloved woman in whose sight Those days were passed,
> Maintained for me a saving intercourse
> With my true self (for, though impaired, and changed
> Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
> Than as a clouded, not a waning moon);
> She, in the midst of all, preserved me still A poet,
> made me seek beneath that name
> My office upon earth, and nowhere else."
>
> (11. 908-20)

The conclusion of The Prelude contains a long, lyrical eulogy of Dorothy. In this verse tribute Wordsworth tells us to what extent he had been dependent on his sister for his own emotional and imaginative growth. Once again, Wordsworth refers to the fact that Dorothy's natural, vital, and reassuring presence sustains his own faith in his vocation. In moments of crises in his poetic life, she had helped him return to the earlier state of harmonious interaction with Nature, and he eulogizes her as a soul-mate, a friend and guide who illuminates the dark days of despair with her purity and "an unconscious understanding of the laws of things and life of nature." (Fadem, 17)

> "Child of my parents, sister of my soul,
> Elsewhere have strains of gratitude been breathed
> To thee for all the early tenderness Which I from thee imbibed.
> And true it is That later seasons owed to thee no less;
> .. I too exclusively esteemed that love, And sought that beauty,
> which as Milton sings Hath terror in it.
> Thou didst soften down This over-sternness;
> but for thee, sweet friend,. MY soul, too reckless of mild grace,
> had been · Fa longer what by Nature it was framed –
> Longer retained its countenance severe. ..
> But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
> Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
> And teach the little birds to build their nests
> And warble in its chambers.
> At a time when Nature, destined to remain so long
> Foremost in my affections, had fallen back Into second place,. ..
>
> (XIII, 11. 211-46)

Although we are left in no doubt as to the nature of the bond between brother and sister, Wordsworth's portrait of Dorothy at

times nevertheless seems to relegate the self-effacing, devoted sister to the background while it is the image of the poetic genius which is foregrounded for the benefit of Coleridge and future readers of The Prelude. At the narrative centre of The Prelude is the articulate, visible, and self-conscious poet who is Wordsworth, and despite the "strains of gratitude" in which Dorothy is apotheosized in the poem, she remains a floating and ephemeral figure on the periphery of our vision. We get a sense of Dorothy's selfless involvement in areas of experience which were crucial to the poet himself, but it is difficult to see her as a separate and unique individual since Wordsworth fails to probe deeper into her character and personality. As Elizabeth Hardwick points out in her book Seduction and Betrayal, Wordsworth ignores what "we imagine [she] must have often felt – undefined, attendant, dangerously emotional, stumbling. All of this side of her life is a hole, a vacancy." (154).

Indeed, for many years, literary historians and critics had taken their cue from Wordsworth's verse and persisted in seeing Dorothy only as "William's satellite" (Brownstein, 48). It is only recently that her place in literary history has been evaluated in terms other than her existence as a famous poet's sister. Today, on the strength of her own writings, Dorothy is considered a distinctive writer whose diaries and Journals are worthy of critical attention for their innate formal and contextual merits.

One diary in particular-The Grasmere Journal--has been the object of concentrated scrutiny not only because of the detailed descriptions of Nature and the daily household activities, but also because it is here that Dorothy reveals more about herself and her relationship with her brother than she does in all of her other works put together. In 1799, Dorothy and William moved to the Lake Country village of Grasmere, and at one of Wordsworth's frequent trips away from home, Dorothy's loneliness acts as a catalyst in making her begin to write her prose autobiography: "I resolved to write a journal of the time till W. and J. return, and I set about keeping my resolve because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give Wm Pleasure by it when he comes home again." (The Grasmere Journals, 15-16)

The Grasmere Journals is not really a true autobiography. Unlike Wordsworth's poetic autobiography The Prelude, which takes us on a journey from infancy to maturity and in which there is a great deal of introspective self-analysis as the poet struggles to achieve a stable poetic identity, The Grasmere Journals contain detailed accounts of only the period 1800-1803 and much of the work is repetitive and concerned with external activities: walking all over the beautiful countryside – alone or in William's company; gardening-toiling with her brother to grow flowers and vegetables; and doing the backbreaking household chores that had to be done by women alone, such as laundering, ironing, cleaning and cooking. Dorothy is meticulous in her descriptions of people, and her observation of Nature is at times so accurate and poetic that both Wordsworth and Coleridge transposed some of those graphic natural images into their own poems. However, Dorothy avoids introspection in her writing, and just as the brother had provided little of Dorothy's real self in The Prelude, the sister herself in turn desists from looking inward and revealing her innermost desires and fears. Dorothy observes the world around her, and records her feelings at particular moments in time, but she does not analyse or examine either her own motives and passions or those of others.

II

There is a good, tenable psychological reason for Dorothy's refusal to be more critical and analytic: the traumatic childhood experiences of loss and homelessness most likely led to the fear of being too bold and independent – even in her writings. Although Dorothy's inner life is absent in the Journals, there are many passages which betray the intensity of her feelings for her brother William. His presence kept her alive and vital, and his absence made her suffer. A whole series of entries at the beginning of. The Grasmere Journals, written during William's absence from home from the period between May 14, 1800 to June 6, 1800-shows us an anxious, lonely, insecure Dorothy, whose tense expectancy of her brother's return is manifested in the physical symptom of a constant headache. Even Nature does not soothe her at these times:

"I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me I knew not why dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound." (15)

> "No letters! no papers. ... I was sadly tired, ate a hasty dinner and had a bad head-ache. "' (20)

> "... wrote to William after dinner, nailed up the beds, worked in the garden, sate in· the evening under the trees. I went to bed soon with a bad head-ache. "(20)

> "I expected a letter from Wm. ... I had a bad head-ache-went to bed after dinner, and lay till after 5 – not well after tea. "(21)

> "No letter-No William. ... I lingered out of doors in the hope of hearing my brothers tread." (23-4)

> "No William! I slackened my pace as I came near home fearing to hear that he was not come. "(24)

The need for William's physical nearness is so pronounced that it leads us to speculate that Dorothy must have had an unconscious terror of losing him as she had lost her mother and father at the early age of six. His presence is constantly desired because his presence alone gives her a sense of security and permanence. In his absence, all her thoughts focus on him with an urgency akin to hysteria, and she is constantly concerned with his safety when he is travelling:

> "I will be busy; I will look well and be well when he comes back to me. O the Darling! Here is one of his bitten apples! I can hardly find in my heart to throw it into. the fire. ... Sate down where we always sit. I was full of thoughts about my darling. Blessings on him."(97)

Even a momentary separation is enough to send her into a panic about his return: "William and I walked together after tea first to the top of white Moss, then to Mr. Olliffs. I left Wm and while he was absent wrote out poems. I grew alarmed and went to seek him – I met him at Mr. Olliff's." (106)

In contrast, when William is with her, she glows with a sense of contentment, and she and William seem like two souls in harmony with each other:

> "We made up a good fire after dinner, and William brought his Mattress out, and lay on the floor. I read to him the life of Ben Jonson..." (88)

> "… we sat a long time with the windows unclosed. I almost finished writing the Pedlar, but poor William wore himself and me out with labour. We had an affecting conversation." (89-90).

> I " I went and sate with W. and walked backwards and forwards in the orchard till dinner time – he read me his poem.. . . After dinner we made a pillow of my shoulder, I read to hm and my Beloved slept." (102-3).

William marries Mary Hutchinson on October 4, 1802, and soon after this event, Dorothy stops writing in her Journals. Although Dorothy accompanies the newly-weds on their honeymoon, she does not attend the wedding ceremony. Her description of her own emotional state during the hour William was wedded to Mary reveals a great deal about her inner conflicts. She appears almost numb with grief at the thought of losing William to another woman:

> ".. . I saw them go down the avenue towards the Church. William had parted from me upstairs. I gave him the; wedding ring – with how deep a blessing! I took it from my forefinger where I had worn it the whole of the night before-he slipped it again onto my finger and blessed me fervently. ... I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men naming up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer and threw myself on the bed where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing anything, till Sara came upstairs to me and said 'They are coming'. This forced me from the bed where I lay and I moved I knew not how straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me till I met my beloved William and fell upon his bosom. "(154)

After reading the above passage, we cannot help but identify with Dorothy's grief. We can empathise with this unfortunate woman in her dire circumstances. We realise that Dorothy has resolutely steeled herself to accept the situation with grace and courage: after all, unless she is able to subsume her own wishes to the wishes of her brother, her very survival is put at risk. And, as Norman Furman points out in his famous essay "The Sister's Sacrifice", from this time onward "until her mind and body broke down in her early sixties, [Dorothy] was a tireless servant of William's needs and those of his household" (Fruman, 711).

Feminist critics of the twentieth-century celebrate Dorothy Wordsworth's writings, but continue to read her life story as a "cautionary tale": the unique trajectory of her unique journey is

suffused with tragic irony. Without a fortune of her own, or any economic and material means of sustaining herself, plain-looking and poor Dorothy never found a lover or husband. While her beloved brother and his large household flourished, Dorothy's slaved away her days as a drudge. Her mind began to disintegrate as she entered mid-life. Routine chores and constant hard work were her lot in Wordsworth's household, and the natural rewards of motherhood were denied her. In such circumstances even Nature gradually failed to sustain her or give her any solace.

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1. See Thomas A. Vogler's "A Spirit, Yet a Woman Too!". In *Mothering the Mind: Twelve Studies of Writers and Their Silent Partners*. Edited by Ruth Perry and Martine Watson Brownley. Holmes and Meier: London and New York, 19841 238-258.
2. All quotations from The Prelude are from the 1805 version of the poem.

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2

Exploring the Burmese Socio-political Scenario through Wendy Law-Yonne's *A Daughter's Memoir of Burma*

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Abstract

Drawing from Wendy Law-Yone's memoir *A Daughter's Memoir of Burma*, this paper examines how life writing is crucial to understand the socio-political scenario under military rule in Burma. In particular, this work focuses on military history that gets contextualised in this memoir. Burma is plagued with marginalisation and subaltern voices attempt to narrativise the political space and depict the personal struggles during the military rule era. Clashes between the military and pro-democracy movements, various insurgencies, forced displacement and the refugee crisis are some of the major problematic areas that come to the forefront through such memoirs. Conflicts of ethnic minorities are some of the longstanding conundrums that can be highlighted. The politics of the colonial era, the nationalist political scene, the complex post-independence political dynamics, the beginning of military rule in Burma, along with Law-Yone's father's attempt to restore democracy and her own personal experiences from her visits to Burma in the later years, especially in 1989. These visits not only reveal the political affairs but also particular emphasis is drawn on individual experiences. These lived experiences are read with an approach to indicate and contextualise the complexities and understand the struggles people went through. The renewed interest in life writing enables the much-required attention to such otherwise silenced voices.

Keywords: life writing, marginalisation, lived experiences, Burmese military rule

Introduction

…sociologists have explored or implied another variety of reflection which has arisen evidently from accumulated sociological data and a

concern for social problems. Their basic assumption is that literature, mainly fiction and biography in "popular" forms, reflects social "facts." (Albrecht 430)

Memory plays a huge role in every human being's life. It becomes all the more pertinent after the world witnessed horrifying events and experienced brutal torture of many kinds. There is an undeniable and significant role of memory in a memoir. Scholars like Woolf and Sartre find a pejorative concern that retrospection can be illusionary, leaving room for invention. Adriana Cavarero, in her 1997 work, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, exclaims that, "memory can select, censure, forget, re-elaborate but rarely invents" (36). This can be seen as a response to the previous scholars. Further, often regarded as "the literature of survivors" (Buss 19), life writing as a genre is often questioned as it possesses the limitations of fragmentation. However fragmented memory and recollection of memory is, it does play a foundational role in recovering experiences of survivors, exiles and refugees – in all senses the marginalised. It enables the representation of lived experiences and draws attention to silenced voices. Life writing is a genre that is both objective and subjective, hence the confluence of both is dovetailed in such a way that the literary and non-literary constantly inform each other. The urge to keep collective experiences in mind can be seen in Wendy Law-Yone's memoir *A Daughter's Memoir of Burma* (2014). This probably inspired her to voice her individual perspectives and experiences, and her father's contribution towards the political scene. Positing these into the broader scheme of subjugation, the focus of this paper would principally be to contextualise the socio-political events embellished in the texts. Memoirs, or life-writing in general, becomes extremely crucial in this context because, unlike other forms of literature, it does not merely 'represent' life or society, it essentially comprises real-life experiences and therein lies the relevance. Further, this memoir demonstrates a new body of understanding through reconfiguring historicity. Through this memoir, we can contextualise the turmoiled past into the 'present' of the texts.

Politics of the Colonial Era and the Nationalist Political Scene

Turning a few pages from the past, Law-Yone mentions King Narapatisithu and legendary stories about him. This can be looked at

as how the people of Burma hung on to the idea of a rich glorious and cultural heritage that provided them hope to combat the challenges they were compelled to face. Intertwining a personal incident of her grandmother reciting poems to her, she describes the valour of the king,

> This great ruler, beloved by his subjects and venerated for his benevolence in building countless canals and reservoirs, pagodas and shrines, was blessed with a long life – a fate denied most Burmese sovereigns. (Law-Yone 59)

Law-Yone contextualises the politics of the colonial era through the lens of her father's recollections and thus a vivid Burmese scenario comes to the forefront. The experiences that Edward Law-Yone gathered must have been in his manuscript which opens up the memoir for an exploration of a different era altogether. The political scenario in the wake of the Japanese invasion in early 1941 gets contextualised with Edward Law-Yone's engagement with the air-defence unit as a volunteer air-raid warden. Wendy Law-Yone mentions her father's job at the Burma Railway in the memoir. Now, Burma Railway has a very perturbed history of marginalisation that rose from the political dynamics during the Second World War which both the Britishers and the Japanese were a part of. Describing the horrific subjugation, she writes, "The Japanese had begun conscripting labour for their notorious Death Railway" (Law-Yone 68).

The nationalist history of Burma particularly gets contextualised as she talks of her father's association with Aun San, the national hero of Burma. Describing Aun San's zeal for the independence of Burma, she also contextualises the legendary story of the 'thirty comrades. Aun San and his comrades formed a group of thirty and went to Japan to gain military training. They came back with the knowledge of modern warfare and thus formed the military of the Burmese people, Tatmadaw (1941~). The Burmese men had initially sought help from Japan without understanding the hidden intentions of Japan. Burma was an altar of land politics in the wake of the Second World War since the English and the Japanese were combating each other. The global context of the Second World War and the devastating Hiroshima and Nagasaki bomb blasts also come to life in the memoir. Further, the Japanese invasion of the early 1940s was one

of the significant events in the history of Burma which is stated by Law-Yone in her memoir. She writes,

> This select group, who called themselves the Thirty Comrades, were organised into the Burma Independence Army and would become the dominant military force in post-war Burma. In return for their support of Japan against the Allies, the Japanese agreed to a provisional Burmese government under their occupation, with the promise of full independence in the future. But when towards the war's end it became clear to Aung San and his comrades that not only was 'independence' under the Japanese illusory, but that a Japanese victory was far from assured, they switched their allegiance to the Allied war effort and fought alongside the British. (Law-Yone 79)

Law-Yone further describes the unfortunate event where Aun San was assassinated and how some of his close aides and elder brother passed away in the same incident in the most tragic manner. She also mentions that this incident took place on 19th July 1947. This event indicates the impending complexity on the national front.

The Complex Post-Independence Political Dynamics

The assassination of Aun San and world politics had somewhat paced up the momentum of Burmese independence. Law-Yone contextualises the entry of U Nu in the forefront of national politics as he took over the negotiating talks with the imperial powers as a leader of Burma. U Nu was the leader of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). With these talks doing the round, Burma was declared independent and Law-Yone describes the event, "Six months later, at the astrologically determined time of twenty minutes past four on the morning of 4 January 1948, independence was declared" (52). She further describes the pandemonium Burma had unknowingly ushered and contextualises the entire situation post-independence,

> The Union of Burma was finally free – free of the Japanese, free of the British, free to start tearing itself apart. Less than six months later, the country was in chaos, with the central government under attack from a multiplicity of insurgent groups: the 'Red Flag' and 'White Flag' Communists; the 'White Band' and 'Yellow Band' PVO (the People's Volunteer Organisation, formerly General Aung San's private army); the Union Military Police; rogue elements from the AFPFL; half a dozen ethnic armies, and marauding dacoits with no political affiliations. (Law-Yone 52)

Contextualising the unsettling situation post-independence, Law-Yone aptly describes that "life in the early 1950s was far from tranquil" (52). She talks about how the various insurgent groups were unhappy with the decisions and policies of the government. The country went through a tumultuous time as the Karen rebels threatened to take over the government at Rangoon. The civil wars that took place are also shown in the memoir. With the insurgency movements rising to the brim, Burma was under martial law for most of the following years after independence. Edward Law-Yone, as mentioned earlier was a well-known journalist. This gave him a ground to scrutinise the lives of the leaders with a very critical approach and needless to mention that his understanding of these people mostly revolved around a political situation and therefore the vivid contextualisation of the political scenario in the memoir! He personally knew prime minister U Nu and the chief of armed forces, General Ne Win. He unravelled the situation of Burma during the parliamentarian period to be not quite stable and charges of corruption were brought against the government every now and then. It was believed by the opposition that the supporters were given political protection, even though they continued to murder, rape, and kill people (Law-Yone 122). His manuscripts reveal that "violence mounting in the run-up to the elections, with the murders of politicians from both Clean and Stable factions being reported in increasing numbers" (Law-Yone 125). U Nu won the elections of 1958 by a few votes but could not maintain law and order and therefore asked Ne Win to form a caretaker government and prepare the nation for elections. By 1960, U Nu again came back to power with a landslide victory. The taste of power and "fund of personal grudges and misgivings had been growing" (Law-Yone 136) in General Ne Win and he staged a coup on 6th March 1962. Interestingly, the era that gets portrayed adds up to the prolonged predicament of instability in the country.

The Beginning of Military Rule in Burma

> 'Mum, what's wrong?'
> 'It's Daddy.' She took a ragged breath. 'He's been arrested.'
> 'Arrested? For what?'
> 'For political reasons, I suppose.' Something in the pit of my stomach twisted. All the hundreds of prisoners taken in for political reasons since

> Ne Win came to power were still in jail. Nobody ever seemed to come out of jail.
> 'But when did it happen?'
> 'In the middle of the night.'
> 'And you've been sitting here all by yourself? Why didn't you wake me?'
> 'There was nothing to be done,' Mum said, with a faraway look.
>
> (Law-Yone 140-141)

An excerpt from the text reveals the harrowing condition of Wendy Law-Yone's family when her father Edward Law-Yone was arrested. Fear, anxiety and helplessness can be traced here in the conversation that Law-Yone had with her mother. The parliamentarian government was overthrown, almost all-important leaders in position were seized of their power and some were even imprisoned after the coup in 1962. She remembers that U Nu was one of the first politicians to be arrested. Many people who protested against the wrong doings were taken as political prisoners especially students and so was her father. In the opening chapter of her book, titled "The Lost Nation," she describes the adverse socio-political situation of the country under the military regime in distressing words. Recalling how her father's newspaper *The Nation* was shut overnight, her father being imprisoned and the general political situation in Burma, she writes that the junta destroyed everything from politics to society to home. Struck by the severity of the frequent imprisonment of the people, Law-Yone describes in a very personal tone that the junta took away both peace and their homes; often with physical force by imprisoning family members from the households of Burma. This further affected the psychologically harmonical peaceful space of the structure of the 'home' as the incarceration disrupted family life altogether. Very significantly she points out that such situations would occur "by force if necessary, and also when not necessary" (Law-Yone 22).

> His letters, though addressed to Mum, had to speak to all of us, his wife and children. And no matter how bland he tried to keep his messages, the pages would arrive with rectangular cavities where words like jail, or government, or plans, had been neatly excised by the censor's blade. (Law-Yone 149)

Edward Law-Yone wrote letters when he was imprisoned and some of those documents reveal the cruel surveillance. She writes that the letters went through censorship before reaching the family.

The harsh prison conditions also come to the forefront. Initially, Edward Law-Yone stayed in his 4′ x 7′ cell with rainwater dripping from the walls. The damp conditions even led to tuberculosis in some of the prisoners. Later he was transferred to the infamous Insein jail where he stayed in solitary confinement for two years. Bugs, rats, etc. would be all around the prison and he writes that the students were completely shaken by the torture. Some would stage subversive plays and that further "led to the main actors being beaten and placed in solitary" (Law-Yone 178-179). Law-Yone described these experiences when he was released in 1968.

Edward Law-Yone's Attempt to Restore Democracy

Edward Law-Yone shifted with his family to Thailand shortly after being released from prison in 1968. With the initiative of fellow dissidents including ex-ministers from the parliamentarian government, the Parliamentary Democratic Party was formed and Wendy Law-Yone notes,

> In forming the PDP, the group was also declaring itself a government in exile, and in this capacity Nu, as the constitutionally elected prime minister, retained his office; Let Ya was appointed finance minister, Tommy Clift defence minister and (Edward) Law-Yone foreign minister. (185)

This whole episode contextualises the indomitable spirit of the people to fight back against the military regime. Edward Law-Yone and U Nu travelled to distant lands to gather international support and attention and succeeded in doing so. Thereafter they strengthened the support from the ethnic minorities like the Kachin, Shan, and Chinese, etc. who were "linked only by a common hatred of the central military government" (Law-Yone 194). Very aptly the civil war and constant ethnic conflict in Burma can be contextualised here. The frequent insurgencies left many people homeless, dwelling in camps near the Thai-Burma border, and thus the aspect of forced displacement also gets surfaced. She writes about the jungles across the Thai-Burma border and the rebel camps which operated since the early days when the military junta took over. The ethnic minorities had their own insurgent organisations and armies. They came in support of the movement initially, however, the movement which was taken up couldn't succeed due to many reasons. For instance, the

funds were not enough for them to sustain their rebellion for long, soon the ethnic minorities surfaced their separate agendas, and the camaraderie between the leaders somehow fell apart. As could be fathomed from the memoir, Edward Law-Yone himself was facing financial crunches (as he had given lumpsum from his own pocket for the cause of the democracy movement) and thought it better to move in with his family who had already left for America. The disillusionment had set in and the movement disintegrated soon after.

Wendy Law-Yone's Personal Experiences and her Visits to Burma in the Later Years

Wendy Law-Yone describes her lived experiences under military rule with utmost vividness and undaunted spirit. She narrates that she was expelled from Rangoon University on the pretext of being Edward law-Yone's daughter. Recapitulating the time when her father was incarcerated, she divulges that a sense of fear had taken over. She was terrified and anxious about the question of her father's return from prison. She wrote numerous petitions to the military government for his release. Further, recalling her own brief prison experience, she describes that the cyclic long interrogation sessions had taken a toll on both her mental and physical health. Such gruelling experiences made her believe that escape is the only way out. This is rather a harrowing incident and indicates the large number of people who were forced to flee Burma. In particular, it raises and reiterates the issue of forced displacement. Law-Yone left Burma in 1967. Surfacing one of the many instances of her encounter with the junta, Law-Yone delineates,

> For the next ten days, the routine was unvarying: every night, a few minutes before nine o'clock, a guard would unlock the door to lead me downstairs, where I sat across a table from my interrogators. Twelve hours later, I would be led back to the windowless room that was my cell, and locked in once more. (158)

In the last segment of the book, the series of student movements of the late 1980s that ultimately led to the 8-8-88 student movement in Rangoon can be contextualised. This movement took the shape of a mass movement against the regime. Even though she was not residing in Burma, she was stirred to visit Burma in 1989 and see the

deadly conditions herself. Through her experience, she could fathom that what she witnessed, depicted a clear call for the restoration of democracy through free and fair elections. The pro-democracy movement which began as a student movement was in full swing during the late 1980s. Aun San Suu Kyi, who came to Burma to care for her ailing mother was moved to join the movement and thus became the face of democracy in Burma. The whole nation learnt the language of protest and resistance. Depicting the national scene, Law-Yone writes,

> Day by day thousands, then tens of thousands, and finally hundreds of thousands of students, schoolchildren, housewives, monks, government workers, doctors, lawyers and whole units of the armed forces had thronged the streets, chanting demands for democracy, free elections and an end to one-party rule. (257)

Law-Yone also visited refugee camps and depicts the pulse of the people. Young men and women talked of politics, democracy, Suu Kyi and the fair election that was promised to be held in 1990. Some even discussed ammunitions like M-16, AK-47, Howitzers, G-3 etc. and how they felt like blowing up military bases and assassinating military leaders. She further describes the tragic condition of people in the camps as they were "struck down by malaria and dengue fever slept on rickety bamboo platforms, protected from the elements only by canopies of plastic sheeting" (Law-Yone 259). During her short visit in 2001, she records that the terminal Mingaladon Airport was flooded with khaki men armed with machine guns. Her impression of Burma from sixteen days visit in 2012 seems less gruelling and the stark difference she noticed was that women were in various services. However, the explosion sounds at the backdrop made her think that probably nothing has changed as she exclaims, "the ground of the distant, past with its old certainties" (Law-Yone 3).

Conclusion

> "…that speaking the 'unspeakable' factor…opens up scope to subvert the subjugation of the suppressed" (Bhaduri 96).

Law-Yone's memoir contextualises contemporary politics and the effect it had on the people. This text is part her recollections and part her father's reflections. Intertwining the struggle movements under military rule during the 1960s, with the reminiscence of British colonial rule and rebel movements against it, the Japanese invasions,

the nationalist and the brief parliamentarian period, this memoir can be read as an attempt at subversion. In upholding the entire socio-political milieu of Burma, suppressed voices come to light as one can identify the plight and vulnerability of exiles, political prisoners, student activists and rebels in refugee camps. The recent military coup of January 2021 perhaps further harps on the immediacy of the representation of anxiety and fear-stricken generation against the backdrop of tumultuous social movements.

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3

Structural Violence in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

This paper analyses how Adiga's *The White Tiger* places the spotlight on structural violence in modern India caused by the existing socio-political and economic disparities in the country. By taking recourse to Johan Galtung's critical concept, "structural violence" and Paul Gready's ideas of "social marginalisation", "political exclusion" and "economic exploitation", this paper argues that the protagonist of the novel represents underprivileged people in India, who are the victims of structural violence – unequal distribution of fundamental rights such as health, education, representation, employment and even the infrastructures of development by the existing socio-political and economic structures of the country. Although structural violence is indirect and invisible, it is capable of driving the victims to commit direct crimes. Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel, as a victim of structural violence, comes to commit a crime without a moment's hesitation. Since structural violence is a driving force to commit a crime, it must be checked by those in power to establish socio-political and economic harmony in a particular country or community. This article makes a significant contribution in a couple of areas of critical concern. It contributes by bringing the victims of structural violence into the purview of critical analysis. It also contributes by showing how structural violence is a slow poison and hence, it should be addressed on time for social, political and economic justice.

Keywords: Structural Violence, Crime, Injustice, Poverty, Corruption

Introduction

Aravind Adiga's Man Booker Prize-awarded debut novel, *The White Tiger* (2008) unflatteringly unfolds the pathetic plight of poor people in modern India in the period when India is projected as a country of social, political and economic glory in the international arena. As a

post-revolution novel, it unveils the dark side of Indian society ravaged by poverty, injustice, superstitions, exploitation of the poor and a host of other social evils when India is taken as a global power amidst scientific and technological advancement. Undoubtedly, India is a socially, politically and economically fast-growing country but certain groups of people are still victims of poverty, inequality, injustice, casteism, corruption, majority regime, social, political, economic disparities, and a host of other problems.

This paper argues that the protagonist of the novel represents underprivileged people in India, who are the victims of structural violence – unequal distribution of fundamental rights such as health, education, representation, employment and even the infrastructures of development by the existing socio-political and economic imperatives of the country. Structural violence though is indirect and invisible; it is capable of driving the victims to commit direct crimes. Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel, as a victim of structural violence, comes to commit a crime without a moment's hesitation. Since structural violence is a driving force to commit a crime, it must be checked by those in power to establish socio-political and economic harmony in a particular country or community.

Literature Review

The literature review shows that the dimension of structural violence in the novel has received only sketchy and oblique attention from critics. Dr Ramandeep Mahal and Maharishi Markandeshwar, for example, interpret this novel as having captured the theme of "social issues of present-day society like debasement, destitution, ignorance, betting, western culture, casteism, wrongdoing, joblessness, mission for personality, forlornness, rehabilitation and so on" (5646). They, however, do not look at the role of socio-political structure in depriving a certain group of people of their basic rights. Similarly, Snehal Shingavi argues that the novel is "a critique of crony capitalism and an endorsement of entrepreneurialism" (8). But the perspective of structural violence goes missing. Likewise, Mst. Rekha Parvin and Md. Chand Alithe observe this novel as a "shocking insights of the corrupted rich people over the poor" (24). Their line of analysis from the lens of structural violence falls short.

In the same way, linking human rights and development, Lena Khor makes an argument that "the ruthless form which Halwai's thoughts and actions taken is but the logical outcome of a world where underdevelopment, modernisation, and neoliberal globalisation in tandem" (42). In the discussion of human rights and development, the critic does not highlight the violation of human rights caused by the existing social institutions herein. Likewise, Sundhya Walther argues, "*The White Tiger* employs a language of species that is useful for its representation of subalternity, even if its focus is not nonhuman animals, but rather human beings" (592). Here also, no discussion of structural violence is found for the reduction of someone into the position of subalternity. In the same vein, Virendra Patel and Dr Hitendra Dhote interpret this novel as "how the desire to become rich makes people corrupt and dehumanised through the physical, moral, existential and material transformation of Balram Halwai from poor, innocent to highly corrupt" (5320). Here also the critical approach of structural violence goes missing.

By the same token, Betty Joseph observes the novel as "a critique of neoliberalism that exposes these conflations depends first on foregrounding the ways in which the novel adopts the clichés of a neoliberal economic doctrine and transforms them into speech issuing from an illegitimate spokesman: an uneducated rural migrant and murderer who self-identifies as a successful "entrepreneur" (72). Here also, the critic overlooks how the so-called neoliberalism is a productive ground to make certain groups of people structurally deprived of their fundamental rights. Likewise, for A.J. Sebastian, *The White Tiger* "is an excellent social commentary on the poor-rich divide in India" (244). The critic, here also does not talk about the gap between the poor and rich caused by structural violence. Similarly, for the critics, Dr. Vinita Singh Chawdhry and R. Renuka Narasiman the "focus of Adiga's novel is that even though India is a developing economy the poor are still under poverty line" (230). The critics do not give much focus on the root cause of growing poverty through structural violence in their analysis.

Similarly, Dr Shipra Malik argues that the novel is about "a startling contrast between India's rise as a global economy and the plight of the marginalised class of society living in devastating rural

and urban poverty through Balram Halwai, the narrator and the protagonist" (672). Critical analysis from the perspective of structural violence also lacks in her criticism. Randeep Rana further asserts that *The White Tiger* "is a pulsating critique of the deep-rooted socio-economic inequality rampant in India" (454). His critiquing of the novel also does not take the line of structural violence for socio-economic inequality. According to Veena Sindhu, *The White Tiger* "examines the issues of religion, caste, loyalty, corruption, urbanisation and poverty in India" (329). Her line of analysis, however, is also oblivious to structural violence and its role in the disparities and absurdities in Indian society. Since the above critical studies have not emphasised the issue of structural violence, this paper attempts to bridge this critical gap.

Textual Analysis/ Discussion

The White Tiger is the story of Balram Halwai also known as Munna, a servant from the poverty-stricken community of Bihar, India. He narrates his entire story to the Chinese Prime Minister who is supposed to be coming to India. He cannot continue his study due to poverty. At school, the inspector praises him as an "intelligent, honest, and vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots" (35). The school inspector identifies him as a white tiger, "the rarest of animals – the creatures that comes along only once in a generation" (35). In search of a job, the protagonist goes to the capital city, Delhi, where he gets a job as a driver. His master, Mr. Ashok is a rich and corrupt businessman. In Delhi, he becomes a laughing stock for his master, who not only humiliates him but tries to dehumanise him from time to time. His master even forces him to take charge of murdering a child killed by Pinky, Mr. Ashok's wife while driving-in-drinking. Delhi teaches the protagonist nothing but exploitation, humiliation and dehumanisation of poor people by the rich ones. By being a victim of such injustice, he becomes homicidal and finally kills his master and takes his money, which his master is planning to give as a bribe to the politician. By taking money, he goes to Bangalore, the city of information technology and runs a call centre. He, hence, turns out to be an entrepreneur from an ordinary village boy though through foul means.

The narrator, Balram Halwai, writes a series of letters to the Chinese Premier, in which he expresses and exposes the pathetic plight of the poor in India. The poor are fated to live amidst a lack of basic facilities while the rich ones are enjoying privileges. As he explains to Chinese Premiere, "our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs" (4). This explicates two sides of India – one is the dark side in which people are deprived of basic things and the other is the bright side, in which entrepreneurs, who represent high-class people, are in comfort zones with all facilities. He further talks about India, "Your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India – the black river" (14). India of light represents India of structurally powerful people while India of dark represents structurally powerless people whose life is utterly horrible. Powerless people are the real victims of structural violence.

Johan Galtung in his seminal article, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" uses the critical idea, of "structural violence". For him, "structural violence is inequality, above all in the distribution of power" (175). When the social, economic and political powers are unequally distributed, certain groups of people are devoid of their fundamental rights and even cannot get the privileges of the state. The narrator places the spotlight on the lack of infrastructural development in his poverty-stricken village by saying, "There is no hospital in Laxmangarh, although there are three different foundation stories for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections" (47), which shows how the political corruption contributes to structural violence.

Structural violence is invisible while personal violence is visible. However, the invisibility of structural violence makes certain groups of people poor and powerless. As Galtung distinguishes between them "personal violence is meaningful as a threat, a demonstration even when nobody is hit, and structural violence is also meaningful as a blueprint, as an abstract form without social life, used to threaten people into subordination" (172). Structural violence always remains a threat to those who are in the lower hierarchy in social strata, which

leaves them destitute. This paper also concentrates on the idea of Paul Gready that "structural violence can be conceptually divided into three major pillars: social marginalisation, political exclusion and economic exploitation" (15). In the novel, the protagonist is the victim of social marginalisation, political exclusion and economic exploitation.

Firstly, he becomes the victim of the so-called feudal system in his village, Laxmangarh which does not let him get an education and grow up respectably. The poor people of the whole village are under the exploitation of so-called landlords. The protagonist describes the exploitation of poor people by the landlords thus:

> The Buffalo was one of the landlords in Laxmangarh. There were three others, and each had got his name from the peculiarities of appetite that had been detected in him. The Stork was a fat man with a fat moustache, thick and curved and pointy at the tips. He owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river to come to our village. (24)

The protagonist identifies landlords in the animal-bird image, who own the resources in the village and exploit the poor people by imposing taxes and dehumanising them. Similarly, he identifies Strork's brother as the Wild Boar, who "owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work on those lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages" (24). In the same vein, the protagonist identifies another landlord as the Raven, who "owned the worst land, which was the dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze with their flocks. If they didn't have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backsides, so they called him the Raven" (24-25). This shows the monopoly of so-called landlords in all resources in the village and the condition of the poor therein. The narrator explains the luxury of the landlords in the following lines thus:

> All four of the Animals lived in high-walled mansions just outside Laxmangarh – the landlords' quarters. They had their temples inside the mansions, and their wells and ponds, and did not need to come out into the village except to feed. Once upon a time, the children of the four Animals went around town in their cars; Kusum remembered

> those days. But after the Buffalo's son had been kidnapped by the Naxals – perhaps you've heard about them, Mr. Jiabao, since they're Communists, just like you, and go around shooting rich people on principle – the four Animals had sent their sons and daughters away, to Dhanbad or to Delhi. (25)

The narratives reflect the luxurious life of the rich ones with all facilities inside their big houses while people like Balram Halwai are fated to live a miserable life under exploitation, poverty and humiliation. The references to "Naxals" and the kidnapping of Buffalo's "son" by them implicitly hint that disgruntled people are taking recourse to violence to fight against the established socio-economic structures of the country, which have brought a gap between the rich and the poor. The sending of their sons and daughters to safe places by landlords due to the threat of Naxals exposes distinctly two classes – the powerful and the powerless in modern India. The rich are powerful and can give good education to their sons and daughters while the poor are under utter darkness without education and other basic rights. The narrator highlights the existing corruption, one of the causes of structural violence, through the following lines thus:

> There was supposed to be free food at my school – a government programme gave every boy three *rotis*, yellow *daal*, and pickles at lunchtime. But we never saw *rotis*, or yellow *daal*, or pickles, and everyone knew why: the schoolteacher had stolen our lunch money, (32).

The poor people are even deprived of state-sponsored privileges due to existing corruption. To stop dropouts from school, the government program of supplying food for the children is suspended as the school teacher misuses the lunch money. "Corruption is a form of structural violence because it is about private gain at public expenses", as George Kent affirms (135). It is the corruption that drives, more particularly, oppressed people to get the real benefits consequently; they are more frustrated and upset. When India is exposed as a technologically advanced country across the globe, the narrator ironically exposes the other side of India, where people are dying of tuberculosis. As the narrative goes:

> When he began spitting blood that morning, Kishan and I took him by boat across the river. We kept washing his mouth with water from the river, but the water was so polluted that it made him spit more blood.

> Later on, Kishan's father dies of tuberculosis and the doctor explains that he has "seen it before in rickshaw-pullers. They get weak from their work" (50).

Tuberculosis is a minor disease at present; however, the poor like rickshaw pullers in India are dying of it. Due to a lack of sufficient food, they are weak and more vulnerable to even minor diseases. Balram satirizes the corrupted doctor which shows class discrimination clearly:

> "Now, you – Dr. Ram Pandey –will kindly put one-third of your salary in my palm. Good boy. In return, I do this.' He made a tick on the imaginary ledger. 'You can keep the rest of your government salary and go work in some private hospital for the rest of the week. Forget the village. Because according to this ledger you've been there. You've treated my wounded leg. You've healed that girl's jaundice." (21)

This is not only the reflection of the pervasive corruption in the medical field but also the absurdities and anomalies in bureaucracy in India. The existing dowry system is another evil in so-called shining India, due to which, the poor are always helpless, restless and frustrated. The narrator explains Kishan's marriage indicating the dowry system thus:

> It was one of the good marriages. We had the boy, and we screwed the girl's family hard. I remember exactly what we got in dowry from the girl's side, and thinking about it even now makes my mouth fill up with water: five thousand rupees cash, all crisp new unsoiled notes fresh from the bank, plus a Hero bicycle, plus a thick gold necklace for Kishan. (51)

The above narrative reflects the happiness of the receiver of the dowry, the boy's family but one can easily understand the plight of the girl's family who is to give the dowry to the prospective bridegroom. The dowry system as a social evil has crippling and coercive effects on underclass people. The narrator also talks about two castes in modern India "in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up" (64). The terms "Big Bellies" and "Small Bellies" distinctly mark the rich class and the poor class. The first one has luxurious life while the second one is oppressed by the first one. Since the "Big Bellies" have political power, they easily use the underclass population to materialise their vested interest. As

Claudio Schuftan rightly says, "Poverty, part and parcel of the global free-market system, is the world's greatest killer. It is not enough to improve the situation of the poor within the existing social relationships. The poverty of the poor demands that we build a different, more just social order" (308). The political exclusion of the underclass becomes clear from the following narratives:

> I had to be eighteen. All of us in the tea shop had to be eighteen, the legal age to vote. There was an election coming up, and the tea shop owner had already sold us. He had sold our fingerprints – the inky fingerprints which the illiterate person makes on the ballot paper to indicate his vote. I had overheard this from a customer. This was supposed to be a close election; he had got a good price for each one of us from the Great Socialist Party. (97)

The novelist bitingly criticizes the political corruption and unfair election system in India, the largest democracy in the world. This sort of unfair election and political corruption lead certain rich and powerful people in policy making and hence, no expectation is there from them to do something good to uplift the status of the powerless and underclass people. This makes the situation of the poor even worse. The narrator further brings the so-called tall claims of corrupted politicians to the fore thus:

> The health minister today announced a plan to eliminate malaria in Bangalore by the end of the year…In other news, the chief minister of the state today announced a plan to eliminate malnutrition in Bangalore in six months. He declared that there would be not one hungry child in the city by the end of the year …In other news; the finance minister declared that this year's budget will include special incentives to turn our village into a high-technology paradise…. (219)

The above lines show the sugar-coated statements of politicians who claim to eliminate all kinds of injustice, and discrimination and move towards the path of development but things simply do not happen, and finally, people are habituated to "swallow this crap"(219). The narrator recounts the story of his father thus:

> "It's the way it always is," my father told me that night. "I've seen twelve elections – five general, five states, two local – and someone else has voted for me twelve times. I've heard that people in the other India get to vote for themselves – isn't that something?"(100)

The narrator's father never got a chance to cast his vote as his right as someone else did it. The poor are deprived of their voting rights in a democracy. What can be more ironic than this one? The powerful people never let underclass people choose their representatives as they just want to use them as ladders to the rich at the top. They never want awareness among common people. As Galtung asserts, "Those who benefit from structural violence, above all those who are at the top, will try to preserve the status quo so well geared to protect their interest" (179). It means they expect common people to be under their grip all the time taking advantage of their economic backwardness. The miserable condition of economically backward Indians is noticeable in the narrative, "Thousands of people live on the sides of the road in Delhi. They have come from the Darkness too – you can tell by their thin bodies, filthy faces, by the animal-like way they live under the huge bridges", as the protagonist states (119). The most horrible situation can be seen in the jails of Delhi where the drivers are "behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle-class masters" (169). When their masters commit the crime of hit-and-run; their servants have to take the blame and are fated to live inside the cell. This is nothing but the dehumanisation of the poor by the so-called rich people. "We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse. Yes, that's right: we all live in the world's greatest democracy" (169), asserts the narrator. Few rich people controlling the majority of poor people in modern India is exposed by the narrator in the following lines:

> A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 per cent – as strong, as talented as intelligent in every way – to exist in perpetual servitude; a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands, he will throw it back at you with a curse. (175-176)

The narrator being aware of the plight and predicament of the poor in so-called technologically shining India becomes frustrated and that drives him to commit a crime. He narrates his journey from an innocent village boy to an ignominious city boy as "how I was corrupted from a sweet, innocent village fool into a citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness" (197). The condition of working-class people in Delhi and their dehumanisation by their masters make the protagonist rebellious. The corrupted nature of his

master drives the protagonist to murder his own master. By reading *Murder Weekly*, the idea of murdering his master germinates in the mind of the narrator. To escape from the domain of utter poverty and injustice, he decides to kill his master and seize the red bag full of money, which his master is planning to bribe the politicians in return for his taxes settled. He soliloquizes before murdering his master thus:

> Go on, just look at the red bag, Balram – that's not stealing, is it?
> I shook my head.
> And even if you were to steal it, Balram, it wouldn't be stealing.
> How so? I looked at the creature in the mirror.
> See – Mr. Ashok is giving money to all these politicians
> in Delhi so that they will excuse him from the tax he has to pay. And who owns that tax, in the end? Who but the ordinary people of this country – you! (244).

Finally, he kills his master with a broken bottle and seizes the money and goes to Bangalore and starts running call centres. The narrator further narrates his plan to Chinese Primer thus:

> After three or four years in real estate, I think I might sell everything, take the money, and start a school – an English-language school – for poor children in Bangalore. A school where you won't be allowed to corrupt anyone's head with prayers and stories about God or Gandhi – nothing but the facts of life for these kids. A school full of White Tigers, unleashed on Bangalore! (319).

These lines show the real attitude of the narrator, who is highly concerned with the poor. Since his past was poverty-stricken, he plans to do something to uplift the status of the poor by giving them pragmatic education to make their life fruitful enough. He is well aware of the fact that the existing socio-political and economic structures of the country should be revisited to establish equality and justice for all people devoid of class and caste. "Structures and not just individuals must be changed if the world is to change" (308), as Claudio Schuftan asserts.

Conclusion

The White Tiger, thus, is a powerful document, which faithfully unfolds the plight of certain groups of people in India as victims of poverty, inequality, oppression and injustice caused by the existing social, cultural, economic and political structure of the country.

Structural violence caused by unequal distribution of fundamental rights such as health, education, representation, employment and even the infrastructures of development by the existing socio-political and economic imperatives of the country, is a curse that always brings a rift between powerful and powerless. Although indirect and invisible, structural violence tends to motivate the victims to commit direct crimes. Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel, as a victim of structural violence, commits a crime without hesitation. Since structural violence is capable of driving the victims to commit crimes, it must be checked by those in power to establish socio-political and economic harmony in a particular country or community. Undoubtedly, India is a socially, politically and economically fast-growing country but certain groups of people are still victims of poverty, inequality, injustice, casteism, corruption, majority regime, and social, political and economic disparities. It is the immediate duty of the authorities to do away with structural violence to make the nation peaceful, prosperous and powerful.

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4

Translation and Memory: Recovery of the Past in "Face in the Mirror"

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Abstract

Memory and translation always have something preceding them. Their existence depends on a prior happening. A past occurrence is recounted in memory and a text is rewritten in its translation. The paper draws on many similarities between translation and memories and illustrates it in the context of a story entitled "Face in the Mirror" written by an Assamese writer Arupa Patangia Kalita.

Keywords: Memory, Translation, Collective Memory, Historical Memory, Mediation.

Literature has had an inseparable relationship with memory since the time of its inception. Memory was the source and means for the creation and dissemination of oral literature. Considering the fundamental role of memory in literature Lovro Skopljanac in the essay, "Literature Through Recall: Ways of Connecting Literary Studies and Memory Studies" conjectures in this way:

> The metaphorical blend of memory with literature, where memorising is the source domain and writing is the target domain, has been indirectly present in Western thought since Plato's wax tablet (see Draaisma 2001), influencing the way memory is conceptualised and explained. The opposite blend, where writing is the source domain and memorising is the target domain, would conceptualise the writer as the encoder of meaning that is stored in a text and later recalled by a reader.

The above-quoted lines describe the associations between memory and writing and also between memory and reading. However, the terms source and target also bring to our mind the task of translation where the transmission happens between a source and a target text. Memory is stored in the human brain in the form of

individual or collective memories and again it is preserved in oral or written literature which can be decoded by the readers. In this journey of memory, literature works as a carrier of memories. Likewise, translation can be called an 'intercultural carrier of memory'. Sharon Deane-Cox, in the essay "Remembering Oradour-sur-Glane: Collective Memory in Translation" observes: "Nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere, scope remains for a much more concerted and conscientious dialogue between Memory Studies and Translation Studies; the former may be served by a more detailed, critical appreciation of the processes and potential consequences of translation as an intercultural carrier of memory," (273).

> Both memory studies and translation studies can complement each other. There is always room for discussion regarding the potential of translation as an intercultural carrier. When we think about it critically, we become aware that the nature of the task of the translation is such that it can never be perfect and there is always a scope of partiality. Translation mediates between two languages which are always non-equivalent and most of the time a translator's attempt at establishing an equivalence between them may result in a forceful connection leading to a limited view or a dispersed view. For a better understanding of the idea, we can refer to Maria Tymoczko as she tells:
>
> > …the receptor language and culture entail obligatory features that limit the possibilities of the translation, as well as extending the meanings of the translation in directions other than those inherent in the source text. .. As a result, translators must make choices, selecting aspects or parts of a text to transpose and emphasise. Such choices in turn serve to create representations of their source texts, representations that are also partial (24).

However, Derrida's claims expressed in his book *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation* pose a stark contrast to our discussion of the limitations of translation. He views that a translation ensures the survival of the original. He further stresses: "The work does not simply live longer, it lives more and better, beyond the means of its author" (179). A similar view is given by Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Task of the Translator" as he remarks: "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its after-life – which could

not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living – the original undergoes a change" (73). In the same way, recounting of memory whether it is in the written or oral form whether it is a historical account or a literary production; undergoes a change. Yet the recounting guarantees the living on of the memory. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the fact that in the act of translation, the translator goes through a great struggle to find the right words in the target language to express the ideas in the original text exactly. When memory is turned into narrative similar kinds of challenges are faced by the writer. Quoting Schachtel Mark Freeman articulates it beautifully:

> At every step a word beckons, it seems so convenient, so suitable, one has heard or read it so often in a similar context, it sounds so well, it makes the phrase flow so smoothly. If he follows the temptation of this word, he will perhaps describe something that many people recognise at once, that they already know, that follows a familiar pattern; but he will have missed the nuance that distinguishes his experience from others, that makes it his own. If he wants to communicate that elusive nuance which in some way, however small, will be his contribution, a widening or opening of the scope of articulate human experience at some point, he has to fight constantly against the easy flow of words that offer themselves (265-266).

The familiarity of the language and its use in certain known contexts create an inextricable relation between words and meanings. To dissociate this link is the challenge in front of a translator and a narrator.

Memory needs mediation for its survival. The question becomes complicated because the idea of mediation also carries with it questions like whose memory, who will mediate etc. Edward Said talks about 'invented historical memory' which aided the 19th-century nation-building movements. It aided in creating a shared sense of the past. "Thereby providing a false, that is, invented memory of the past as a way of creating a new sense of identity for ruler and ruled" (178). Here memory is mediated in such a manner that it created a sense of oneness. The idea of invented historical memory is similar to the idea of pseudo-translation because here too the translator works with marginalised literary forms and themes. Lawrence Venuti states: "most likely to be literary forms and themes that are new to or currently marginal in the domestic culture so that the

pseudotranslator typically exploits accepted translation practices to work with cultural materials that might otherwise be excluded or censored" (33). Gideon Toury too opines that pseudo translations help in creating a new literary tradition at the time of tense historical situation (48).

In this manner, we can point out many affinities between translation and narrativisation of memory as both acts transmit cultural material from one place to another. However, when we discuss the issue in the context of texts where memory plays a key role and at the same time, they are translated into another language the issue gets intriguing. For instance, in this case memory is formulated in one language and again in translation, it is reformulated in another language. In both cases, the writer and the translator pass through the same experiences as has been discussed above.

For an analytical study one story entitled "Ghrinar Ipar Sipar" (translated as "Face in the Mirror") written by an Assamese writer Arupa Patangia Kalita has been chosen. The story "Face in the Mirror" shows intricate interconnections among memories irrespective of time and culture. The story narrates the life of a girl in a missionary school in Assam in the 1960s. As a punishment one of her teachers made her sit with a very silent, unfriendly girl called Zungmila. Despite the many attempts from the girl's side (who is also the narrator of the story) Zungmila did not speak with her although she helped her in their sewing class. At that time the small girl was reading the novel *Yaruingam* written by an Assamese novelist Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. The novel was set in Nagaland which talks about the involvement of the common Naga people in the world war and how they were affected by it. Zungmila too was a Naga girl. The girl, Zungmila's classmate who is also the narrator of the story started to talk about the characters in *Yaruingam* in front of Zungmila. She told about Charengla's (one of the characters in the novel) sorrow for being abandoned by the Japanese soldiers. She also narrated an old man in the novel who wanted to establish an independent land in their hills. Zungmila listened to her quite attentively as the writer informs: "It was as if mute Zungmila had a damned – up hilly river inside her and now somebody had opened

it…She asked me again and again about the things I had already talked about…She started talking" (124).

Zungmila related to her classmate how her whole family was involved in Nagaland's fight for an independent land during the time of India's independence from British rule. It was a terrible time for the people of her land. She narrated her memory sometimes by crying and sometimes with anger. She unfolded how the clash between the Indian army and the rebels resulted in the burning of villages, the killing of people, and the rape of women. Her aunt who was actively involved in the movement was raped and killed. She described how it continued till the 1960s and she too became a sufferer and an eyewitness to all this.

Here we can refer to what Alison Landsberg has termed 'prosthetic memory'. Landsberg defines it in the following manner:

> This is a particular form of memory that emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history. .. The person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics (2).

Zungmila is reminded of the tense time of her land by her friend's narration of *Yaruingam*. She remembered certain memories which were never experienced by her but she knew about them from the narratives told by her elders. This is what prosthetic memory is exactly like. On top of that it ignited memories that she experienced in the 1960s: "For three days and two nights, the people of the village were surrounded in the church field. Zungmila shed tears when she told me about the little babies who had died from cold and hunger. She had fainted towards dawn" (127).

The narrative moves to the 1990s and the small girl, Zungmila's class friend is a woman now. She narrates her own experience of terrorism in Assam during that time. She and her husband were given an extortion notice with a threat of murder. The whole incident took her back to her reading of a novel entitled *The Bluest Eye* written by the Afro-American writer Toni Morrison. The helpless situation

reminded her of Cholly, a black character from *The Bluest Eye* who became enraged with an innocent black girl; but couldn't hate the White people who humiliated him. Later on, when she had to invite a relative of hers to her house who was a leader of the Assam movement in the 1980s and spearheaded many massacres; but is a very rich person now. The hatred for this class of people was dormant in her mind. Observing the hypocrisies of the wife of this person she couldn't remain silent. From a welcoming host, she turned into a rebel which reminded her of Zungmala: "I did not know why, after a long time I remembered Zungmila" (147). In this manner, the story creates a chain of memories. The Memories are of different times and different people but get interconnected in the mind of the narrator.

The act of translation transmits at the temporal as well as at the spatial level. The temporal transmissions establish interconnectedness among generations and the spatial transmissions connect cultures. Similarly, memory too can perform the above mentioned tasks; nonetheless, cultural transmissions happen at a larger scale when texts are translated. The selected story by focusing on the historical and cultural memory of the character accomplishes intergenerational transmission. At this point, we can cite Bella Brodzki's view on the same concerning a novel entitled *I Saw the Sky Catch Fire*: "This fictional text, by exemplifying the processes of history and cultural memory it thematizes, signals an imperative-the value and vitality of intergenerational transmission as a crucial form of cultural survival in a postcolonial context" (219). The English translation of the story "Ghrinar Ipar Sipar" (translated as "Face in the Mirror") actualizes cultural transmission spreading it across cultures. Once it is translated into English; it crosses the boundary of Assamese culture and reaches a large audience.

The memories depicted in the story are bitter historical memories. The word 'Ghrina' in Assamese means hatred. The story represents how hatred and hateful memories persist irrespective of place and time. The same kind of memories prevails in Africa, Nagaland, and Assam. The English translation does not retain the word 'Ghrina'; yet the title "Face in the Mirror" successfully captures the meaning of 'Ipar Sipar'which roughly means both sides. The face inside the mirror and outside the mirror connotes experiences from both sides where the narrator is actively involved and where the

narrator hears about others' experiences. Thus, with some variations, the memories get transferred across cultures.

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that if literature mediates memories; translations of literary texts remediate them. If literature ensures the passing on of memories, translations ensure intercultural connections through sharing of memories. Both acts perform the task of connecting us to our past for a better hold over our future.

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5

Use of Literature in Learning English and its Effectiveness: A Case Study on the Department of English Students at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST)

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Abstract

This research aims at exploring the use of literature and its effectiveness in learning English involving English department students to develop both basic language skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking and language areas i.e., vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. English students, those studying literary texts, are reading a version of the language which is rich in metaphor, simile, allusion and ambiguity, and those are the elements that deepen their thinking and understanding of the material they are reading as well as the English language. When English is taught through literature, it creates the power of self-belief in students, and hence, influences learner's behaviours, motivation and attitudes towards English language learning. (Keshavarzi, 2012) Literature provides the kind of subject matter that has the power to motivate learners and help them in exploring the possibilities of usages and meaning that enhances their language competence in a great way. Since the literary texts "explore the resources of language to its highest capacity, the learner, therefore, is inspired through the reading of the literary texts to learn the language in real-life situations and communicate fluently" (Keshavarzi, 2012, p. 557). Therefore, literary texts help them to acquire the language as a means of communication. The objectives of this study are – to identify what kinds of problems the students are facing while using literary texts in the process of learning English; to prioritise the activities of the students as per their academic needs in comprehending texts; to explore how arranged skill development sessions may help the students improve their language skills and to recommend the strategies to be taken so that the students may effectively use literature to improve their English language skills.

Keywords: Literature, learning English, effectiveness, case study, SUST

Introduction, Background of the Study and Statement of the Problem

This study aims at exploring the use of literature in learning English and its effectiveness; in both basic language skills such as listening reading, writing, and speaking and language areas i.e., vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Literary texts "offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practice the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary" (Rahayu, p. 1). English students, those studying literary texts, are reading a version of the language which is rich in metaphor, simile, allusion and ambiguity, and these are the elements that deepen their thinking and understanding of the material they are reading as well as their language skills. When English is taught through literature, it creates the power of self-belief in students, and hence, influences learner's behaviours, motivation and attitudes towards English language learning. (Keshavarza, 2012, p. 559)

Literature develops learners' strategies; they listen and read for general meaning, and predict and guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. Literature helps students to go "beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings; that is, it enables students to go beyond what is written and dive into what is meant" (Keshavarza, 2012, p. 557). Literature provides the kind of subject matter that has the power to motivate learners and help them in exploring the possibilities of usages and meaning that enhance their language competence in a great way. Since the literary texts "explore the resources of language to its highest capacity, the learner, therefore, is inspired through the reading of the literary texts to learn a language in real-life situations and communicate fluently" (Keshavarza, 2012, p. 557). Literature evokes feelings through words, pulls learners out of the graded grammatical forms and helps them to communicate in a way that attracts language learning.

Language learning requires acquiring four skills: reading comprehension, writing, listening and speaking. Literature has proved a good source that fulfils these four skills. literature is the culture of the people using that language. the present paper will

debate the reasons behind using literature as a good source in teaching the English language. (Keshavarza, 2012, p. 554)

Literature forces the students to read more and more as well as deeply. Literature helps in the incorporation of linguistic competence into communicative competence by putting language into use in different social situations. But when we examine the exam scripts and take oral viva or presentation of the students; we find the ineffectiveness of using literature by the students in recent years. It seems that they are gradually losing their cognitive capacity and skills in using literature due to the lack of motivation, methodology and mechanics.

This study considers the following questions to address the study problem of this research project:

(i) Why should students use literary texts in the process of learning the English language?

(ii) How do the students carry out the purposes of using literary texts?

(iii) What problems are the students facing in using literature in developing language skills?

(iv) What measures should we take to focus on the effectiveness of using pieces of literature for learning English?

Rationale of the Study

(i) I. Relationship of the objectives to existing relevant knowledge on the research field: English literature has an immense "scope and significance in the process of teaching-learning the English language" (Sawant, 2014, p. 2). According to Collie and Slater, there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. (J. Collie, and S. Slater, 1990, p. 3)

Literature provides learners with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items.

Students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualised body of text. They learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas, which develop and enrich their writing skills. Students also become more productive and adventurous when they begin to perceive the richness and diversity of the language they are trying to learn and begin to make use of some of that potential themselves. Thus, they improve their communicative and cultural competence in the authentic richness, the naturalness of the authentic texts. (Hismanal, 2005, p. 55)

(ii) II. Relevance of the proposed study to national or regional priorities: English is the common language of today's world which is called a global village. Bangladesh is connected with this new approach emphasising on development and digitalisation of every sector. In this context, English as a language is playing a vital role in the daily life of the people of this country. Sylhet is importantly and significantly concerned about this reality.

Objectives of the Study:

The general objective of this study is to explore the effectiveness of the use of literature in learning English and engaging the English Department students in it. The specific objectives of this study are:

(i) To identify what kinds of problems the students are facing while using literary texts in the process of learning English.

(ii) To prioritise the activities of the students as per their academic needs in comprehending texts.

(iii) To explore how arranged skill development sessions may help the students improve their language skills.

(iv) To recommend the strategies to be taken so that the students may effectively use literature to improve their English language skills.

Methodology

Using literature in learning the English language helps to create an overall classroom environment that can motivate the students. This

study investigates how students are using their given, taught literary texts in developing the skills in learning English because a second language environment will enhance learners‟ intrinsic reading motivation" (Morrow, 2004, p. 21).

This study follows the experimental study method, which enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context of some experiments. By including both quantitative and qualitative data, an experimental study helps explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete experiment and analysis of the investigation. This study includes two questionnaire surveys.

The "Text and Activities" method is the most common approach to using fiction and poetry in the classroom. In this study, literary texts will be used for explaining and understanding, as well as simulating readers for practising language skills. The analysis will be emphasised with the linguistic inputs that readers/students can get, such as the grammar structure and vocabulary and the use of the literary work for practising 4 (four) language skills.

Maley (1989) lists some of the reasons for regarding literature as a potent resource in the language classroom as follows (p.12):

(i) Universality

(ii) Non-triviality

(iii) Personal Relevance

(iv) Variety

(v) Interest

(vi) Economy and Suggestive Power

(vii) Ambiguity

When selecting the literary texts to be used in language learning, this study considers: the needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of the students. (Amer, 2012, 57) In this study, the literary texts are used for explaining and understanding, as well as stimulating learners to practise the language skills to enrich students' "appreciation of literary works and all at once improving their language competence" (Rahayu, 4).

Data Analysis

The project selects twenty-five students from different batches of the department on a random basis. The *first survey* was conducted among the students before giving Skill development sessions to them with the following ten questions (Table:1) to know what the students are doing for developing their four language skills; what is the status/ability of their language skills and what they think about received initiatives to develop language skills through reading literature. So that, after giving skill development sessions to them, the study finds out the effectiveness of the project.

Table: 1

No.	Questions
1.	How do you develop your Skill using literary texts that you are taught in the classes?
2.	What Strategy do you follow to improve your Reading Skill through reading literary texts from your syllabus?
7.	How do you develop your Writing Skill using the knowledge learnt from reading texts?
8.	How do you apply your acquired knowledge from the read texts to develop your speaking skill?
5.	How is your present Listening Skill?
6.	How is your present Reading Skill?
7.	How is your present Writing Skill?
8.	How is your present Speaking Skill?
9.	What obstacles/barriers are you facing in developing your four language skills by using English literary text?
10.	Are you receiving proper and perfect guidelines in this regard? If not, what steps/strategies should be taken?

Table:2

No.	**Question**	**Students' opinion**
1.	How do you develop your Skill using literary texts that you are taught in the classes?	Concentration and understanding, using a sound system, hearing native speakers, avoiding irrelevant discussion, recording the class lecture, focusing and attention, reading loudly, watching movies, and dramas, listening to audiobooks, concentrating on the pronunciation of the

		words, understanding inner meanings, hearing carefully
2.	What Strategy do you follow to improve your Reading Skill through reading literary texts from your syllabus?	Selecting topics, screaming and screaming, fast reading, reading loudly, reading many times, focusing on unknown words, spelling, vocabulary, through reading, finding meanings, group study, reading more short stories, and novels, following sentence structure, fixing time to complete reading, follow google translate, highlight the words, finding logical meanings, synonym and antonym
3.	How do you develop your Writing Skill using the knowledge learnt from reading texts?	Focus on ideas and information, write regularly, write a summary, follow sentence structure, note takings, rewriting, focus on new words, and phrases, focus on grammatical mistakes, critical writing, writing summary, paraphrasing, style of writing,
4.	How do you apply your acquired knowledge from the read texts to develop your speaking skill?	Follow fluency and accuracy, record the reading to hear again, mark the quotes, share my opinion, group discussion, follow native speakers, practice regularly, follow public talks,

Table 2 shows students' feedback on the four questions which are based on their strategies and abilities to develop language skills.

Table: 3

No.	Question	Very poor/ 50-60%	Poor/ 60-70%	Good/70-80%	very good/ 80-90%	Excellent/90-100%
5	How is your present Listening Skill?		4 (16%)	20 (80%)	0	1(4%)
6	How is	1 (4%)	7(28%)	15(60%)	0	2(8%)

	your present Reading Skill?					
7	How is your present Writing Skill?	3(12%)	7(28%)	15(60%)	0	0
8	How is your present Speaking Skill?	3(12%)	11(44%)	11(44%)	0	0

Table 3 shows students' present language skills of learning, reading, writing and speaking. The data shows the status of the student's learning ability before receiving lessons in skill development sessions.

Table: 4

9.	What obstacles/barriers are you facing in developing your four language skills by using English literary text?	Lack of practice, knowing vocabulary, unknown words, poor grammar, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, nervousness in speaking, lack of arranging workshops, difficulties in understanding the perspective of literary texts, language barrier, availability of audiobooks

The data of Table: 4 provides the feedback of the students; what they consider as the obstacles/barriers to developing their language skills?

Table:5

No.	Question	Yes	No	Opinion
10.	Are you receiving proper and perfect guidelines in this regard? If not, what steps/strategies should be taken?	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	Motivation, arranging the seminar, presentation, effective language classes, classes on methods, proper assessment and feedback,

Table 5 shows that 20% of students think that they are receiving proper and perfect guidelines to develop their language skills. And, 80% of students say that they are not receiving that in this regard.

Work Plan/Activity:

The study has followed the following work plan as mentioned in the proposal (Table: 6).

Table:6

Project Duration	**From-to**		**Time**	**Division**	
One Year	**July 2019-June 2020**	**July-August 2019**	**September-December 2019**	**January-April 2020**	**May=June 2020**
		Ist Questionnaire, Distribution of Selected Books among Research Students	Arranging (first 4) Language Skills Development Sessions	Arranging (second 4) Language Skills Development Sessions	2nd Questionnaire, Final report preparation and submission

According to the demand of developing students' English language skills through using literary texts, the research has conducted eight Skill Development Sessions to improve the selected students' ability and skills in learning English. Each session follows the plan which is given below (Table:7):

Table: 7

Name of the Session	Total Sessions	Duration of a session	Each Session Activity				
English Language Skill Development	8	4 hours	1st hour	2nd And 3rd hour			4th hour

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Sessions</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"></td><td colspan="4"></td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>30min</td><td>30min</td><td>30min</td><td>30min</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Text Analysis</td><td>Listening</td><td>Speaking</td><td>Reading</td><td>Writing</td><td rowspan="2">Cognitive Analysis</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Language Skills</td><td colspan="2">Development</td></tr>
</table>

Eight (8) English Language Skill Development Sessions have been arranged during one year period of the project. Six selected literary texts (*The Metamorphosis*, *A Doll's House*, *1984*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Things Fall Apart* and *Hamlet*) from the syllabus (BA and MA) of the department were provided to twenty-five (25) Research students. Each Session has been conducted on a particular prescribed text. Six texts have been comprehended in six sessions. The beginning session was for conducting the first questionnaire survey and a discussion on "how to improve four language skills?" The ending session was to give feedback to the students and conduct a second questionnaire survey.

After conducting eight skill development sessions, the study finds that students become engaged and spontaneous in the learning process. They tried to receive the best from the sessions according to their ability. In the sessions, students' presence was 97% (average). 100% of students have participated in the two questionnaire surveys. Their feedback is discussed in the following part of the final report.

Result and Discussion

The research students have given their feedback before and after joining skill development sessions. Therefore, the results of this research are discussed comparatively in the below tables and figures:

Table: 8 (Frequency distribution with percentages of the students)

Questions	Before study					After study				
	Very poor/ 50-60%	**Poor/ 60-70%**	**Good/ 70-80%**	**very good/ 80-90%**	**Excellent /90-100%**	**Very poor/ 50-60%**	**Poor/ 60-70%**	**Good/ 70-80%**	**very good/ 80-90%**	**Excellent/90-100%**
How is your present Listening Skill?		4 (16%)	20 (80%)	0	1(4%)	0	0	9(36%)	14 (56%)	2(8%)
How is your present Reading Skill?	1 (4%)	7(28%)	15(60%)	0	2(8%)	0	0	10(40%)	8(32%)	7(28%)
How is your present Writing Skill?	3(12%)	7(28%)	15(60%)	0	0	0	1(4%)	14(56%)	10(40%)	0
How is your present Speaking Skill?	3(12%)	11(44%)	11(44%)	0	0	1(4%)	1(4%)	14(56%)	8(32%)	1(4%)
How is the Research Project helpful for improving your Listening Skill?						1 (4%)	5(20%)	8(32%)	10(40%)	1(4%)
How is the Research Project helpful for improving your Reading Skill?						2(8%)	3(12%)	5(20%)	12(48%)	3(12%)

How is the Research Project helpful for improving your Writing Skill?						1(4%)	4(16%)	8(32%)	9 (36%)	3(12%)
How is the Research Project helpful for improving your Speaking Skill?						1(4%)	2(8%)	8(32%)	10 (40%)	4(16%)
How do you rate your feedback on the effectiveness of the Research Project?						0	3(12%)	6(24%)	10 (40%)	6 (24%)

Table 8 shows a comparative picture of the status of the student's language skills before the study and after the study under the project which is shown skill-wise in the following figures comparatively. This table also shows the other feedback from the students on the effectiveness of using literature for developing language skills after attending the project activities.

Assessment

This study considers a three-step comparison of the feedback and assessments which are received and done to justify the effectiveness of this research project. Before beginning Skill Development sessions for the research students, this study conducts a survey where the students provide their feedback on their language skills which are given below:

Table: 9

Questions	Before study				
	Very poor/ 50-60%	Poor/ 60-70%	Good/ 70-80%	very good/ 80-90%	Excellent / 90-100%
How is your present Listening Skill?		4 (16%)	20 (80%)	0	1(4%)
How is your present Reading Skill?	1 (4%)	7(28%)	15(60 %)	0	2(8%)
How is your present Writing Skill?	3(12%)	7(28%)	15(60 %)	0	0
How is your present Speaking Skill?	3(12%)	11(44 %)	11(44 %)	0	0

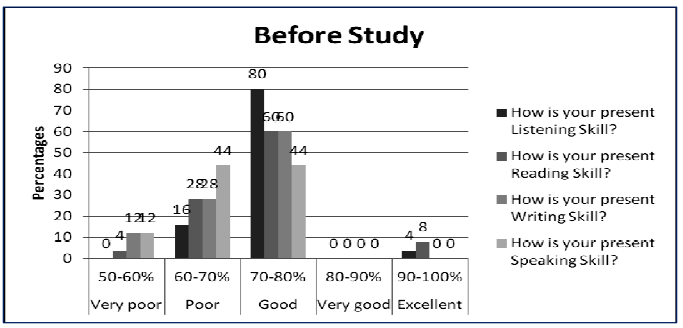

Figure: 1

Table: 09 and Figure: 1 show that before attending the skill development sessions of the research project, 16% of students' listening skill was poor, 80% good and 4% excellent. 4% of students reading skill was very poor, 28% poor, 80% good and 8% excellent. 12% of students' writing skill was very poor, 28% poor and 60% good. 12% of students speaking skill was very poor, 44% poor and 44% good.

During the eight skill development sessions, the study arranges tests on all four skills from prescribed and taught six literary texts. After examining all manuscripts, the study prepares an average result table which is as follows:

Table: 10

Assessments/Skill Tests	**Average of Six Skill Tests**				
	Very poor/ 50-60%	Poor/ 60-70%	Good/ 70-80%	very good/ 80-90%	Excellent/ 90-100%
Listening	0	2(8%)	11(44%)	10(40%)	2(8%)
Reading	0	3(12%)	9(36%)	10(40%)	3(12%)
Writing	0	3(12%)	13(52%)	9(36%)	0
Speaking	1(4%)	3(12%)	12(48%)	8(32%)	1(4%)

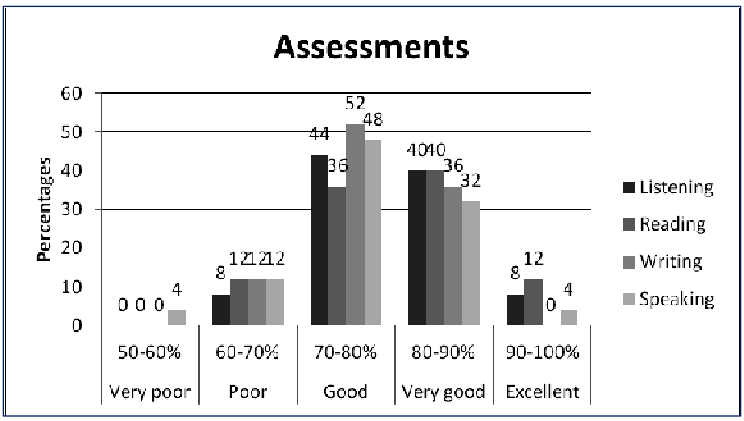

Figure: 2

Table: 10 and Figure: 2 show that among 25 research students, 8% of students' listening skill is poor, 44% good, 40% very good and

8% excellent. 12% of students reading skill is poor, 36% good, 40% very good and 12% excellent. 12% of students' writing skill is poor, 52% good and 36% very good. 4% of students speaking skill is very poor, 12% poor, 48% good, 32% very good and 4% excellent.

After completing all skill development sessions, this study conducts the second and final survey among the respondents to know their development and the effectiveness of using literary texts for improving their skills in the English language. The research students' feedback is given below:

Table: 11

Questions	After study				
	Very poor/ 50-60%	Poor/ 60-70%	Good/ 70-80%	very good/ 80-90%	Excellent/ 90-100%
How is your present Listening Skill?	0	0	9(36%)	14 (56%)	2(8%)
How is your present Reading Skill?	0	0	10(40%)	8(32%)	7(28%)
How is your present Writing Skill?	0	1(4%)	14(56%)	10(40%)	0
How is your present Speaking Skill?	1(4%)	1(4%)	14(56%)	8(32%)	1(4%)

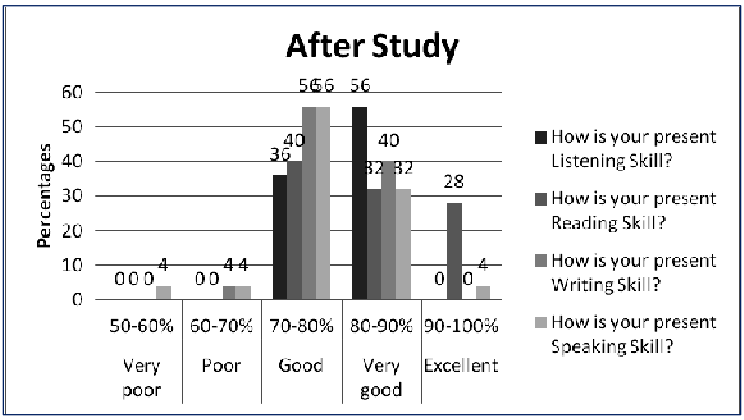

Figure: 3

Table: 11 and Figure: 3 show that 36% of students' listening skill is good and 56% are very good. 40% of students reading skill is good, 32% very good and 28% excellent. 4% of students' writing skill is poor, 56% good and 40% very good. 4% of students speaking skill is very poor, 4% poor, 56% good, 32% very good and 4% excellent.

Therefore, when the study compares the students' language skills before and after the study (shown in Table: 8; Table: 9, Figure: 1; Table: 10, Figure: 2) under this research project, the difference in development and the effectiveness of the use of literary texts for learning the English language is explored. Moreover, the result of this comparative data analysis is justified when we examine the assessment results and the students' closely similar study feedback (shown in Table: 11, Figure: 3; Table: 10, Figure: 2). As a result, it can be said that the objectives of the study are achieved expectedly.

Findings/Outputs:

In a nutshell, this study follows the Case Study Method, which enables the researcher to examine the data closely within a specific context. During the research, two questionnaire surveys are conducted. The first one is done before arranging skill development sessions for the research students (twenty-five students are selected randomly from all batches of the department) which helps to know the gaps in the students, whether they followed strategies and showed strength or ability in language skills. Eight skill development sessions are arranged where six literary texts are taught and after teaching, assessments are also taken on four language skills. Finally, another questionnaire survey is conducted to know the development of the attended students. The data analysis and the discussion of the results show that the research project finds the effectiveness of using Literature in Learning English. The assessment of the tests of the research students justifies the results of the study.

This study finds the following results/outcomes after conducting the research:

a. The attending students now can use their prescribed taught texts effectively in learning the English language.

b. The students now have a mature concept as to what they should follow to get the best out of their reading literary texts.

c. The students know why the pragmatic use of literature is an essential part of their language-learning process.

d. The research will help the teachers to know what steps should be taken to keep the students interested in using literary texts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This empirical research has been conducted by practical skill development sessions for 25 selected students from different batches of the department of English at SUST to develop their English language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking and language areas i.e., vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation by using pieces of literature. The arranged eight sessions have shown the usefulness and effectiveness of the research project. The objectives of the study are achieved and the research explores the demand and necessity of taking effective plans and actions for further improvement of English students' language skills through reading literary texts. The following recommendations are made for further research and action plan:

(i) There should be a long-term plan and project for identifying students' knowledge gaps in the skill development perspectives/contexts.

(ii) The English department should provide a more technologically sound classroom environment.

(iii) Teaching methods, techniques and strategies should be focused on English Language skill development because of facing the use of the English language as a *Lingua Franca*.

(iv) There should be the availability of audiobooks in the central and departmental libraries.

(v) Feedback culture from both sides – teacher and student should be established and cared for to continue effectively.

(vi) Workshops, Seminars, Talks, Group Discussions and Presentations should be arranged regularly with proper notification and effective time management.

(vii) The English Department should collect recognised versions of Dramas, Movies, Documentaries are based on literary texts and make them available for the students' use.

(viii) Distinguished Professors from native English countries should be invited regularly.

(ix) English Debate competitions should be arranged regularly.

(x) The English Department should ensure that the 'coming and going" of the students every year should be revolved around the environment "English for English".

Acknowledgement

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Appendix 1

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-Eghifz4-Fb-mseIfkvHHQvbuulxuJ-W/edit?usp=drivesdk&ouid=110517976389250995641&rtpof=true&sd=true

Appendix 2

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-ObvOvY5Nv33jVbxYdGBkiBv2obMutOO/edit?usp=drivesdk&ouid=110517976389250995641&rtpof=true&sd=true

6

Great Expectations in Hard Times: A Reading of John Updike's *Terrorist*

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Abstract

While the core of Updike's prolific oeuvre veers broadly around his 'three secret things' as sex, religion and art, delineating the attitudes and platitudes of adultery of American middle-class suburbia, Terrorist (2006) is singularly exceptional not only with respect to the context of 9/11 in which it is set, but also in terms of its rare apocalyptic treatment, hitherto absent in Updike. Set in the suburb of 'New Prospect', New Jersey, the novel traces the development of Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, the 18-year-old radical Islamic, whose great expectations of his spiritual fidelity to Allah actually border on religious fanaticism during the hard times America was passing through. Living in a veritable bleak house with his liberal mother whom he detests and an absent father for whom his heart famishes, Ahmad finds his solace in his unflinching faith in Allah. Haunted by this blind faith, he falls prey to the religious sophistry of his imam, Shaikh Rashid, whose eisegeses on Islam traps him into a terrorist conspiracy of blowing up the Lincoln Tunnel. This paper intends to point out the basic lacuna of Ahmad's problem – the gap between his expectations and his achievements, between the ideal and the real – which triggers off his seeming failure in this novel. This paper proposes to argue that in *Terrorist* Updike wanted to exemplify the gap between the ideal and the real, between what Ahmad hopes and what he finds, and it is his pursuit of filling in this gap that he is invested with great expectations wrought by his undeviating faith in his religion, and it is because of the hard times prevailing in America that his great expectations are perpetually shattered and denied.

Keywords: expectations, failure, faith, religion, Ahmad, Islam, America, 9/11

"Between the idea
And the reality

> Between the motion
> And the act
> Falls the Shadow" – T.S. Eliot ("The Hollow Men")

In his famous interview with Charles Thomas Samuels, Updike claims:

> My fiction about the daily doings of ordinary people has more history in it than history books, just as there is more breathing history in archaeology than in a list of declared wars and changes in government. (Plath 37)

An undeviating devotee of realism, Updike has remained faithful to his contemporary America and has given splendid literary expression to the evolution of his society and nation through his prolific lurid oeuvre. "America without Updike to record it", rightly claims Joyce Carol Oates, is "unthinkable" (Harold Bloom 68). While the core of Updike lies in his exhaustive depiction of middle-class American suburbia with a rare comprehensiveness, he was equally capable of depicting political issues. In one of his interviews, Updike asserted to Micheal Sragow:

> You are born into one political contract or another, whose terms, though they sit very lightly at first, eventually in the form of the draft, or taxes, begin to make heavy demands on you (Plath 61).

While he was intrinsically drawn toward the realm of the visual world chiefly because of his family background and his early desire to be a cartoonist, and while the matrix of his canon veers chiefly around the triangle of religion, sex, and art, Updike was equally sensitive to socio-political and cultural issues. We get the first inkling of his political sensibility in his chapter "On Not Being a Dove" from his memoir *Self-Consciousness.* Still, earlier, the same political sensibility finds vivid literary manifestation particularly in *Rabbit Redux* (1971) mainly through the Vietnam war-veteran Skeeter. Updike believed that a novel intrinsically affords oneself with a perfect acquaintance of a place, and expresses the same in his interview with Jean-Pierre Salgas:

> I would say that nothing allows you to go deeply into a place more than a novel does. You can read everything you want about 19th-century Russia, but you are still left with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and Turgenev. That is what I am trying to do: to say what is changing in the

> United States – through the imagination, to tell the truth about the United States. (Plath 177).

This comment may be loosely read as one of his aesthetic credos in that the evolution of his career shows a clear shift from his early inclination toward the domestic and the quotidian to the experimental and the apocalyptic: from his earlier *Poorhouse Fair*, Rabbit novels, *Couples*, Bech stories, and *Marry Me* situated in the core of domesticity; to his effort to revisit Hawthorne through his Scarlet Letter Trilogy in the middle-phase of his career; to his effort to find out new pastures in a foreign land as in *The Coup* and *Brazil*; to his attempt to experiment with Feminism in both the Eastwick novels and with the apocalyptic in *Toward the End of Time* and *Terrorist*.

But long before the conception of *Terrorist*s and much before 9/11, Updike had tried to hint at an anti-American ideology in *The Coup*, particularly through the creation of Colonel Qadhafi. But Updike, himself clarifies the difference in his attitudes in these two novels in his interview with Matt Nelson:

> *The Coup* was about global politics. There was the Soviet Union to consider, and it was about the position of the Third World while the Cold War was going on. But yes, I did read the Quran for that book and I did portray an African dictator a little like Colonel Qadhafi of Libya, who spouted a lot of anti-American rhetoric. So, when I came to write this some years later, I had to refresh my memory of the Quran.
>
> But Ahmad is an 18-year-old high-school student who has absorbed other people's rhetoric, whereas Colonel Ellellou in *The Coup* was a self-invented, semi-American man.[1]

In his eventful career one may notice so many purple patches each of which remains prominent because of its distinct feature: for example, the Rabbit Tetralogy, Updike's American epic written in prose, is different from his intertextual evocation of Hawthorne in Scarlet Letter Trilogy; *Gertrude and Claudius* and *Seek My Face*, on the other hand, "stand as departures", argues Schiff, " in the masculine-centered Updike canon by featuring a female protagonist"(46); and while *Memories of the Ford Administration* is steeped in history, *The Coup* and *Brazil* are his attempts to pitch his literary camp outside America. Written against the backdrop of 9/11, *Terrorist* (2006), is indubitably one of such purple patches in his career. During the traumatic moment of 9/11 Updike was present with his second wife.

"On the morning of September 11", records Begley, "woke up in Brooklyn Heights, where they were staying in the tenth-floor apartment of Martha's son Jason" (465). As Updike later relates it:

> A four-year-old girl and a babysitter called from the library and pointed out through the window the smoking top of the north tower, not a mile away. It seemed at first glance, more curious than horrendous: smoke speckled with bits of paper curled into the cloudless sky, and strange inky rivulets ran down the giant structure's vertically corrugated surface. (*Due Considerations* 117).

The memory of this horrible incident loomed large on his sensibility, and he gave vent to the same in an interview in 2006:

> [T]he theme of terrorism was there, and I had my sense of participating in it vicariously, and I thought it would be a service to the state of the nation and the world of fiction if I tried to dramatise a young man, a young devout self-converted Muslim living in Northern New Jersey, in a not-very-promising metropolis city, and tried to dramatise him from within and show how he was slowly involved in a terrorist plot. (Qtd. in Batchelor 53).

The next year Updike wrote a short story, "Varieties of Religious Experience" which was published posthumously in his collection *My Father's Tears and Other Stories* in 2009. That a peerless chronicler of contemporary America and such a prolific writer as Updike with his "seismographic ears for the tremors of his time", as Adam Gopnik so wonderfully puts it, would remain satisfied just with a short story or a few interviews was unlikely (335). Little wonder then, the conception of a novel on 9/11 was quite natural for a prolific writer as Updike.

*Terrorist*s elicited a wide variety of responses from reviewers and critics some of whom criticised it in scathing terms. Christopher Hitchens[ii] in his Review of the book criticizes it saying "Updike has produced one of the worst pieces of writing from any grown-up source since the events he has so unwisely tried to draw upon". Hitchens's criticism appears lopsided and does not hold much water in it when we notice the immense potential of this rich novel. Michiko Kakutani[iii] criticizes this novel in scathing terms particularly because he created an unnatural hero like Ahmad. Describing Updike's creation of Ahmad as "more robot than a human being" and as a "static one-dimensional stereotype", Michiko Kakutani digs at

Terrorist contending that "the ensuing developments in this maladroit novel prove to be every bit as dubious as Ahmad is as a recognisable human being". Kakutani possibly misses the complexity of Ahmad's character so wonderfully delineated by his creator in the novel. And far from being a "maladroit novel", *Terrorist* reaffirms Updike's panache as an adroit connoisseur of fiction. In his wonderful study, *Running Toward the Apocalypse: John Updike's New America*, Bob Batchelor argues that *terrorists* "captures Updike's vision of a new America and the nation's relationship to the broader global community in the twenty-first century" (24). In yet another interesting research, ' " Whiteness of a Different Color"? Racial Profiling in John Updike's *Terrorist*' Mita Banerjee examines the racial aspects of this novel from a postcolonial perspective.

But all these reviewers and critics have failed to detect the basic lacuna of Ahmad's problem – the gap between his expectations and his achievements, between the ideal and the real – which triggers off his seeming failure in this novel. In this paper, I propose to argue that *Terrorist* Updike wanted to exemplify the gap between the ideal and the real, between what Ahmad hopes and what he finds, and it is his pursuit of filling in this gap that he is invested with great expectations wrought by his undeviating faith in his religion, and it is because of the hard times prevailing in America that his great expectations are perpetually shattered and denied. Pitted against the hard times of contemporary America, Ahmad's great expectations manifested through his unflinching faith in his religion get thwarted.

II

It was Quentin Miller who in his wonderful research *John Updike and the Cold War: Drawing the Iron Curtain* makes an exhaustive study of the impact of the Cold War on Updike's literary career. Miller argues, "Updike's America is driven by the constant negotiation between what our nation hopes to be and what it is" (3). Thus, Miller presupposes a gap between the ideal and the real. I contend that things did not change much even after the Cold War, and even after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. in 1989. On the contrary, America's increasing participation in the Middle East along with her involvement in the Gulf Wars had aggravated her relationship with some Islam nations. Broadly speaking the aftermath of the Cold War,

America's foreign policy, the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, the internecine strife among the Jews and the Muslims, the power-hankering equations existing among some of the Islamic factions, and the American neo-colonial enterprise to control the natural resources of oil in the Middle – East are some of the factors that precipitated the unfortunate attacks of 9/11[iv] I further argue that in the post-9/11 scenario, things remained almost the same. The Americans with their American Dream still looming large over their sensibility tried to retain the previous state of innocence, particularly because contemporary times became difficult for them. In *Terrorist* Updike however grapples with this problem not through the perspective of an American, but through his hero Ahmad, the product of an Egyptian father and a white American mother.

Updike's choice of two epigraphs amply reflects some of the thematic concerns of the novel. The first epigraph taken from Jonah (4:3-4) relates to Jesus Christ's counseling to Jonah, the son of Amittai, suggesting he relinquish his anger which has stimulated a suicidal wish in him. Thus, the message of Christ is to eschew one's self-destructive motivation, a message that Updike decontextualises and transfers from Christianity to Islam for the ultimate rescue of his hero Ahmad from being trapped in the terrorist activity through a suicidal mission. Interestingly, had Updike made Ahmad a successful victim of this terrorist act through the eventual exploding of the Lincoln Tunnel, *Terrorist* would have been just a journalistic account of another attack perpetrated by terrorists throughout the world. But Updike turns out to be a more artistic writer by allowing Ahmad to extricate himself from the tangle of his sham Imam Shaikh Rashid through an epiphanic revelation. Furthermore, it enables Ahmad to reinforce his faith in the creative opulence of Allah, and by so doing, Updike marks a telling departure from those who blindly hold Islam to be the only cause of terrorism. Finally, by creating the epiphanic moment in Ahmad, Updike presents Islam also from a positive perspective. The second epigraph taken from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel *Of Love and Other Demons* anticipates the dialogic conflict between faith and disbelief so wonderfully envisaged in this novel and exemplified through the conflict of its hero Ahmad.

Before I proceed, I wish to briefly clarify the otherwise enigmatic nature of the title of my paper. While Updike's *Terrorist* or any other

novel has nothing to do with Dickens, the fictional world of this Victorian master was pervaded with criminals, delinquents, offenders, police, prison houses, and lawyers. Furthermore, if *Great Expectations* captures Pip's disenchantment and if *Hard Times* engenders the failure of utilitarianism, *Terrorist* presents the disenchantment and failure of its hero in a world pervaded with bleakness, crime, and terror. But I have used the phrases "great expectations" and "hard times" not because of Dickens but despite Dickens. The rationale for selecting such a catchy title is supported by the text itself, and not by any extraneous factor. Toward the end of the novel when Ahmad is with his truck full of explosives and was forging ahead towards the Lincoln Tunnel on his suicidal mission, he feels: "In a few minutes I am going to see the face of God. My heart overflows with the expectation" (303). The first portion of my title may be traced to this particular comment. Besides, there are sporadic textual references that amply attest to his sense of great expectations. "Your faith – it's important to you", says Jack Levy to Ahmad, and further exhorts him saying, "you have a *grea*t life, my friend" (42, 43) (Emphasis mine). Ahmad's great expectations are sustained throughout the novel chiefly through his unflinching faith in his religion.

A clarification on the second key – phrase of my title, "hard times", becomes necessary to substantiate my thesis. To be set in the backdrop of 9/11 is indisputably hard times for any text. But Updike gives us ample textual references to reinforce the idea that hard times were still prevailing in America. Ahmad's search in the television for "traces of God in this infidel society" may be interpreted as his frantic efforts to cling to his great expectations in the hard times America has been passing through (194). The snatches of telephonic conversation between Beth and his elder sister Hermione who works in the office of the Secretary of Homeland Security, smack of a sinister design and a vicious circle operating during these hard times to aid and abet terrorism. We referred to how "[t]errorists are blowing up oil pipes and power plants in Iraq" in one of their conversations (264). In another conversation, Hermione gives Beth a shocking account of militancy infiltrated mainly through the ports:

> Hundreds of container ships go in and out of American ports every day, and nobody knows what's in a tenth of them. They could be

> bringing in atomic weapons labeled Argentinean cowhides or something. Brazilian coffee – or who's sure it's coffee? Or think of these huge tankers, not just the oil, but, say liquid propane. That's how they ship propane, liquefied. But think of what would happen in Jersey City or under the Bayonne Bridge if they got to it with just a few pounds of Semtex or TNT. Beth, it would be a conflagration: thousands of dead...Think of a few men with assault rifles in a mall anywhere in America...We can never be happy again – we Americans." (131-132).

Significantly, Updike's evocation of hard times takes into account both the intrinsic factors and the extrinsic factors. Updike casts his net wide and offers us snapshot details of not only how militants are trying to destabilize the U.S.A. through the smuggling of weapons and explosives through sinuous clandestine ways, but also how America herself is involved in perpetuating her hegemonic role in the Middle East. "We are servants, basically of reality", claimed Updike in his interview with Alvin P. Sanoff, and he does not hush up any facade of reality, however unpalatable it may be. This not only attests to his sense of verisimilitude, and expands the scope of his discussion, but, more importantly, adds to the sense of his objectivity. Charlie's speech smacks of the hard times induced by what may be termed a Neo-colonialism in which some of the Asian countries have been consigned to live:

> That the Muslim peasant in Mindanao need not starve, that the Bangladesh child need not drown, that the Egyptian villager need not go blind with schistosomiasis, that the Palestinians need not be strafed by Israeli helicopters, that the faithful need not eat the sand and camel dung of the world while the great Satan grows fat on sugar and pork and underpriced petroleum. They believe that a billion followers of Islam need not have their eyes and ears and souls corrupted by the poisonous entertainments of Hollywood and a ruthless economic imperialism whose Christian-Jewish God is a decrepit idol, a mere mask concealing the despair of atheists". (198-99).

This particular speech captures Updike's concern for the "other". By showing such a concern, he at once evokes another version of hard times prevailing outside the U.S.A., and by so doing, he assigns equal significance to the periphery("other") as he gives to the center (U.S.A.). In other words, Updike strikes an objective note by privileging the periphery along with the center. This concern for the "other", this objective outlook, this privileging of the periphery, and

this global focus make *terrorist*s amenable to a diasporic, and postcolonial reading.

Terrorist Updike offers us different versions of hard times with nuanced implications. The evocation of Ahmad's hard times comes in terms of the crass slavery of others to the dictates of their sensuality. As he says to his girlfriend Joryleen Grant: "I look around me, and I see slaves – slaves to drugs, slaves to fads, slaves to television, slaves to sports heroes that don't know they exist, slaves to the unholy, meaningless opinions of others" (73). The comment of Shaikh Rashid to Ahmad induces a feeling of dystopia in his mind. "Did you not discover", asks Shaikh Rashid to Ahmad, "that the world, in its American portion, emits a stench of waste and greed, of sensuality and futility, of the despair and lassitude that come with the ignorance of the inspired wisdom of the Prophet? (233). A social critic of his times and an excellent chronicler, Updike offers us a brilliant critique of moral degeneration to suggest the social and moral hard times rocking and raking America:

> Once you run out of steam, America doesn't give you much. It doesn't even let you die, what with the hospitals sucking all the money they can out of Medicare. Drug companies have turned doctors into crooks. (304).

Little wonder then, America was indeed passing through the miasma of hard times with its varied ramifications and alarming proportions.

III

My reading of Updike's *Terrorist* has led me to a host of findings, many of which do not cohere with Updike's detractors in this novel. *Terrorist* presents Updike as a pan-American and an international novelist, rather than a pigeonholed regional writer. It marks a transcendence and evolution in his career from a hitherto so-called Pennsylvanian writer to an international writer capturing the angst and Zeitgeist of the contemporary world. Updike himself had anticipated his plan of getting out of his America and widening his ken in his interview with Terry Gross:

> Every writer has to find some balance, surely, between being at home and doing the work and getting out and living and seeing the world. I've maybe stuck to my desk more than most, but plan in the future of

> get away a bit. I think we have to, just to let ourselves know that there's more to the world than our desks and our window. (Plath 210).

That Updike has evolved into a more mature, more complex, and richer artist is attested by the very choice of his subject in *Terrorist*. This shift from the domestic to the apocalyptic in *Terrorist* is also what accounts for its distinctiveness in Updike's canon. Quentin Miller was amply justified in detecting the evolution of Updike when he argued:

> …the Bomb is often overlooked as instrumental in shaping his writings, The young writer worked hard to avoid the terrifying reality of the Nuclear Age, concentrating instead on the artistic and metaphysical questions that have intrigued him throughout his career; but like his characters, Updike would gradually discover that the threats of nuclear war were undeniable and that these threats must eventually be confronted. (16-17).

Furthermore, if Updike is an acknowledged master who captures the day-to-day, ordinary, quotidian flux of American middle-class suburbia faithfully and comprehensively with all its attitudes and platitudes, *Terrorist* marks a telling shift in his long career, revealing him capable of capturing the apocalyptic, violent moments of American and global history simultaneously. In other words, *Terrorist* adds to the variety, complexity, comprehensiveness, and richness of Updike who can reckon with almost anything taking place around him with admirable éclat and great panache.

It adds to Updike's sense of verisimilitude and consolidates his role as a chronicler of America. One cannot but be reminded of his "Rabbit Tetralogy" which according to Greiner, is John Updike's *Barchester Chronicles* of Anthony Trollope used to "choreograph the social dance of our age" (*Updike's Novels* 84). According to Marshall Boswell, the Rabbit Tetralogy "serve as a fictionalised timeline of postwar American experience"(*John Updike's Rabbit Tetralogy* 1). In The Tetralogy Updike chronicles sporadic moments from American and global history as the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the moon shot in *Apollo 11*, the Civil Rights Movement, the Iran hostage crisis, the gasoline crisis, the proliferation of Toyota business in the U.S.A., the explosion of the Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, to name only a few. In *Terrorist* Updike completes the list, as it were,

and makes the wheel come full circle by exploring the traumatic moment of 9/11 which inspired this novel.

Although Ahmad in *Terrorist* is by no means a representative American character either racially, socially, or spiritually, he amasingly reflects one American trait – that his sense of mobility. Like Natty Bumppo's flight to the forest, Huck Finn's journey on the raft on the Mississippi, Captain Ahab's whale chase in the *Peqoud*, Santiago's search for the big marlin through his repeated ventures on the sea, Sal Paradise's wild peregrinations across America, and of course, Rabbit's enigmatic ride in his ford in *Rabbit, Run*, Ahmad finds his truck as a suitable space to prove his freedom, courage, and sense of identity. His journey in his truck exhilarates him and gives him a sense of freedom like some of the great American heroes marked by their sense of mobility. Far from being a "robot", as Michiko Kakutani has put it, Updike's creation of Ahmad is one of the triumphs of this novel. While it is true that Updike's eighteen-years old hero does not fit into the paradigm of his counterparts and other teenagers given to flirting and merriment, his undeviating devotion to his religion and his unflinching faith in his Allah give Updike the scope to turn him into a bait of his imam who uses and entraps him for the nefarious action. Sensitive, serious, and devoted to his religion, he reminds me of a faint echo of Hamlet, barring the tragic grandeur of the Prince of Denmark: both are marked by their brooding natures; both are marked by missing fathers, either being dead or having left the family; both have a cold relationship with their mothers (both being adulterous); both are somewhat cold and whimsical, if not misogynistic, toward women; both are prisoners of indecisiveness and dilatoriness; both are intent upon revenge.

*Terrorist*s may be subsumed under the broad paradigm of Updikean novels which exemplify the failure of religious faith chiefly because of the existence of some priest or religious preachers or whom George W. Hunt calls "cock-eyed clergymen or clergymen *manque* ", i.e., sham preachers capable of adulterous indiscretions(182). If Reverend Thomas Marshfield distorts the real meaning of the Bible for his adulterous indiscretions, and if Arthur Steinmetz or the Arhat in *S.* distorts the actual import of Hindu scriptures for his adulterous liaison with the ashram women, in *Terrorist* Shaikh Rashid distorts the true message of the Holy Quran for his subversive

militant ends. Bruce Hoffman so pertinently reflects: "Religion and theological justification, in particular, that is communicated and encouraged by Muslim clerical authorities has played an important role in framing popular attitudes toward suicide operations and encouraging their followers to carry out acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of their community". (*Inside Terrorism* 158). Terrorists have increasingly resorted to suicide bombings basically for two factors: they are both effective and inexpensive. Terrorists have repeatedly used religious fundamentalism to justify their subversive actions in general, and suicide attacks in particular. For example, on the Palestine Authority's television Channel, some Islamic scholars justified the cause of suicide bombing:

> When the Shahid[martyr] meets his Maker, all his sins are forgiven from the first gush of blood. He is exempted from the "torments of the grave"(Judgement); he sees his place in paradise, and he is shielded from the great shock, He is a heavenly advocate for 70 members of his family, on his head is placed a crown of honor, one stone of which is worth more than all there is in this world. (Qtd in Hoffman, 159). [v]

One cannot but notice that Shaikh Rashid stimulates in Ahmad the temptation of embracing martyrdom through his suicidal mission almost through a similar forceful speech and vocal exhortations.

Although Updike himself was convinced of some violent passages in the Quran, he was equally aware of their positive sides. Updike reflects in his interview with Matt Nelson that:

> The Quran is in some ways a beautiful book with beautiful quotes in it. It's a little like the Old Testament in that it's a mixture of poetry and prophecy and dogma. One reads it now with an eye toward how much violence toward unbelievers does it encourage, and what does it say about suicide even in a noble cause? I found there was quite a lot of violence in it and that the insurgents and terrorists do have some texts to quote, but I wouldn't say that's all that's in the Quran. There's quite a lot of moderation also.

But the Quran, like every other religious scripture, shuns violence and stimulates the message of love, kindness, and compassion. In his "Introduction" to *The Quran* translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan states in unambiguous terms the actual import of jihad[vi] which is an inner struggle of an individual:

> But jihad, taken in its correct sense, is the name of peaceful struggle rather than any kind of violent action. The Quranic concept of jihad is expressed in the following verse: 'Do greater jihad (i.e., strive more strenuously) with the help of this (i.e., the Quran).' (25: 52) (Ali xi).

Actually by 'greater jihad' Muhammad meant one's inner struggle against selfishness, greed, ego, and evil. Each Book of the Holy Quran begins with a reference to God as "Al-Rahman al-Rahim", meaning "God the Merciful and the Compassionate'". John Esposito in his exposition on Islam and the Quran, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, reiterates the same notion of shying away from violence:

> Islam, like all world religions, neither supports nor requires illegitimate violence. The Quran does not advocate or condone terrorism…. Every chapter of the Quran begins with a reference to God's mercy and compassion; (119).

Esposito makes it clear that "the Islamic tradition places limits on the use of violence and rejects terrorism, hijackings, and hostage-taking"(121). And when we come to Quran, we find wonderful passages exhorting its followers to eschew violence. Needless to say, the crafty imam Shaikh Rashid wistfully distorts the real message of the Quran for his subversive ends. For example, although Shaikh Rashid quotes the one-hundred-fourth sura from the Quran, about "*God's kindled fire*" (6), what he tactfully shuns is the opening of this sura which says that this fire is meant only for the "scandal-monger and backbiter" (Ali 421). But ironically, Ahmad is too loyal to him to be able to see through his deceptive self under the suavity of his appearance and the felicity of his tongue. Updike's deliberate strategy to create Ahmad as a somewhat unnatural guy whose tastes do not match with the remaining teenagers of his age and who consciously shuns flirting with girls or luxuriating in voluptuousness also accounts for his gullibility to his imam. Had it not been for Ahmad's off-the-track, introverted nature leading to his focus on his religion rather than on the material pleasures of life, he could scarcely have been entrapped in the nefarious terrorist plot hatched by his imam. Thus, those who raise their eyebrows at Ahmad's so-called unnatural behavior or criticize Updike because of that like Michiko Kakutani, have probably missed the potentiality of Ahmad's character, and have failed to situate him within the plot of the novel. In other words,

Ahmad's conception in an unfamiliar way conduces to the plot of the novel.

Terrorist re-enacts one of the popular Updikean motifs of introducing spiritual and philosophical debates or what Updike calls "moral debate with the reader" (Plath 50) or what Boswell calls "moral debate" ("Updike, religion, and the novel of moral debate" 43). Ahmad's situation may remind any perceptive reader of the epigraph Updike had used in his famous novel *Rabbit, Run.* It is in Ahmad that once may find how the "motions of grace" induced by his religious faith, giving rise to his great expectations, get congealed and hardened by the "hardness" and rigidity of his heart, chiefly under the hard times of "external circumstances". In Ahmad's case, the debate is double-edged: he is pulled apart by the opposite counselling of his counsellor Jack Levy and the preaching of his imam Shaikh Rashid. There are other forms of milder debates, such as those between Charlie and Ahmad. These extended debates in the novel make it amenable to a polyphonic reading of the novel from a Bakhtinian angle. In fact, like a polyphonic discourse, *Terrorist* accommodates the multiple voices of multiple characters clashing and coalescing within the same discourse. Rather than create a single authorial voice, Updike creates a plurality of voices ensconced by different characters and a perfect orchestration of those voices almost in a Bakhtinian sense, without erasing or eclipsing other voices. And like a polyphonic novel, each of these voices becomes equally plausible and valid. The dialogic conflict between faith and disbelief – as has been indicated by the second epigraph of the novel – gnaws Ahmad within. During his visit to the church with Joyrleen he listens to a sermon in which the preacher stressed the necessity of faith. Ahmad is delighted to find this message ratified by a similar message from the third sura of the Quran, and his faith in his religion becomes consolidated by many folds. I would like to argue, faith constitutes the staple of Ahamad's great expectations, or to put it conversely, Ahmad's great expectations are chiefly manifested through his unflinching faith in Allah.

Terrorist presents Updike at once as a realistic, visionary, and prophetic writer. He is indisputably a realist in his conception of Ahmad's innocence being marred by religious fundamentalism and distorted eisegeses on Islam offered by his imam Shaikh Rashid.

Updike is a visionary in that Ahmad's ultimate withdrawal from the suicidal act of blowing off the Lincoln Tunnel strikes the note of the author's optimism. This seemingly optimistic ending partly justifies the title of my paper: that the great expectations of Ahmad wrought by his undeviating devotion to his religion amid hard times are, after all, not lost. No longer at ease with his imam – a veritable spiritual hollow man – about whom Ahmad has already begun to hold a leery feeling, he may have been disenchanted; but this disenchantment leads him to a revised and more balanced form of his great expectations and creates in him an epiphanic moment in which he rejoices in the creative wonders of Allah who is more constructive than destructive. Finally, Updike turns out to be prophetic in this novel in that what he anticipates in this novel turns out to be the way of the world of so many terrorists nowadays[viii].

Interestingly perhaps, although the entire novel smacks of a vicious circle moving toward violent terrorist action, the novel does not end in violence. This may appear somewhat discordant with what the terrorists have been doing around the globe, but then, Ahmad's ultimate abstinence from the act of violence appears to be attuned to the Updikean spirit. "I feel a tenderness toward my characters that forbids me making violent use of them", comments Updike in his famous interview with Charles Thomas Samuels (Plath 37). The ending of the novel suggests Ahmad's refraining from his projected act of violence chiefly due to his almost epiphanic realisation of the real import and meaning of Islam, and partly due to the tactful maneuverings of Jack Levy, bespeaks both Ahamad's, as well as his creator's flexibility and sense of pragmatism. This epiphanic realisation may also be interpreted as quite Updikean, for in his interview with Jeff Campbell, Updike asserted, "My heroes, at least, are all struggling for some kind of inner certitude, illumination, or something" (Plath 95). This positive interpretation from the fifty-sixth sura of the holy Quran is tellingly significant in that unlike most of his contemporary spokesmen reacting to the 9/11 trauma in terms of a lopsided attack against Islam, Updike offers the more practical, more probable, and more convincing explanation: that Islam *per se* can never be the cause of terrorism; that it is the abuse of Islam by crafty people that triggers off such violent forces on earth. Rather than scoff at Islam as being culpable for the 9/11 attack and other

forms of terrorism, Updike harps on the right string and detects the right cause. Rather than being a dry blueprint of anti-terrorist propaganda, Updike's *Terrorist* turns out to be a rich mosaic where religious debates, political issues, personal conflicts, racial issues, postcolonial agenda, effects of globalisation, imperialistic factors, racial prejudice, US foreign policy, distortion of the Quran, social criticism, etc. are wonderfully fused.

My final finding of the novel makes me inclined to infer that *Terrorist* has the force of a political novel, an occasional novel, a postcolonial novel, a thriller, a detective fiction, a dystopian novel, a fable, an altered fairy tale(where the hero is liberated from the clutches of a wicked magician-like figure(here, Shaikh Rashid, who mesmerizes him) by the fairy godfather (here Jack Levy), a propaganda novel, a 'condition-of-America' novel(if I were admitted to coin this term), a diasporic novel, a subversive novel, a trauma novel, and God knows what else! It is, as it were, Updike's *Crime and Punishment*, capturing the pride and prejudice of religiously and racially polarised people without any sense and sensibility, geared toward encroaching upon the power and the glory of the U.S.A.

Conclusion

A sensitive literary antenna like John Updike could capture all the wavelengths of his contemporary times and give literary shapes to them with admirable dexterity. Updike apprehends to Elinor Stout in 1975 that "we're always venturing from a radiant past into a dark future" and this is attested by the socio-political changes that took place since the placid Eisenhower era (Plath 78). In the same interview, Updike admits that "the gap between reality, on the one hand, and the novel, on the other, is still excitingly large and waiting to be closed. And it is not a gap that will be closed permanently by anybody because the quality of life keeps changing and the way we look at things keep changing"(Plath 83). This comment is attested by most of the Updikean heroes whose expectations did *not* cohere with their final experience. Commenting on the short fiction of Updike, Robert Luscher argues, "Updike's fiction is pervaded not only by a consciousness of the few decades' effect on marriage and the family but also by a religiously informed vision of the gap between the actual state of affairs and the desired sense of connection that

characters often seek in the realms of eros or memory" (154). Luscher's observation of Updike's short fiction can well be extended to *Terrorist* where this gap between Ahmad's great expectations and his experience wrought by the hard times of his circumstances becomes prominent. Reflecting on the impact of the Cold War on Updike's canon, Miller rightly points out that "American identity during and after the Cold War, according to Updike's fiction, is based on the clash between early Cold War optimism and late Cold War disillusionment. The zeitgeist of Updike's Cold War America is not paranoia, anticommunist hysteria, or anxiety, but rather nostalgia: a painful longing to return to the earlier, unfallen, innocent world of 1950s middle-class suburbia that no longer exists, and that only really ever existed in America's imagination"(3). Taking my cue from Miller, I would like to contend that "the clash between early Cold War optimism and late Cold War disillusionment" has taken a more complex and more acute dimension following the events of 9/11. In a multi-dimensional novel like *Terrorist,* this gap is wonderfully exemplified through its equally wonderful hero, Ahmad, who, despite the dystopian hard times prevailing in America, frantically clings to his great expectations rooted in his religion. When that faith is shaken, he feels that those devils "*have taken away my God*" (310), and feels helpless and hapless. At once possessed with the indecisiveness of Hamlet, the split sensibility of a Raskolnikov, the temptation of embracing martyrdom (albeit through his suicidal mission) like a Thomas Beckett, and the unwavering faith in his religion like the faith of a Joan of Arc, Ahmad, finds it difficult to cope up with his great expectations in the crucible and miasma of his contemporary times, and between his idea and the reality, between his expectations and the experience, between the conception and the action, between the hope and the haul "falls the shadow" of hard times.

Notes & References

i. Matt Nelson. "In the Mind of a Terrorist: An Interview with John Updike". <http://f.chtah.com/i/9/276579820/updike2.htm > Accessed on 12 September 2016.

ii. Christopher Hitchens, "No Way", Rev. Of *Terrorist* by John Updike <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/06/no-way/304864/> Accessed on 12 September 2016.

iii.Michiko Kakutani, "John Updike's 'Terrorist' Imagines a Homegrown Threat to Homeland Security," *New York Times*, 6 June 2006.

iv.Even before the eventful 9/11, attempts had been made to explode the World Trade Center. For example, on February 26, 1999, a few Muslim jihadists exploded a truck full of explosives into one of the sections of the World Trade Center.

v.Hoffman quotes it from Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, p.85.

vi.For a better understanding of the concept of "jihad," one may consult Ahmed(434-435), Griffith(109-11), and Esposito(118-119).

vii.For example, one may refer to this particular verse: "Whoever transgresses against you, respond in kind"(2: 194); or consult this verse: "O you who believe! Do not consume your wealth in the wrong way – rather only through trade mutually agreed to, and do not kill yourselves. Surely God is merciful toward you".(4:29)

viii.To support my view let me quote from an email from David Updike given to me as his response to some of my queries: "As you know, he(Updike) was interested in all religions, to some extent, and was no doubt interested in Islam, and the ways it was being distorted and used by terrorists. As you know, some of the critics hated the book--Christopher Hitchens and Anthony Lane, I believe, though I have not read the latter. I wonder if they would have changed their view in light of the Marathon Bombing here in Boston, which in many ways was eerily foreshadowed by Terrorists: an American High School Student, by all accounts normal, with a fairly stable home life, is drawn into a plot to kill hundreds of people, by an older male: in one case, the imam in terrorist, in another by his older brother. My son attended the high school where the Tsarnov brothers (sp?) went and graduated, My wife teaches there and knew the younger one, now in jail. He almost joined Model UN and was looked up to by many fellow students, and wrestlers. He was a normal kid, like Ahmad in 'Terrorist'. This might be something to consider – to what extent did 'Terrorist' predict the marathon bombing". (Message to the author. 11 September. 2016.E-mail.).

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7

To Be or Not to Be: Cultural Crisis and Politics of Caste in U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*

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Abstract

Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man (1989) is set in colonial India of the 1930s and 1940s in Durvasapura, an *agra*hara, a secluded Brahmin community that lives according to strict prescribed norms of orthodox Hinduism. Anantha Murthy offers fine portraits of a variety of characters as they struggle between natural urges and societal expectations, and has successfully crafted an impressive story. At the outset, it's a story that poses a cultural problem – which is complicated further as the story progresses – regarding performing the last rites of a Brahmin named Naranappa who did not subscribe to the norms of orthodox Brahminism in cohabiting with a Dalit woman, Chandri. The exploitation of the weak is open and universal stripping them of agency engaging in a conflict between the permitted and prohibited norms of society. The protagonist of the novel Praneshacharya, a pious Brahmin, who has spent his entire life practising austerity and looking after his sick wife, gives in to his urge and has one sexual interlude with Chandri. Subsequently through the mental conflicts that he has to undergo he becomes aware of the meaninglessness of religion and orthodoxy and realises the real meaning of his existence through a process of self-realisation and transformation. This paper intents to unfold the hegemony of the patriarchal Brahmin society depicted in Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* and expose hypocrisy and exploitation that existed in the name of orthodoxy and religion through an analysis of the text.

Keywords: Brahminism, caste, cultural imperialism, normative orthodoxy, resistance, transformation.

Introduction

Writings from regions whose histories during the 20th century are "marked by colonialism, anti-colonial movements, and subsequent transitions to post-independence society" (Baldick 265) and are generally reformist in nature, pointing out and resisting the evils prevalent in pre-colonial and colonial times. U.N. Anantha Murthy's *Samsk*ara depicts the conflict ingrained deeply into the Indian social structure which is stratified along the lines of caste. Rituals are prescriptive and normative and any deviation impacts society severely. Brahmins, the priestly upper class being at the top of the social hierarchy are supposedly the keeper of the rules that define Hinduism. *Samskara* poses a cultural problem regarding performing the last rites of a Brahmin named Naranappa who did not subscribe to the norms of orthodox Brahminism in that he cohabited with a Dalit woman, Chandri. The protagonist of the novel Praneshacharya, a pious Brahmin, who has spent his entire life practising austerity and looking after his sick wife, who is supposed to prescribe the rule and give his sage decision regarding the cremation of the now rotting body of Naranappa gives in to his urge and has a sexual interlude with Chandri. The conflict intensifies throughout the narrative and the hypocrisy of the society is exposed. This paper intents to unfold the hegemony of the patriarchal Brahmin society depicted in Anantha Murthy's Samskara and expose hypocrisy and exploitation that existed in the name of orthodoxy and religion through an analysis of the text.

Samskara set in colonial India of the 1930s and 1940s in Durvasapura, is the story of an *agrahara*, a secluded Brahmin community that lives according to strict prescribed norms of orthodox Hinduism. It narrates the conflict of caste and the dilemma of accepting change within a staunch albeit corrupt Brahminical society. "Brahmanism (also known as Vedic Religion) is the belief system that developed from the Vedas during the Late Vedic Period (c. 1100-500 BCE) originating in the Indus Valley Civilisation after the Indo-Aryan Migration c. 2000-1500 BCE. It claims the supreme being is Brahman, and its tenets influenced the development of Hinduism"

(Mark n.p.). Joshua Mark elaborates that "Belief in the authority of the Vedas was encouraged by the priestly upper class – Brahmins – who could read Sanskrit, the language of the Vedas, whereas the lower classes could not. The Brahmins' unique position further enhanced their reputation …" (n.p.) and they dictated religious precepts for all. Brahminism has influenced Hinduism since the Vedic period till modern times and has been accused of "encouraging inequality and brutalisation of the lower classes". The Brahmins have emphasised their elite position at the top of the social hierarchy and have maintained the caste system while being strictly ritualistic themselves.

The lower classes or the Dalits have always been at the margins of Indian society. Oppressed by cultural imperialism they neither have social status nor agency. In her essay about subalterns, Gayatri Spivak observes that:

> In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern.... Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word 'subaltern'.... They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are... they're within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern... (Spivak 45-46)

Thus, the Dalit or the lower class who are outside of the discourse of the Hindu hegemonic class and are perpetually oppressed and rendered voiceless qualify for the term "subaltern". In an earlier paper published in October 2017, Shruti Das has noted that,

> The age-old practice of Hinduism based itself on the division of labour. The social hierarchy was formed according to the work each individual was assigned as a means of livelihood. Individual duty gradually became a family profession leading to the formation of guilds which later took on the nomenclature of caste. In the mainstream of Hindu life, according to the records of the agents of history, a class of people assigned with the duty of serving others were relegated to the margins and called shudras. They were rendered untouchable. The Untouchables or Dalits are a marginalised class victimised by the hegemonic Brahministic ideology of caste. This Hindu upper caste

> ideology was used as an instrument to dehumanise, oppress, exploit and dominate the Dalits in India. (Das 48)

The novel depicts the conflict inherent in the Brahminic ideology alongside their age-old convictions, customs, and superstitions. The narrative raises sensitive issues like rituals, cultural imperialism, untouchability, sex, communal feeling, and human weakness or the lack of it in the Brahmin community in Durvasapura.

Ever since its publication, *Samskara* has been as controversial as it has been popular. It has been widely praised by the critics, but it has also been harshly attacked by fanatical Brahmins who went so far as to try to block the release of the film. The novel is an illustration of the "complex apparatus of rules, rituals, taboos" which is responsible for the decay of Indian civilisation. (Naipaul, 108). The novel is usually interpreted as a forceful portrayal of decadent Brahminism in modern India. *Samskara* can be read as a sad story of the fall from grace of a rare soul. It can also be read as a scathing attack on the intellectual bankruptcy and barrenness of an old order. It can also be read as a naturalist realist presentation of the human condition. And it can also be read as a celebration of an untouchable who is responsible for the transformation of Praneshacharya from an orthodox Brahmin into a new human being free from orthodoxy. But the focus of this study is to unfold the hegemony of the patriarchal Brahmin society depicted in the narrative and expose hypocrisy and exploitation that existed in the name of orthodoxy and religion through an analysis of the text.

Samskara: Cultural Crisis

U.R. Ananatha Murthy's *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*, translated from Kannada by A. K. Ramanujan, has become an important treatise bringing to the fore the crisis of culture existing in the rigid Hindu socio-religious system. The translator rightly notes in his Afterword, that Samskara is "a movement, not a closure" in any traditional sense of the term (147). The readers are as "anxious, [and] expectant" (138) (parenthesis mine) as the protagonist himself. As the translator puts in his Afterword:

> The opening event is a death, an anti-brahminical brahmin's death-and it brings in its wake a plague, many deaths, questions without answers, old answers that do not fit the new questions, and the rebirth of one

> good brahmin, Praneshacharya. In trying to resolve the dilemma of who, if any, should perform the heretic's death-rite (a *samskara*), the Acharya begins a *samskara* (a transformation) for himself. A rite for a dead man becomes a rite of passage for the living. (139)

The expressions 'anxiety, expectancy' signify the crisis of contradictions and intensify the urgency of negotiation.

Samskara is the story of the community of orthodox Brahmins of Durvasapura where live two Brahmins, Naranappa and Praneshacharya, are diametrically opposite in ideology. Naranappa, whose cremation is the lynchpin of the story, is projected as an anti-hero, a rebel, and a denouncer of Brahminical rules. He eats meat, consumes alcohol, and also cohabits with an untouchable woman, a prostitute named Chandri. He defies all notions of culturally prescribed purity. Whereas, Praneshacharya, the head of the *agrahara*, is a learned Brahmin, a pious and rule-abiding man who religiously serves his community and his invalid wife. After returning from Kashi, he married an invalid girl, Bhagirathi, in order to earn salvation in living a life of sacrifice and selfless service to her. "The Acharya is filled with pleasure and a sense of worth as sweet as the five-fold nectar of holy days; he is filled with compassion for his ailing wife. He proudly swells a little at his lot, thinking, 'By marring an invalid, I get ripe and ready'" (2). We read:

> When he married her he was sixteen, she twelve. He had thought he should renounce the world, become a sanyasi, live a life of self-sacrifice. That was the ideal, the challenge, of his boyhood days…. He had cooked for her, fed her the wheat-gruel he had himself made, done meticulously every act of daily worship for the gods, read and explicated the holy texts for the brahmins-Ramayana, Bharata, Bhagavata, etc.-hoarded his penances like a miser his money. (75-76)

The community of Brahmins depends on his advice and decision in all critical situations. While Praneshacharya is the keeper of a rigid social system, Naranappa plays the role of Mephistopheles enticing him into profane ways. Juxtaposing these two characters Anantha Murthy "critiques and subverts a social system erected on degraded and unexamined cultural-religious foundations" (Raval 114). Meenakshi Mukherjee, a noted critic, rightly observes "the author's attempt to exploit the tension between two world views" (166) in the narrative of *Samskara*.

The title of the novel "samskara" refers to the socio-religious purification ritual associated with death, here the death of a Brahmin. "Samskara means religious purificatory rites and ceremonies for sanctifying the body, mind and intellect of an individual so that he may become a full-fledged member of the community" (Maheshwari16). The ritual of conducting samskara after cremating the body of Naranappa gives rise to a conflict dictated by the cultural imperialism of the Brahmins and their sense of purity and profanity. Naranappa had deliberately flouted all the norms made friends with Muslims, eaten meat, indulged in alcohol and lived with a lower caste woman, and finally died a reprobate. The cultural crisis in the text emanates from his death and the moral and social issues of performing his death rites. As he had no offspring the responsibility of cremating his body and conducting the rituals fell on his relatives Garuda and Lakshmana, both of whom shirked the responsibility claiming that they had cut ties with him long since. In the chapter "Sexuality, Psychology, Biology" Stuart Elden in his book *The Archeology of Foucault* (2023) discusses Foucault's observation of the "disruptive nature of … the figure of the libertine … (where) the more common penalties (were) … banishment or confinement" (96) which in our context applies to the case of Naranappa. But Naranappa was never banished as he threatened to pollute the entire community with the help of his muslim friends if any dire measures were taken against him. Thereby his punishment was "condemnation of the act" and a "moral censure of the person" (Elden 96) which continued even after his death.

The religious Brahmins of the *agrahara*, young and old, customarily could not touch food till the body was cremated. The stench from the rotting body became unbearable as the pangs of hunger in their stomachs yet the Brahmins could not decide what to do. The many scriptures and religious texts could not give Praneshacharya an answer to the dilemma. As a last resort, hungry, tired, and weak he headed towards the temple of Lord Maruti to pray and seek his guidance in resolving the matter of samskara of Naranappa's body. Chandri, who had first informed him of the death and who had also offered all her gold jewellery for the cremation of her lover, waited patiently outside the temple for Praneshcharya to come out and announce God's decision. No matter how hard he

prayed, God did not yield and finally remembering that it was time for his wife's medicine Praneshcharya came out of the temple. The compassionate Chandri who blamed herself for the fate of the Brahmin fell at his feet. In the dark her, clothing tore and came open as Praneshacharya bent forward to touch her hair in blessing.

> The Sanskrit formula of blessing got stuck in his throat. As his hand played on her hair, Chandri's intensity doubled. She held his hands tightly and stood up and she pressed them to her breasts now beating away like a pair of doves. Touching full breasts, he had never touched, Praneshacharya felt faint. As in a dream, he pressed them. As the strength in his legs was ebbing, Chandri sat the Acharya down, holding him close. The Acharya's hunger, so far unconscious, suddenly raged…. (63)

The emotions and sexual desire that Praneshacharya had repressed as the guardian of his culture surfaced in the physical pleasure that he experienced with Chandri.

> It was midnight when the Acharya woke up. His head was in Chandri's lap. His cheek was pressed into her low naked belly. Chandri's fingers caressed his back, his ears, his head. As if he had become a stranger to himself, the Acharya opened his eyes and asked himself: Where am I? How did I get here? What's this dark? Which forest is this? Who is this woman?
>
> It felt as though he'd turned over and fallen into his childhood, lying in his mother's lap and finding rest there after great fatigue. (67)

Chandri's body had become his passage to a new world and new knowledge, a site of solace. He felt a different man, not guilty but emancipated. Minakshi Mukherjee notes "the difficult and uneasy process of transition between the fixed settled order of life and the still inchoate stirring of self" (167) which is presented in the character of Praneshacharya. He realises that he can no longer bear the burden of his culture. He asks Chandri to go ahead of himself and tell the people of the *agrahara* about their communion.

> 'Chandri, get up. Let's go. Tomorrow morning when the brahmins gather, we'll say this happened. You tell them yourself. As for my authority to decide for the agrahara, I have.'
>
> Not knowing what to say, Praneshacharya stood there in confusion.
>
> 'I've lost it. If I don't have the courage to speak tomorrow you must speak out. I'm ready to do the funeral rites myself. I've no authority to

> tell any other brahmin to do them, that's all.' Having said the words, Praneshacharya felt all his fatigue drop from him. (68)

His communion with Chandri was a transgression of ethics held dear by his society. The "'… prohibitions, exclusions, limitations, values, freedoms, and transgressions of sexuality, all its manifestations, verbal or otherwise, are linked to a discursive practice'" (Elden 96) which was prevalent in Durvasapura. Although Praneshacharya feels liberated he lacks the courage to speak out to his community about his sexual interlude with Chandri. The conflict in his mind is like that of Hamlet and so is his procrastination. Like Hamlet, he is unable to decide to disclose his actions and denounce himself or to wait for a more opportune moment. "He would never have the courage to defy brahmin practice as Naranappa did. His mind mocked: 'What price your resolve to join Chandri and live with her? If you must, do it fully; if you let go, let go utterly. That's the only way to go beyond the play of opposites, that's the way of liberation from fear'" (116).

The Brahmins waited in hunger and fear for Praneshcharya to return with some news from the temple that would resolve the problem of cremating the rotting body of Naranappa. A baffled Praneshacharya paces about in his house trying to come to terms with his conflicting self.

> 'What shall I do? What shall I do?' When he gave his wife her usual medicine as she lay groaning in the dining room, his hands trembled and spilled the medicine. As he held it to her lips, as he looked into his broken wife's pitted eyes, those helpless visionless symbols of his self-sacrifice and duty as a householder-he felt his legs twitch and double-up, as if in troubled sleep, as if in a dream he fell dizzily into bottomless netherworlds. At the end of the beaten path of a quarter century of doctor-patient relations, of affection and compassion, – he seemed to see an abyss. (75)

The diligent self-sacrifice in taking care of an invalid wife and hoping to thereby attain salvation doesn't seem to be his goal anymore. "Did he clutch this duty, this dharma, to protect this wife lying here lifeless, a pathetic beggarwoman did the dharma, clinging to him through the action and culture of his past, guide him hand in hand through these ways?" (75). He no longer had answers to such questions. The rhetorical questions appear existentialist as they

address the fulfilment of his being. He does not believe that he has signed with Chandri because he had not sought it, instead, his words propose an existentialist ethics "Even if I lost control, the responsibility to decide was still mine. Man's decision is valid only because it's possible to lose control, not because it's easy. We shape ourselves through our choices, bring form and line to this thing we call our person" (98). His wife dies of plague and he leaves the village after cremating her. His journey becomes his bildungsroman. He emerges a "new man" resolved of the conflicts of purity, profanity, and pollution.

At the end of the novel when he returns to the *agrahara* and anticipates explaining himself as a "new man" to his community, he distances himself from religio-cultural shackles. He knows that he is not a sinner for indulging in desire. There is no repentance or trace of sorrow in him as he prepares to face his people. He is beyond conflicts and dualities of social norms and believes that "only the form we forge for ourselves in our inmost will is ours without question" (135). Shaping ourselves through choices, and forging our own form, are clear notions about "leaving the ghostly stage behind" (123). Praneshcharya justifies his actions by arguing that both Mahabala, his friend, and Naranappa lived the life they chose to defy the hegemonic culture of Brahminism and had no regrets in life. He says, "I'm not free till I realise that the turning is also my act, again I'm to answer for it. What happened at that turning? Dualities, conflict, rushed into my life. I hung suspended between two truths, like Trishanku" (98-99). At this juncture, he feels free of the dualities and hypocrisy of culture.

Conclusion

Anantha Murthy critiques and subverts the politics of cultural imperialism of Brahminism. He also points to the evils in the rigidity of the caste system held sacred by Brahminism. The portrayal of anti-heroic characters like Naranappa and Mahabala who reject the cultural imperialism of Brahminism to embrace Epicureanism serves as a contrast to the self-sacrificing Praneshacharya and his kind who renounce worldly pleasure, repress their desires to attain some mythical salvation. Chandri is used as a catalyst to provoke the growth of Praneshacharya into a new man who realises that life

cannot run along prescriptive lines, rather existential choices define a man. The narrative pointedly exposes the hypocrisy of the Brahmins like Shripati, Garuda, Lakshmana, and the other Brahmins of Parijatapura who would be polluted if the shadow of a Dalit crossed their way but would secretly indulge in sex with lower caste women without any qualms. People like Garuda and Lakshmana destroy the good values for which Brahmin society is held in great esteem. Like them, many Brahmins have resorted to greed, anger, jealousy, and lust. They pose as the protectors and legislators of the values of orthodox Brahminism while violating those very norms.

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8

Interrogating Memory in Robin S. Ngangom's *The Desire of Roots*

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Abstract

Robin S Ngangom's poetry is all about the culture, the community, and the plurality of Northeastern India. To read Ngangom is to explore different modes of memory. My paper aims at investigating some selected poems from his collection of poems entitled *The Desire of Roots* under the theoretical framework of memory. Ngangom's memory poems remain multidirectional as they address complex social realities and trigger serious issues of belongingness, identity crisis, and ethnicity. I propose to examine how the poet's poems on remembering and forgetting become political in his world of experiences. This paper unearths the discourses of "multidirectional memory", "folklore", "collective memory", and "trans-local memory" woven into the poems. I intend to study how memory operates to restore the past and reconstruct history. The research question revolves around the interconnection among history, identity, race, politics, and ethnicity.

Keywords: Memory, Remembering, North-East, multidirectional

The multicultural, multi-ethnic North-East India remains an alluring, intersectional field for memory study. Since time immemorial, the Northeastern region of India has charmed people with its impeccable scenic beauty and ethnic plurality. In Manipur, the complex issues of history, identity, and culture always interact with each other through the modes of memory. By recapitulating the past, the Manipuri poet Robin S. Ngangom unearths the societal truth. Individual or personal memories become instrumental in transporting one to the very roots of communal, collective, and social discontent. One can converse with the history of violence, trauma, ethnic uprising, and insurgency by getting back to the rich archive of memories, associations, and "mnemonic practices"[1]. Jeffrey K. Olick says that as a social

phenomenon memory resides in the context of the society. Memory and history are intertwined. Histories can be re-discovered and re-formulated through the acts of remembering and forgetting the experiences – personal and political, individual and collective. Memories are shared experiences. They are never unique. In a lecture on "Multidirectional Memory", Michael Rothberg says, "Memory has been always in course of a dialogue with other memories.. . Memories are always linking up with different moments of time and spaces. Memories are structurally multidirectional."[3] The collection of poems entitled *The Desire of Roots* invites one to the world of anxieties, atrocities, and animosities. Ngangom's poems originate from the turbulent, complex memory – moments unfold their cultural, and ethnic histories. The rootedness of his imagination in the bloodstained Manipur unfolds its history of multidimensional and multidirectional complexities.

The horrible experiences of insurgency and the ethnic uprising have a cumulative effect on the poet. He penetrates "the mildew of years" (9) formed by the political, social crisis in Manipur. The act of remembering helps him connect the past and the present. The poet even tries to forget the instances of "the black vigil" and "fevers of men and women" accompanied by the insurgency at a crucial moment in the country. The reference to the Manipuri myth of Hynniew Trep creates an image of a country that can be emotionally alive in the midst of peaceful surroundings. Hynniew Trep is Khasi's seven huts. Khasi is known as the land of Seven Huts. In the beginning, there was. emptiness everywhere. God created the beautiful guardian spirit named Ram-ew to get married to Basa. They were blessed with five children. Ram-ew asked God to create something more meaningful to protect the earth. God sent his seven clans to the earth. He fixed a golden ladder on the Lumsohpetbneng mountain as a bond between man and God on the condition that the seven clans will exist on the earth as long as men remain righteous. Unfortunately, as people became rebellious of the divine norms and constraints, the ladder disappeared ending the golden era. The seven clans remained on the Khasi hills forever amidst darkness and evil. The myth becomes a metaphor for the reign of anarchy and terror in Manipur. Since time immemorial the numerous clans and tribes of Khasi have been fighting for their rights and identity in a grave socio-

economic and socio-political climate. His bruised memories are beautifully expressed through the images of "seasons of anxiety", a wet smoky room". The poet belongs to the seasons of anxiety. Ngangom reformulates his identity – both individual and collective by the very act of remembering the past. In "Introduction" to *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Astrid Erll says that history is just a mode of cultural memory (7). Trauma, memory, myth, political history, and remembrance of the family are the various modes of recalling the past.

Memories of Robin S. Ngangom are more cultural, and more social than personal. The myths, the legends, the folklore, and the human feelings that he shares with us belong to the whole community. Jeffrey K. Olick differs from Maurice Halbwachs in the question of whether memories are personal or social. Orlick opines that even the most personal things are social. Human beings are bound to call up social frameworks. 4. The crisis faced by the Meitei people, the Kuki, and other indigenous people is not a personal experience. Rather this becomes a communal crisis faced by most of the dwellers of Manipur. So, the social theorist Orlick emphasised the "social, cultural or collective perspective of memory."[5]

Ngangom's social awareness helps him store personal memories. Though he is detached from his beloved, through his journey down memory lane he can reclaim her in the stark villages with fogs billowing up from gorges and on the dizzy mountain paths. Memories have a therapeutic effect on the poet. According to David Gerbar, "Recollecting those positive emotions of a time we consider to be simpler and more positive can help counteract emotions of anxiety, loneliness, and depression. Recalling a love for the past helps promote hope for the future, and reassures us that life is meaningful" (qtd. in Alissa Roy). In the poem titled "Monody" the poet wants to compensate for the loss of the past with memories. Memories shelter him. They transport him to his beloved. He articulates in his present state of detachment:

> If I cannot touch you
> let memory follow the road
> to the house of birds
> on the way to your door,
> days coloured by water and smoke

with pines ambling down
the bends of your mountain and
rain on a Christmas eve
when you came to comfort me. (1-9)

The portrayal of the waning of their love in the troubled immense socio-political context of Manipur remains unforgettable. The phrase "immense hurt" speaks of the enormity of pain caused by his personal loss and social issues. The very act of remembering strengthens his sense of belongingness.

In the poem entitled "To a Woman from Southeastern Hill", the poet cherishes the memories of his adorable lady belonging to the hills. He soothes his bruised self through the healing reminiscences of his beloved. Recalling her "cloud-covered mystery" (14) he craves for her mystical voice, "Your voice is soft because mountain streams/ taught your heart" (18-19). He recalls the memories in the present scenario where the Manipuri boys spend time with dolorous guitars, and the poet transforms into a "plaintive cry.. . /the love song you've exiled" (24-25). Trapped in the political and communal chaos the love between them cools off. Identifying himself with the depressed land of Manipur he realises that being born at an unearthly hour he becomes a victim bound to experience trauma. The sarcastic self-portrayal in the expression "a composer of bitter verse" remains unique in its power of evoking pathos. In "A Libran Horoscope", he uses a remarkable storytelling method to crystalise childhood memories. He recalls how his childhood days were free from fears and worries as he had his "mother's love/ to protect me from knives, /from fire and death by water" (13-15). Mother's love protected him like an amulet. In those days he was fond of playing with moonflowers and sunstone. But the soothing images disappear to give place to fire and gun.

Due to the intolerable crisis of ethnicity, identity, plurality, and insurgency, the poet turns out to be a man of caustic personality. The psychological refugee in him muses on the bygone pre-scientific, pre-civilised days when there was no discrimination of religion. Though people were not civilised at that time they could love each other. But in the present context, people live in suspicion. They have become civilised with the modern outlook at the cost of shedding others' blood. Ngangom satirises all sorts of oppressive ideologies running

rampant in society. The primitive ages of being innocent of the cruelties and violence of the postcolonial era appear to be a safe refuge for his agonised soul. The personal experiences become collective memories when he refers to his lady's roots in the land of Chhura, a popular undisputed Mizo folk hero. Ngangom here uses transcultural memory to transcend the narrow borders of provincialism. The tropes of transcultural memories trigger his unfulfilled dreams and desires. The paradoxical nature of the mythical Chhura becomes emblematic of the powers and weaknesses of the indigenous people.

The trans-local association recurs in his reference to a Khyrim woman in the poem entitled "Genesis's End". The poet invites us to the colonial history of Northeast India when the Khyrim had sovereignty and existed as a princely kingdom. In the post-colonial era Khyrim as a part of the Khasi kingdom got included in Meghalaya. The common concern of the hill people of the North-Eastern region of India is beautifully encapsulated in this poem. He speaks to the woman he loves:

> You also hummed ballads of freedom
> and wrote on suntanned granite
> the genealogy of your people
> and your man-wounded heart. (21-24)

The memories of the hill people humming of freedom, and the carving of the history of their descent on the hills intrigue the poet to spell out their sense of home. Their desires, aspirations, struggle, and oral tradition make them synonymous with one another. They can identify themselves through memories.

Memory being multidirectional has a futuristic aim and claim. Avishek Parui speaks of the "futuristic", and "retrospective" activities of memories in the launching of the book titled *Culture and the Literary: Matter, Metaphor, Memory.* He emphasises what to remember and how to remember as memories shape the future. It not only recalls the future but also provides us with tools to make the future. To him, memory is more often to do with looking forward. Another important issue related to memory studies is "forgetting". According to Avishek Parui, "Memory is more about forgetting than remembering."[6] In a poem titled "The First Rain", Ngangom thinks of the options left to him: "Is it better to rejoice and forget/ or to

remember and be sad?" (10-11). The bitter experiences of leading an exilic life outnumber the sweet memories of childhood. That's why forgetting is a better option for him. His desire to become an escapist is an avenue to the much-required relief. So, memories play a significant role in the process of decision-making: "/I'll leave the cracked fields of my land /And its weeping pastures of daybreak" (71-72). He wants to leave the fascinating flora and fauna of Manipur to alleviate his agitated mind. The claustrophobic surroundings choke his sensibility. In the present context, he looks forward to evading the effect of painful, traumatic memories. To live he is bound to forget. Aleida Assmann comments in "Canon and Archive" that remembering and forgetting constantly interact with each other. It is selective by nature. From the psychological point of view, incongruent and painful memories are displaced, overwritten, hidden, and probably erased (97).

Memory with its capacities for restoring and erasing the past paves the way for stabilising the future. For Ngangom memories play a crucial role in awakening the consciousness of people. The folklores, the legends, and the beliefs of the hill people in Ngangom's poetry of nostalgia, and reminiscences remind the readers of the poetry of Mamang Dai and Easterine Kire. For all of them, memory becomes the mode of identification. Memories mature them. They can identify themselves with the roots of North-East India by recalling their personal and political past. The strong ethnic group consciousness is a remarkable trait in all of them. Like Ngangom, Dai can also reclaim her identity in a memory poem titled "Gone" where she says that they had long journeys in their blood. She recalls a burnt black hill that is monumental with their people's faces. Easterine Kire muses on her ancestral past, the arctic sky, the ancient people, and the sound of the didgeridoo in a poem titled "Riddu Ride". Like Mamang Dai and Easterine Kire Ngangom retires to the haven of memories to reclaim and regain a sense of belongingness and completeness.

Notes

1. Jeffrey Olick thinks that human beings are shaped by a combination of fantasies, interests, traditions, and opportunities. According to Renate Lachmann in "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature", the

mnemonic functions of literature can represent and convey knowledge (306). See

https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110207262.3.151/html?lang=en. Accessed on 30 March 2023.

2. See https://www.bing.com/search?q=Jeffrey+K.+Olick+"Memory+is+not+a+thing%2C+it+is+not+an+object.+Memory+is+an+ongoing+process"+(istorex.org)+.&cvid=d904e9914dbb4e219e544cd6028ee8db&aqs=edge..69i57j69i64.4643j0j9&FORM=ANAB01&PC=U531. Accessed 27 March 2023.
3. See Michael Rothberg's "Multidimensional Memory and Postcolonial Studies in Contemporary Germany", https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Michael+Rothberg+%E2%80%93+Multidirectional+Memory+and+Postcolonial+Studies+in+Contemporary+Germany+-+Bing+video&docid=603486194088298110&mid=11B3D1337811F4F280EF11B3D1337811F4F280EF&view=detail&FORM=VIRE. Accessed 27 March 2023.
4. See https://www.bing.com/search?q=Jeffrey+K.+Olick+"Memory+is+not+a+thing%2C+it+is+not+an+object.+Memory+is+an+ongoing+process"+(istorex.org)+.&cvid=d904e9914dbb4e219e544cd6028ee8db&aqs=edge..69i57j69i64.4643j0j9&FORM=ANAB01&PC=U531. Accessed 27 March 2023.
5. See https://www.bing.com/search?q=Jeffrey+K.+Olick+"Memory+is+not+a+thing%2C+it+is+not+an+object.+Memory+is+an+ongoing+process"+(istorex.org)+.&cvid=d904e9914dbb4e219e544cd6028ee8db&aqs=edge..69i57j69i64.4643j0j9&FORM=ANAB01&PC=U531. Accessed 27 March 2023.
6. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev6wAQ85BdE . Accessed 27 March 2023.

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9

Religious and Cultural Significance of the Monasteries in the Rituals and Festivals of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri

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Abstract

The monasteries are an indispensable part of the Indian culture and heritage. From ancient times, many monasteries have grown surrounding the holy temples and shrines across India to provide ritual services to the temple, educating the disciples and poor meritorious students, and giving shelter to the pilgrims. Similarly, many monasteries were established at Puri by eminent scholars, saints, and their disciples while visiting Puri from different parts of India to offer religious worship at Lord Jagannath temple and spread their ideals and philosophy. Apart from this, these traditional age-old institutions promote religious tourism and serve as preservers and promoters of the local religious and cultural traditions of the state. This is an exploratory qualitative research study that contributes an original piece of research on the religious and cultural importance of the monasteries in offering ritual services to the Jagannath Temple in Puri, especially during the rituals and festivals. The study delves into the current issues and challenges faced by the monasteries in Puri as many of them are on the verge of extinction due to lack of financial aid and other support from the government and other agencies. This study relies on a field-based investigation of the issue. Both primary and secondary data are collected to understand the crux of the problem and explore continuity and change in the monastic tradition in Puri. Besides, the study offers policy-relevant suggestions and valuable feedback to bring improvement to the situation.

Keywords: Monastery, Puri, Pilgrimage, Ritual Services, Jagannath Temple.

Introduction

The state of Odisha is a sacred land richly endowed with multiple holy shrines, ancient temples, and monasteries which remain a vital part of the culture and heritage of the land. The state is also famous for its historic antiquities and religious sanctuaries continuing since the 3rd century B.C**.** Orissa (the present name of Odisha) is derived from the Sanskrit word "Odra Vishaya" or Udra Desha or Utkal Province which consisted of the portions of three ancient regions such as Kalinga, Utkal, or Odra and Kosala which over time under political, social and economic pressure and turmoil have joined together as a distinct realm of Indian sub-continent during 12th Century AD. Of all the regions, Kalinga was the most prominent and advanced region in all respects (Behuria 1991). The ancient kingdom of Kalinga lies towards the east of the Indian peninsula as mentioned in popular legends like the Ramayana and the Mahabharat. In ancient times, Orissa was known as Kalinga which was a big religio-cultural landscape, encompassing the territories from the River Ganges to the River Godavari up to the Krishna River (Tripathy 2007). While evolving within the ambit of Indian civilisation, the Orissa remains a distinctive entity enriching the Indic panorama in different dimensions (Das 1977).

The spiritual quest for the almighty has always existed in every human soul and spirit since the origin of human lives in the universe. Odisha remains a pious land of Lord Jagannath has embraced people from diverse religions and faiths such as Buddhism, Jainism, Shaktism, and Saivaism and forms a distinct religious landscape. Over the centuries, many monastic houses have grown across the state for propagating the spiritual thoughts and ideologies of different scholars and preachers of different religious ideologies of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The monastic life revolves around religious certain principles and disciplines, dedicated to serving God which protects human lives from worldly distractions. These monasteries serve as great centers of learning which disseminate spiritual knowledge, heal sickness and offer mental peace and solace to human life. The creations of the monastic communities show the spiritual maturity of the faithful with a motive to protect the community and perpetuation tradition (Poujeau 2018).

Through the ages, numerous monasteries have sprouted around the holy shrines and temples at different pilgrimage sites across India, such as Kashi, Varanasi, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Mathura, Vrindavan, Puri, etc. Every year large number of Hindus during their pilgrimage journeys to these holy places used to stay in the monasteries which are considered as sanctified places for religious worship and serve as beautiful tourist destinations. Therefore, the monasteries remain as old as pilgrimage which every Hindu likes to visit during his/her lifetime. The earliest reference of pilgrimage referred in the Aitreya Brahmana of Rig Veda c.1500 to c.1000 BC. The Mahabharata (c.400 BC to c. 200 AD) also refers to several pilgrimage circuits (Bharadwaj 1973). Therefore, these monasteries are age-old institutions that are well equipped with all necessary arrangements and serve as shelter homes for the pilgrims during their pilgrimage.

The word 'matha' or monastery is a hut or a cottage (dwelling place) which means the residence for the ascetics and monks who have renounced their worldly lives and spend time meditating on God, reading scriptures, and rendering services for the welfare of humanity. According to the Sanskrit lexicon, "Amara Kosha" math is the residence of pupils along with their teachers. The monastic houses of different creeds, sects, and religions are known by various names such as viharas, asramas, gurudwaras, mathas, and akhadas. They differ widely in terms of their structures and functions. But, the most common characteristic of these institutions is collective living for the higher spiritual life (Ayer 2003). The residential places were converted into various mathas, akharas, ashramas, kottas, etc. (Mishra 2014). Like temples and shrines, the monasteries are also age-old institutions that are considered holy spaces for religious congregations where the inmates usually monks and saints lead an ascetic life during their retired life. Further, these monasteries facilitate the religious and cultural integration of the people of the land and serve as guardians of the local religious and cultural traditions strongly embedded within the local cultural landscape, that determine their historical evolution (Aulet, Mundet, and Vidal 2016). In the tenth century, monastery philosophy brings sublime manifestations of the finest Indian art and paintings (Behl 2008).

Origin and Antiquity of Purusottama Kshetra and Growth of the Monasteries in Puri

Lord Jagannath is the presiding deity of Odisha and Puri which is well known as the abode of Jagannath due to the invaluable presence of the grand majestic temple of Lord Jagannath**.** Though it is impossible to trace back the exact origin and antiquity of the deity of Lord Jagannath, He is known as Purushottama, and his holy land Puri is named after him as Purusottama Kshetra from ancient times. The antiquity of Puri or Purusottama Kshetra as a holy pilgrimage may be traced back to C.700 A.D. (Mahapatra 1954). The gigantic temple in Puri dedicated to Lord Jagannath was rebuilt in the 10th century by King Ananta Varman Chodaganga Dev of the Eastern Ganga dynasty replacing the old pre-existing temple. The Jagannath temple at Puri is considered sacred for all Hindus, especially for the Vaishnavites where devotees from all over India pay reverence to Lord Jagannath (Mahapatra 2008). The religious life of the people of Odisha revolves around the Purusottama Jagannath ever since the famous and majestic temple of the Lord in Puri was built in the 12th century CE (Stietencron 1977) Skanda Purana narrates the sanctity and glory of this pious and miraculous land as the Purusottama Kshetra (Satyanarayan 1998)

Puri is popular by many names such as Shri-Kshetra, Sankha Kshetra, Neelachala, Jagannatha Dhama, etc. As the spiritual capital of Odisha, Puri is considered Parampavana Devabhumi or divine land which is supremely purifying to attain Paramartha, Moksha, or salvation since Lord Vishnu in the form of Darabatanu of Lord Jagannath, (idol made of wood) is born here and performs his leelas like a human being. As a heritage city of India, Puri derives its religious and cultural importance as a seat of learning ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Samhitas, Puranas, and Epics. Puri or Sri Kshetra is widely acclaimed as a famous pilgrimage center and meeting ground of several religious sects (Panda 2011)**.** The eminent scholars, saints, and religious exponents of diverse faiths and religions like Ramanujan, Madhavacharya, Ballavacharya, Nimbark, Shri Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Saint Kabir, and Meerabai visited Puri for offering prayers and religious worship to Lord Jagannath and have reposed their firm faith and conviction for spiritual enlightenment. These religious scholars and their disciples have

established their monasteries surrounding the holy shrine of Lord Jagannath in Puri to offer religious worship and ritual services to the temple and also to spread their thoughts, ideologies, and philosophies across India and the world.

The traditional records show that there are 752 monasteries in Puri which are more than 500 years old. The establishment of some monasteries date back to the 8th-9th century. The saints and preachers have their ethics and ideologies. Therefore, the monasteries are different in terms of ideologies, philosophies, values, and principles which attract devotees and followers to follow their respective religious disciplines. The Govardhan Matha is the first monastery in Puri established by Adi Sankaracharya during his spiritual conquest (820 AD) to teach 'Adwaita Philosophy. However, several monasteries were built in Odisha long before Acharya Sankara visited the Puri. Some monasteries like Bhrugu Ashram and Angira Ashram were established during the 4th to 5th Century A.D. However, from the 9th Century A.D onwards many monasteries were established by the disciples of many great Vaishnavite Saints like Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Vallabhacharya and Ramananda who visited Puri. These monasteries were closely associated with the Jagannath Temple. The great Vaisnava Saint Ramanujacharya visited Puri during the reign of King Chodaganga Dev and established Emar Matha near Jagannath Temple in Puri. The Visnuswami established Jagannath Ballav Math at Puri on the 14th. Century A.D. which is known as the pleasure harbor of Lord Jagannath. Shri Chaitanya came to Puri during the reign of King Prataparudra Dev in the year 1510 and stayed for 18 years in Radhakanta Matha and his dwelling place is called 'Kashimisralaya'. Besides, other great scholars like, Madhvacharya, and Guru Nanak have also visited Puri and have established their monasteries.

Though both Saiva and Vaishnav mathas exist in Puri, most of the mathas are naturally Vaishnav (Malley 1908) since Lord Jagannath symbolises Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna is the presiding deity of the land. Some Vaishnavite Mathas in Puri include Emar Matha, Srirama Dasa (Dakhina Parswa) Matha, Raghava Das Matha, Jagannatha Vallabha Matha, Uttara Parswa Matha, Radhakanta Matha, and Bada Odia Matha. The Saivite mathas found near Swargadwar were Siva-Tritha and Mahi-Prakash Matha. Near the

Gobardhan Matha there is a small matha called Kabir-Choura Matha established by the great Saint Kabir. Besides, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism visited Puri and established 'Bauli Matha' in Puri and his son Sri Chanda established another matha called Mangu Matha. Similarly, scholars like Jayadev, Nimbark, Madhvacharya, Vallabhacharya, Karnama Giri, Hari Das, Raghu Das, Sarbabhouma Bhattacharya, Atibadi Jagannath Das, Nandini Devi, Sri Rama Das, Sri Venkat Swamy, Rasikananda, Madhavendra Puri, and Balak Ram Das have also established their monasteries in Puri. In addition to this, Swamy Nigamananda, Omkarnath, and Digambar (Languli Baba) have also established mathas and ashramas at Puri. According to the Puri Gazetteer (1929), there are over seventy monasteries in Puri affiliated to different sects, namely Angira Sect, Adwaita Sect, Atibadi Sect, Gaudiya Sect, Ramanandi Sect, Nimbarka Sect, Vaishnab Sect, Ramanuja, Sect Madhabacharya Sect, and Dashanami Sect, etc.

In the past, the saints and scholars visiting Puri for the holy darshan of Lord Jagannath were also in contact with the Gajapati Kings of Puri and had received gifts and donations in terms of land and money from the rich followers and kings for the religious worship of Lord Jagannath and charitable purposes. They established monasteries on the lands donated to them. The monasteries are patronised by the religious heads called Mahanta or Mathadhisa (Maharaja or Adhikari) nominated amongst the followers who take care of the supervision and maintenance of the monasteries and offer ritual services to the Jagannath Temple from the income generated from the landed properties spent which is known as 'Amrutmanohi' (nectar food) i.e., offering of 'Mahaprasad' to Lord Jagannath and then distributed among the pilgrims, pupils, ascetics, and beggars. Besides, during necessity, the Mahantas take care of the smooth functioning of the temple.

Objective(s)

- To explore the origin, history, and evolution of the monasteries in Puri, Odisha during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial era and their valuable contribution towards the promotion and dissemination of the Jagannath Culture and Philosophy;

- To study the interrelationship of the monasteries with the Jagannath Temple, Puri in offering ritual services during different rituals and festivals, their continuity and change;
- To examine the emerging issues and challenges faced by the monasteries in Puri during present times and to analyse various factors responsible for the same;
- To document the best practices of the monasteries in Puri and to develop suitable strategies and measures to be adopted for better management and functioning of the monasteries and in offering ritual services to the Jagannath Temple by the monasteries.

Research Design and Method

This is a qualitative fact-finding research in which a holistic approach is adopted during the collection of both secondary and primary data from the two categories of respondents such as visitors, pilgrims, and locals as well as from the scholars and intelligentsia through purposive random sampling method. The scholarly views and opinions on the spiritual importance of the monasteries in Hindu Philosophy are drawn. The purposive random sampling method is adopted for the collection of primary data from the heads of the monasteries, pilgrims, and inmates of around 70 monasteries in Puri and officials of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, Endowment Commission, Puri District Administration, scholars, academia, and experts, etc. The study facilitates knowledge building by gathering local evidence, critical analysis, and explanations of the problem through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focused group discussions with the stakeholders for the understanding of the ground realities of the issue.

This is an innovative research study that offers new research insights into the interrelationship of the monasteries in various rituals and festivals of the Jagannath temple in Puri observed throughout the year. Further, the study examines the religious and cultural significance of the monasteries and concludes how these religious institutions fulfill the sole purpose for which they were established. This is an important area of research, which is planned for making detailed documentation of the valuable facts, documents, and records

of the monasteries offering ritual services to the Jagannath Temple, Puri. The study contributes meaningfully towards the formulation of suitable policy measures for the self-sustenance of the monasteries in continuing their ritual services to the Jagannath Temple more efficiently and rigorously. After identifying the major issues and problems of the monasteries, the study offers practical solutions and policy recommendations to bring improvement to the problem.

Socio-Cultural and Religious Significance of the Monasteries in Puri

Over the centuries, the Jagannath culture has enfolded diverse religious creeds and sects like Saivism, Shaktism, Buddhism, and Jainism into its fold. Many monasteries have grown centered around the Jagannath Temple for offering religious duties or sevas for the worship of Lord Jagannath (Senapati and Kuanar, 1977). Puri holds its unique religious tradition and cultural florescence that reigns upon abundant spiritual essence. Puri is an important pilgrimage Centre as one of the four dhamas (abodes) of God and is regarded as one of the seven moksha-dhama or salvation for the Hindus (Pattanaik 1994). The modest climate with the spiritual ambiance of Puri attracts tourists and visitors from all around the world throughout the year. In the Purusottama Mahatmya of Skanda Purana, the Purusottama Kshetra (Puri) is described as the most sacred place in India as the abode of supreme Lord Jagannath that exists ever since the beginning of creation. According to the Orissa District Gazetteer, many monasteries were established by the saints and scholars for offering ritual services to the temple and for public welfare such as imparting education to the disciples, poor, meritorious students, giving shelter to the pilgrims and visitors, and feeding travelers, ascetics and beggars. etc.

Over the ages, the monasteries have played a distinctive role in shaping the religious and cultural history and heritage of India and Odisha as well. Being an inevitable part of the Jagannath culture Monasteries are intimately connected with the rituals and festivals of the Jagannath Temple. Many saints and sages of diverse religious faiths and ideologies have been congregated at the divine land Puri to attain "Paramartha", Moksha, or salvation synchronising their deep faith and devotion to Lord Jagannath as they perceived Lord

Jagannath as the supreme Godhead. Therefore, Puri is known as Martya Baikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu on the earth. The monks and saints visited Purushottama Kshetra and established their monasteries with twin objectives, firstly for providing ritual services to the temple and secondly, for educating the disciples and giving shelter to the students and pilgrims and spreading the ideologies.

The pilgrimage to Puri from different corners of India unites all Hindus and facilitates common understanding, human aspiration, and faith towards Jagannath Culture and Philosophy which promotes socio-cultural integration of the people of the land. The pilgrimage journey creates phenomenal energy that oozes through a strict regime of rituals followed by the pilgrims to transform one's life through attaining knowledge, devotion, and eliminating evil thoughts and habits of life. As mentioned in the Hindu scriptures and legends, these monasteries have distinct historical, geographical, religious, and cultural significance in protecting Sanatana dharma through realising divinity. Millions of pilgrims assemble in Puri every year during the special occasion of the Rath Yatra arousing a collective ethos to lead a spiritual life. These monasteries remain connecting bonds between the general public and Jagannath temple in Puri (Paikaray 2013). Apart from this, the monasteries were also patrons of music, art, dance, literature, philosophical debates, educating people, feeding poor, widows, and accommodating students and pilgrims visiting Puri (Devi and Acharya, 2008). Besides, many religious arts and mural paintings of the 19th Century are seen on the walls of *monasteries in Puri like the Bada Odia Matha* ***and*** *Gangamata Matha.* With an increasing focus on the preservation and promotion of the ancient cultural heritage of India, this study holds its importance in many dimensions.

Key Functions of the Monasteries in Puri

1. The monasteries play a significant role in propagating the essential religious values, thoughts, and ideals of Hindu Philosophy and especially Jagannath Culture across Odisha and India.
2. The monasteries provide shelter and accommodation to a huge number of pilgrims visiting Puri for the holy darshan of Lord Jagannath from different parts of India.

3. The monasteries provide financial help to the poor and meritorious students and look after the mendicants coming to Puri from far distant places across India and the world.
4. The monasteries offer ritual services to the Jagannath temple during rituals and festivals as per the Record of Rights of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration Act.
5. The monasteries serve as the preservers and promoters of the spiritual values, knowledge, and ideology of Hindu Philosophy.

Role of Monasteries in Daily Rituals of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri

Some leading mathas of Puri perform specific ritual services during daily rituals and festivals of the Jagannatha Temple. These monasteries include the Jagannatha Vallabha Matha, Raghavadasa Matha, Badachhata Matha, Bada Odiya Matha, Sunagosain Matha, Sri Rama Dasa (Dakshina parswa) Matha, Uttaraparswa Matha, Emar Matha, Radhakanta Matha, Jhadu Mathas. Besides, the daily rituals, these mathas offer ritual services during the Ratha Yatra, Snana Yatra, Chandan Yatra, Jhulan Yatra, Navakalevar Ceremony, and other festivals by offering Pankti Bhoga, Pana Bhoga, Vesha materials, cleaning of Ratna Singhasana, supply Canopy and Chaka Apasara, Phuluri oil (Til-oil), Sandalwood paste for Sarbangalagi Ritual, flower garlands, Basil leaves and other puja materials and perform Sankirtana Seva i.e Reciting devotional Music, Chamar and Alata Seva to the deities in the Jagannath Temple.

Some monasteries established by the Gajapati Kings are known as Rajangila Mathas. The duties and functions of these monasteries are as follows.

Monasteries in Puri Services Offered by Monasteries to the Jagannath Temple

Bada Jhadu Matha sweeps the Garbhagriha (inner Sanctum sanctorum of the temple) and Anasara Pindi and Jagamohana of the Temple.

Chhauni Matha gives religious advice and greets Rajas and their family members in pious

	ways during their visit to the Jagannath Temple.
Dagara Matha	informs the public and temple officials if there is any break of ritualistic performance or violation of religious rites connected with the seva puja of Lord Jagannath.
Kadali Patuka Matha	supplies strands of plantain (banana plants) for flower garlands to offer to Lord Jagannath.
Kothabhoga Matha	keeps the stock of ghee and molasses in the store of the temple and looks after the cooking of consecrated foods.
Kalitilaka Matha	supplies Tilaka to the Vaisnavas of the four Sampradayas.
Puranasabha Matha	recites texts from various Puranas and preaches the philosophy of Jagannath culture.
Sana Jhadu Matha	sweeps the Kurma Bedha Courtyard and the Natamandap (Dancing Hall)
Sunagosain Matha	cleans the Suna Kuo (Golden Well) and walls of the Ratna-Singhasana and supplies Alaka and Padak (flower ornament) daily.

As per the Record of Rights of Puri Shree Jagannath Temple (Administration) Act, 1952 presently, around thirty monasteries in Puri are offering different types of services during the daily rituals or Nitis of the Jagannath Temple, the details are given below:

- *Gobardhan Matha* is also known as Sankaracharya Matha. The Sankaracharya is the religious authority and head of the Mukti-Mandap Pandit Sabha (an assembly of Brahmins) and gives a final opinion on the Niti or Rituals of the Jagannath temple. He is given some special privileges during his visit to Jagannath

Temple in Puri. This monastery offers special ritual services to the Jagannath Temple. In return, the Khei is given to this Matha by the temple as a daily routine.

- *Bada Odia Matha* is established by the great Odia scholar Atibadi Jagannath Das which provides Ballav Bhoga (Morning Tiffin) and performs Upachara Chamara, Alata Seva to Lord Jagannath in the temple.
- *Badachhata Matha* offers Sakirtana Seva (reciting devotional songs) daily during Mangala Arati, Badasinghara Vesha, and Chandan Yatra and offers Alata and Chamar Seva to the deities.
- *Chaulia Matha* performs the Chamara and Alata Seva, supplies flower ornaments to the deities, and supplies guava for Gopalavallav Bhoga (this service has been discontinued).
- *Dakhinaparswa Matha* offers Chatra Seva and Chamar Seva to the deities.
- *Dasavatara Matha* performs the cultural function of the temple
- *Emar Math* supplies the Ballabha Bhoga, 'Chandrika', and 'Chausara' (flower ornaments) daily for the Badasinghara Besha and offers Chamara, Alata, and Canopy Seva to the temple.
- *Gangamata Matha* offers Suna-Benta (golden handle) and Chamara and Alata Services.
- *Gopaltirtha Matha* provides the necessary materials for Hati Vesha (elephant-like adornment) for Lord Balabhadra.
- *Jhanjapita Matha* offers seva puja at 'Pada-Padma' (lotus feet of the Lord) in the temple
- *Jagannatha Ballabha Matha* **o**ffers Tilak, Jhumpa (a flower ornament) for Badasinghara Besha, lotus flower, and other flower ornaments during temple rituals such as Ramanabami, Dola Yatra, Dayanachori, Lakha Vindha, Dussahara. Besides, this monastery supplies Masala (torch) during Abakasha rituals, Khuamanda, Ballava Bhog, Khatani-bhoga (Anna

Mahaprasad), and performs Chamara services as per the Jagannath Temple tradition.

- *Kapadia Matha* **p**rovides dress materials to the deities in the temple.
- *Labanikhia Matha* offers sports materials of the deities during rituals like Janmashtami (Birth of Lord Krishna)
- *Nandimata Matha sticks* jari in Patta
- *Papudia Matha* offers Sunabenta Chamara (gold handle) of fine fly whisk and Alata (fan)services.
- *Raghaba-Dasa Matha* offers (Chamara and Alata seva) and supplies Vallabha bhoga and Khatani bhoga in the morning and supplies materials for Hati-Vesha on the day of Snana Purnima.
- *Radhakanta Matha* **p**erforms Upachara Chamara Seva and daily Sankirtana Parikrama on the premises of the temple and offers cleaning services to the Gundicha temple before the Car Festival.
- *Rani Matha* provides decorated Tahia (flower crown) to the deities.
- *Rebasa matha* performs Upachara Chamara and Alata services and offers Khatani Bhoga.
- *Sriram Dasa Matha, Darpanarayan Matha, and Sunagoswami Matha* offer flower garlands for the decoration of the deities.
- *Sivatirtha Matha and Mahiprakash Matha* provides toothbrush for the deities in the temple.
- *Trimali Matha* performs Chamara and Alata services and supplies the Dihudi (torch) during Abakasha ritual and Gopala Vallabha Bhoga and offers Bhoga during the Chandan Yatra.
- *Uttarparswa Matha* offers Chamara and Alata Seva and supplies materials for preparing Mohanbhoga (made of coarse flour and sugar) to the temple every day which is distributed among the devotees after being offered to the deities in the temple.

The monasteries offering Chamara and Alata services include the Radhaballava Matha Sana Chhata Matha, Goswami Matha, Nua Matha and Mangu Matha Venkatachari Matha Nua Matha Chhauni Matha Balaramkote Matha, Ramji Matha, Sanachhata Matha, Sriram Dasa Matha and Rajguru Goswami Matha etc.

Some monasteries have the right to offer Khatani bhoga (offering of cooked food) to the deities are Gobardhan Matha, Radhakanta Matha, Badachhata Matha, Jagannath Ballav Matha, Emar Matha, Uttarparswa Matha, Dakhinaparswa, Matha, Sidhabakula Matha, Gangamata Matha, Jeerswami Matha, Haridas Thakura Matha, Rebasa Matha, Chhauni Matha, Radhaballav Matha, and Bada Odiya Mathas, etc. The monasteries involved are given facilities of occupation of Saraghara" (Store houses), "ovens in temple kitchen", "Khandua Patta" (Silk Cloth), and in return, Mahaprasad in terms of Khei is given to the concerned monasteries by the temple.

Conclusion

Odisha is the land of divinity which has facilitated the growth of the monasteries of diverse religions and sects like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism over the centuries across the state. These monasteries have both material and spiritual significance. These ancient institutions have not only played an important role in developing spiritual consciousness but also serve as preservers of ancient art, culture, and tradition. The temple culture of Puri has given a boost to the flourishing of the culture of the monastery which remains an integral part of Jagannath Culture and is instrumental in developing the Sanatana consciousness in internalising the supremeness of the divine. While on pilgrimage, the pilgrims seek sanctified places like monasteries which are in close association with the holy personage. Therefore, these monasteries in Puri not only serve as shelter homes for a large number of pilgrims but also contribute to building an excellent spiritual ambiance for sharing religious values, fellow feelings, mutual trust, love, compassion, loyalty, and close bonding among the pilgrims. Puri is a center of Hindu pilgrimage where many saints and scholars offer their worship to Lord Jagannath where monasteries serve as a medium for spiritual sensitisation since they are intimately connected with the rituals and festivals of the Jagannath Temple.

However, during the present times, many monasteries have not been able to perform their ritual services to the temple properly due to a paucity of funds and resources. Further, due to a lack of proper management and maintenance, many monasteries are found in dilapidated conditions. Therefore, after independence, many monasteries lost their autonomy and were taken over by the Government (Pattanaik 2005). Though some monasteries have some landed property, they are not being able to generate income for maintaining self-sustainability. In the recent past, the demolition drive taken up by the district administration in Puri has demolished the old grand structures of many ancient monasteries surrounding the Jagannath Temple after Justice BP Das Commission (a committee held under the chairmanship of BP Das a retired judge of Orissa High Court has given a recommendation for the removal of these old buildings within 75 meters periphery of the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Despite public criticisms and heavy protests from religious heads of monasteries including Shankaracharya of Puri seeking stay over erasing the century-old structures of monasteries, the demolitions of the ancient Hindu monasteries such as Emar Mutt, a 900-year-old monastery, Bada Akhada Matha, a 600-year-old monastery, Mangu Matha and Languli Matha continued using bulldozers and heavy machinery and the remnants of boundary wall have been razed in the name of beautification of the surroundings of the Jagannath temple and safety and security of the devotees. Public discontentment grow after the demolition of the monasteries established by great scholars like Ramanujacharya, Nimbark Acharya, Madhwa Acharya, Dasanami, Ramananda Acharya, Bishnu Swami, Ballabhacharya. As a consequence, Puri lost its ancient heritage and culture to a great extent.

In this context, this research study has unfolded many unexplored dimensions on the issue of the monasteries which were originally built to strengthen the cultural unity and integrity of the state, in reality, the very existence of the matha is at stake (Mohanty 2010). The mutual distrust among the mahantas and financial mismanagement are the main causes of the deterioration of the monasteries in Puri. In this context, suitable strategies and policy measures need to be adopted to bring improvement to the problem. Further, consistent efforts are required for the implementation of

appropriate measures by the government and non-government agencies for the effective functioning of these monasteries in Puri. The monasteries are a vital part of the history, culture, and heritage of Odisha and India as well. To restore past glories, the revival of these ancient religious institutions and re-establishing their cultural legacy is highly essential in the current era.

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Glossary

1. *Abakasha Ritual*: A daily morning ritual of brushing teeth and bathing deities.
2. *Alata and Chamara Seva*: Service of fanning the deities with yak-tail whisk fans.
3. *Akhada:* A place of practice and training on martial arts with lodging, and boarding facilities in a monastery for religious renunciation of the saints and monks.
4. *Amruta Manohi*: Landed properties endowed to the monasteries to be spent for food offerings of the deities.
5. *Anasara Pindi*: A platform in the temple where the repairing of the deities takes place during Anasara just before the Rath Yatra
6. *Badasinghara Vesha*: Decorating the deities in flowers during the night ritual in the temple.
7. *Chandan Yatra*: Summer Festival of the temple when the representing Lord of the deities are smeared with sandalwood paste come out of the temple
8. *Dayana Chori*: A ritual when representative idols of Rama and Krishna are taken to the garden of Jagannath Ballav Matha where the deities pick up Dayana leaves unnoticed.
9. *Gopala Ballav Bhoga*: Food offered to the deities during the morning ritual of the temple.
10. *Jagamohan*: An assembly hall in the temple where devotees offer their prayers to the deities.

11. *Khei:* A portion of Kotha Bhoga paid by the temple to the servitor and monastery.
12. *Khuamanda:* A kind of food offering to the deities on some special occasion.
13. *Khatani-Bhoga*: A special type of food offered to the deities on request.
14. *Khandua Patta*: A type of hand-woven silk cloth worn by deities.
15. *Lakha Vindha*: A ritual of shooting arrows is performed in Jagannath Ballav Math.
16. *Matha*: This is a kind of residence of the monks and their disciples which also serves as a shelter home for the pilgrims and visitors.
17. *Mahaprasad*: Food offered to the deities is considered auspicious for devotees.
18. *Mangala Arati:* Lamp Ritual offered to the deities in the temple in the morning.
19. *Mukti Mandap:* An open platform located on the southern side of temple premises where an assembly of Brahmins sits who serve as the advisory body of the temple.
20. *Parikrama:* Circumference of the deities and temple is considered auspicious.
21. *Paramartha:* Salvation i.e., releasing from the cycle of birth and death of mankind from this material world.
22. *Rath Yatra*: Annual festival when the deities come out of the temple and are placed in Chariots to give darshan to the devotees and visitors.
23. *Sankirtan Seva*: Service of singing the glory of God by the saints of monasteries.
24. *Saraghara:* Store house of the temple where the required essential items are kept.
25. *Snana Purnima*: Annual Bathing Ritual when the deities take a bath in 108 barrels of water which takes place in the Odia month Jyestha (June)
26. *Tilak Jhumpa:* A kind of flower ornament offered to the deities in the temple.
27. *Tahia*: Flower Crown of the deities used in temple rituals such as Rath Yatra and Snana Yatra.

10

Dharma and Kama: Coexistence or Precedence?

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Abstract

The zeitgeist, on a considerably large scale, a few thousand years back in India was that of Epicurean-Hedonism governed by an ineluctable Dharma. This is the true face of Hinduism, which has been falsely, since, Prof Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's time, believed/misconceived to be an escapist, otherworldly religion, trying for Moksha or Salvation, running away from worldly pleasure. The fact is that it was incumbent on a Sanatani to experience life in all its varieties – physical, intellectual, spiritual, and any other conception that one may find. Unfortunately, a selective and partial view of such thinkers and their philosophies as Shankracharya's Advaita was taken by the intellectuals of the West to be the guiding philosophy of India. The paper here tries to establish this truth, i.e., out of the Trivarga too, emphasis has always been on *Kaam* and then on *Artha*.

Keywords: Brahminical, Swadharma, Ashramic, Trimurti.

Relationship among the *Purusharthas* of the *Trivarga*

The debate between the householder – and the renunciant tradition does bring into focus the tension between the *Trivarga Purusharthas* (Dharma, Artha, Kaam) on the one hand and Moksha on the other. However, here it would be interesting to see what kind of relationship exists among the three of the same group. Vatsyayan and Manu laid equal emphasis on all three but let us here see how the contest would shape up between Artha and Kaam on the one hand and Dharma on the other. It is generally believed concerning the Trivarga that Dharma is the power that controls the excessive or probably wrong indulgence in, or pursuit of, profit and pleasure. As Dr. Gavin Flood opines, "When profit and pleasure are pursued

alone, outside of Dharma, they lead to social chaos" (Lipner 16). This inevitably raises the question, "What is Dharma?" It is difficult to determine in a universally acceptable manner what exactly Dharma is, not the least because of its immense connotations and implications. The generally accepted view is that it is moral or ethical righteousness, but that could well be relative – about the vagaries of time and place. It is pertinent to state that even Dharma is not immutable, for the "*Shanti Parva* states that what was Adharma (in one age) may become Dharma in another and that Dharma and Adharma are both subject to the limitations of country/place and time" (Kane 1629-30). Furthermore, the *Vishnu Purana* says "Even Dharma may be abandoned, if it is opposed to public opinion and if it is not conducive to the happiness of society" (Balasubramania 45). And again, at the end of the *Mahabharata* it is said, "With uplifted arms I cry from the housetops, but none hears me. It is from Dharma that Artha and Kaam result: why then is Dharma not followed? The *Manusmriti* says (4.176): "Let every individual avoid…. Those acts of Dharma which are opposed to and hurt the feelings of the general public, lead not to joy even in afterlife".

Now the considerable debate is if Dharma is not something stable, universal and all-pervading, if it changes with time and place, then what guides our urge to procure Artha and Kaam? Here a common-sense view of the word Dharma will probably work, which means actions that are socially acceptable and generally considered to be correct and not sinful or evil. Arjuna's claim in the *Mahabharata* that "Dharma and Kaam are the limbs of Artha"(Balasubramania 20) makes us rethink the supremacy of Dharma in the Trivarga. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that classical Hinduism gave significant, not to say central, importance to the worldly values of Artha and Kaam. The abstract values of Dharma and Moksha were perhaps introduced to act as instruments of control as an open and unrestricted permission/license to accumulate wealth and indulgence in physical pleasure would mean doom for any civilised society. In fact, not only for this reason but for yet another and more significant reason for making all three equally important was perhaps a mundane version of the cosmic *rta:* Dharma also stands for duty. This would be a wise balancing act on the part of the law-givers. Giving equal importance to the three entailed equal

dedication to each of the three, thereby, mutually canceling excess, and helping in the creation of equilibrium in the practice of the three. Moreover, for those who were still left with the energy to indulge in excess, for them the rod of social censure or Dharma was there to correct. Not only this, Dharma was not an all-comprehensive law, for example, the prostitutes who were a respectable and acceptable part of the society, did have nothing to do with common Dharma and followed the dictums of their self-styled Dharma of social decorum and propriety. Furthermore, therefore it could be concluded in the words of K M Pannikar who quotes a verse from the *Mahabharata* which says that "while life in pursuit of Artha and Kaam, to the neglect of Dharma, should be shunned by man, *a life which neglects Artha and Kaam could not also be considered as the right way"*(Burton and Arbuthnot 44).

It could therefore be valid to say that an acceptance of Artha and Kaam as we understand them and accept them was the foundation on which the society was built. Moreover, Dharma was the individual consciousness of the universal good that translated itself into a social law, to be followed by everyone for the general good of the community. It can be reasonable to say that Dharma is placed at the top of the *Purushartha* pyramid because it is the guiding and shaping factor of all behavior. The Dharma of the *Brahamcharin* is not that of the G*rihastha* nor vice versa.

Place of Kaam:

Dharmāviruddho bhuteùu kāmo'smi.

"I am that desire in all beings not opposed to Dharma" (The Gita 7:11). The term Kaam has been variously used as desire, pleasure, enjoyment, wish, will, attachment, longing, and love in the Gita according to Dermot Killingley (Lipner 67). It also subsumes aesthetic sense. In the Hindu tradition, physical love (Kaam) is an entirely acceptable and legitimate purpose of life. Unlike other major traditions of the world, Hinduism is a celebration of the body, and it is a very celebrated purpose of life as it demonstrates that important strand in Brahminical ideology which is generally regarded to be positive towards the body, its requirements, and sexuality. Sex is not considered to be intrinsically or inherently sinful and there is all

liberty to explore, practice, and express it within boundaries of propriety and legitimacy which are outlined by societal norms of accepted dignified behavior.

A look at the system of the Ashram explains how all these stages are characterised by a focus on sexuality. Dr. Flood says that "All these stages are characterised by different regimens of the body, particularly the control of diet and sexuality. The first and last ashrams are explicitly celibate, celibacy is a defining characteristic of Brahmacharya, the central ascetic idea being that sexual power contained in semen can be redirected to a spiritual end and, indeed be stored in the head" (65). This meant not only control but internalisation of the whole concept of control, which made it easier for the individual, especially the one practicing Vanaprastha and Sanyaas ashram to control, transcend and transform sexual power for the end of the highest goal of attaining liberation. Not only this, the householder was free to experience and experiment with their sexuality as a welcome goal of life (Kamartha). Furthermore, to propagate this concept of the legitimacy of sex, extensive literature concerning it was produced like the Kaam Shashtras, and the most notable text on this subject is Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra*. Though Kaam Sutra is mainly concerned with sex, modern scholarship adds an aesthetic dimension to it as a whole, not just the human sensuous inclinations and predispositions.

Nagaraja Rao describes Kaam as a "desire for all things in general", only the desire for liberation is excluded from this term" (22). He therefore argues that it is wrong to translate Kaam as sensual desire, though formally, sexual desire has been closely connected with Kaam – that is Kaam can mean both sex in the narrow sense and the world of sensual enjoyment in its much broader sense and connotation. Another example that brings out the Hindu tradition's explicit preference for Kaam comes from the *Mahabharatha* (Zaehner 114-115). When the Pandava brothers sat down with the wise Vidura and discussed which of the three legitimate pursuits of man was the highest…. In the discussion that ensued, Bhima boldly declared that satisfaction of desire (Kaam) was the first duty of man. Speaking in the spirit of the Vedic hymn, which saw in desire the source and origin of all things, he said that without the desire to achieve, all achievement is impossible. "How had the great sages of old won

through to liberation? They had desired it and through the fervor of their desire, they had won the prize. Desire is the secret of all success, whether material or spiritual and only a hypocrite could deny it" (41-42).

The trend did continue till the Islamic invasion although hints of change could be perceived in the Shamanic tradition. Nevertheless, the major advocate of this tradition, the Buddha, also did not consider family life inferior to that of a renunciant or a monk, though it was accepted that family ties and bonds do serve as obstacles in the way of Nibbana as mentioned earlier. Kaam was a regular subject of contemplation and study and the culture in due course of time produced the *Kaam Sutra* which seems to have become a classic immediately. Though we do not have various commentaries written on it other than Kokkaka's, it can be safely said that Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* acquired the position of an authoritative text which no later writer has ever ventured to question according to K. M. Panikkar. Introducing the translation by Richard Burton Pannikar tells us that "The *Kaam Sutra* was composed according to the precepts of the Holy Writ, for the benefit of the world by Vatsyayana, while leading the life of a religious student and wholly engaged in the contemplation of the deity" (43) – a fact which is corroborated by Biardeau (47-48) who tells us that Vatsyayana wrote this work when he had attained the state of 'renouncer' perhaps at Benaras, in other words at an advanced stage when he expected nothing other than liberation, Moksha. He further makes the most pertinent remark that echoes the entire ethos of Hindu tradition when he says "How could a treatise so full of wisdom have been written by anyone other than a renouncer who had crossed over to the far shore of human passions? This according to Pannikar (43) might sound strange, not to say blasphemous to Westerners but in India, Vatsyayana's claim to reverence was never questioned and he is always referred to as Maharshi or the Great Seer-another point that explains the assimilation of purely physical worldly existence with the concept of meditation and liberation. This could not be put in better words than Biardeau when he says, "But it is Kaam that constitutes the most remarkable case. Though its theory is presented in only one text, the notion of Kaam is omnipresent in Indian speculation and gives rise to

philosophical-religious doctrines and practices in which it has a central role" (46).

Kaam was to be explicitly stated in a treatise and if it was necessary, it was because Dharma to technical rules – man and woman cannot make love to each other in the same way as the mating of beasts as is given to be understood as the scope of the book according to Biardeau (48). The treatise includes every type of desire that the term Kaam highlights, every object of desire, and all sorts of sensory as well as sensual satisfaction. As W. G. Archer says "Indians did not shrink from 'the physical fact'. Sex, they believed, could be the finest thing in life. They knew that sex with anyone and everyone was not possible. They conceded that the other considerations must sometimes operate. They recognised morals. However, this did not affect their main contention**.** *Sex was life at its most intense and, confronted, by this intensity, other values lost much of their force"*(40). Moreover, therefore it is not a great surprise that Vatsyayana wrote of the subject at the sunset of his life – a subject to be analysed and essayed with utter abandonment, to be the most thought about and talked about when most free.

Though Vatsyayana tried to color the carnal desire with propriety, duty, and Dharma (he seemed to reject pure carnal desire) these qualifications probably got forgotten in the way of writing the treatise. It would not be out of context to mention here that Biardeau says that "The treatise of kama goes even beyond this, forgetting its dharmic checks and acting as if they did not exist at all" (49).

Furthermore, this is why Archer paying tribute to the translation says "Sex is there and whether right, wise or prudent, life is nothing if it is not enjoyed. For this reason, he constantly reverts to skill, technique, and knowledge. He analyses in detail the physical conditions on which sexual rapture depends. He emphasises the need for variety. He lists the most intricate of small refinements. How extensive was this stock of Indian knowledge, how careful had been its analysis, how erudite its codification had not been realised before" (41).

The translation of the *Kama Sutra*, completely changed, transformed, and revolutionised the world's understanding of Indian culture and especially the Western approach towards Indian thought.

Sex had been so central and so natural to Indian life and thought, that it got reflected in the entire range of culture whether it be art, poetry, or religion. Sex was the primary thought, the basic concern of an average Hindu's life so much so that Archer says that it would not be an exaggeration to say "that from this classic translation in 1883, the modern understanding of Indian art and culture derives" (Burton and Arbuthnot 41). And as Doniger and Kakkar assert "The sexual fantasy in the *Kaam Sutra* is the culmination of centuries of erotic meditations every bit as complex as the parallel ascetic meditations of the literature of the Upanishads and their commentaries"(Xxvii).

Kaam as sex, occupied, and still occupies, an important place in the Hindu Society. Moreover, pleasure for both men and women were deemed to be equally natural and important. Women were supposed to be a procreator and be blessed with sons to carry on the husbands' lineage. However, it should not be understood that women were treated only for use in bringing the next generation into the world. Their desire was also kept in complete cognizance. As Biardeau (47) says that she could be a procreator "only if there is a mutual attraction between the spouses" (for example, Manu, III, 60-61). Thus, the reproductive function is subordinated to the satisfaction of desire, there are a multitude of myths which tend to show this and which even give the initiative in desire to the woman. As Doniger and Kakkar assert

> "The *Kaam Sutra* can be viewed as an account of a war of independence that took place in India some 2000 years ago. The first aim of this struggle was the rescue of erotic pleasure from the crude purposefulness of sexual desire, from its biological function of reproduction alone" (Intro xxxix).

Nevertheless, as we know from Kaam Sutra and Arthasastra that love was the first duty of a woman, her "svadharma" but at the same time, this svadharma was summed up as a formula that said "to serve her husband as her principal god" and get her fulfillment in return. However, if this presents itself to be a contradiction, it appears to be a superficial one after one reads the *Kaam Sutra* as it deals with sex and celebrates the fact that women have the desire, initiative, and existence of their own. The whole treatise is fraught with lessons for women to make themselves more presentable, agreeable, and desirable to men. This might sound provocative to the feminist

movements but it is an open truth that a majority of women's life is dedicated to seeking partners and vice versa, as Biardeau says "There is no human being who does not desire another human being" (44), so if *Kaam Sutra* says that all women, including unmarried girls, must study at least the practice of Kaam – can there be anything more modern in its approach towards women?

Moreover, if taken from this point of view one would not be surprised at the space given to prostitutes in the treatise. They were required to be well-versed in the matters of sex, in theory and practice. The knowledge of all entertaining arts for the satisfaction of her clients was to be expected of her like parlor games, languages, cock-fighting, architecture, etc. Also, as the common worldly household women were expected to win over their prospective husbands by the use of flowers, ointments, perfumes, needlework, cuisine, music, song, and dance.

Additionally, the most interesting aspect of sexual desire and union could have highly symbolic connotations. As K. M. Pannikar tells us "The Hindu view of Salvation being that of the union of the individual soul with the universal, the utter merging of one in the other, the union of man and woman in which the duality is lost becomes in the Hindu view the perfect symbol of liberation"(46). Similarly, it is interesting to note that in Judaism, the union of the Creator with the Matronit is central to creation. The Matronit is described as being always ready for the cosmic sexual act, and this parallel has been explored by many writers (Patai 1977).

The worship of the Shiv Linga (phallus) situated in the vagina (yoni) and the beginning of the *Hymn To the Devi* by Shankaracharya which says "Shiva is capable of creation only when united with Shakti: Otherwise, he is only inert matter" and Lord Krishna's statement in the Gita, "I am the Kaam that procreates" is proof enough to tell us how conspicuous has been Sex for Indian tradition. Thus, it is agreeable when Pannikar says that "when this was the orthodox attitude of Hinduism to the man-woman relationship-as the human counterpart of the cosmic union between matter and energy which creates the world – it is but natural that Hindu thinkers had none of the inhibitions of western writers in studying matters relating to sex" (46). There is probably no culture in the world where sex is

treated with such deference, reverence, and objectivity and not as something obscene and taboo. Though what happened to the culture after the Islamic invasion and British occupation is obvious. The fissure in the comprehensive Hindu life that had appeared with the advance of shamanic traditions got widened with time and the picture of true India as celebrating Sex and pleasure derived thereof, was replaced by something as untrue as the view that Hinduism cared more for liberation and believed the world to be an illusion. Nothing can be farther away from the truth as Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* tells us that no tradition has celebrated sex so openly and made it a part of its day-to-day existence.

The tradition upheld not only sexual gratification as of prime importance to human life, but the modernity of our ancient culture owes to the fact that this gratification was deemed equally important for men as well as women.

Therefore, it is pertinent to discuss Lipner's view that "Although the work is the product of men for the gratification of men, its aim is not to titillate (in this it succeeds), nor are women treated merely as sexual objects. Lovers from both sexes are expected to show sensitivity and understanding towards their partners"(163). Now, a part of this view is contestable again on the same grounds that the work was not meant only for the gratification of men. It was to be taken as the generation of a social order which was to induce satisfaction for all – men and women alike – as the second part of the statement explains. This social order of equanimity/equality then extended to religious rituals where men and women were treated equally importantly – For instance the householder (especially from the higher castes) is supposed to pay three debts. Flood explains that the first was "the debt of Vedic study as a celibate or brahmacarin – student to the rishi or the sages, to pay the debt to the Gods (deva) and perform rituals as a householder, and the debt to be paid to the ancestors (pitr) by begetting a son to make funeral offerings"(Lipner 13). Now begetting the son made the Grihasta ashram the most important one and this is why the Dharma Shastras favour the life of a householder. Manu explicitly states that, "of the four stages, the householder is the best because the householder supports the others and his activity is the supreme good" (Flood 64).

Here it would be pertinent to relate the story of the celibate Shankaracharya who defeated his opponent, the well-known Ritualist or Purva Mimamsaka, Mandana Mishra. However, before the contest could get over, Bharati, Mandan's wife challenged him thinking she would defeat the great celibate on his knowledge of sex. Shankara had heard about a king who had dropped dead on a hunting expedition at which his attendant queens had fainted. Shankara by his superior yogic powers entered with his soul into the king's corpse, while his body remained in a state of suspended animation in his disciple's secret care. Shankara then enjoyed sexual bliss and later decided to return to his own body. Retaining his celibacy and amply conversant in the art of sex, was able to defeat Bharati (Lipner 166). This shows that somebody of the stature of Shankara also was not considered to be complete in knowledge without the knowledge of sex.

As Lipner then asserts "We are interested in the relevant lesson that lurks beneath the surface, which is that it is indispensable, even for a celibate, to appreciate the place of Kaam (and not only its sexual connotations) in a well-ordered society. Such Kaam is not to be just made a part of life in a cathartic or therapeutic manner, but on the contrary, it is to be embraced, for repression, in the absence of sublimation will lead to unhealthy consequences, spiritual and otherwise." He furthers his argument saying "that of course the pursuit of Kaam is not the highest goal and it is fraught with spiritual danger. Nevertheless, for the ordinary person, its outright rejection is even more dangerous spiritually, while its ordered pursuit is conducive to spiritual progress" (165). As the focus of Hindu tradition is on Artha and Kaam and as they are an important base in the life of a householder, they are vital to the very health of the society and religious existence according to Lipner but for them "the society falters and the religious enterprise as a whole grinds to a halt"(165). Not only this, the sole school of Indian materialism, Carvaka, out of the four purusharthas, rejects Dharma (virtue) and Moksha (spiritual freedom). Its prevalence and vibrance since the very beginning of philosophising in the tradition speaks volumes about the popularity of the view of Hindu materialism which gave high importance to the erotic.

They welcome only wealth (Artha) and pleasure (Kaam) as the rational ends of man and out of the two wealth is made subsidiary to the achievement of pleasure as pleasure is considered to be the *summum bonum* of life. According to the present pleasures of Artha and Kaam should not be given up in the hope of future benefit or gain, attained through sanyasa or liberation. They emphasise the enjoyment of the tangible rather than the unseen, intangible rewards of liberation. The famous maxims which explain the character of the Carvaka philosophy such as "Rather a pigeon today than a peacock tomorrow", or "A sure piece of shell is better than a doubtful piece of gold" (Mahadevan 66) reveal the true character of Hindu hedonistic tradition. This ideology of the Carvaka could not be completely ignored as a tempered version of it – something guided by Dharma and socially acceptable norms, the pleasure which is bounded, which is limited by the dictates of propriety is possibly the most acceptable way of defining Hinduism.

This makes it clear that sense and sensual experience is not only indispensable, a necessary element in the Hindu life but is an inevitable step towards the grand goal of liberation – the religious vision of a Hindu. An ethical or dharmic presence of Artha and Kaam is ideal to embrace and as Lipner puts it, "It is distinctive of Hindu savants to teach that in general one can best appreciate the innate spiritual limitations of worldly goals by first passing through the critical fires of the dharmic pursuit of Artha and Kaam" (165). Thus, because of its unique, open, and unabashed consideration of sex, in a society led by Acharyas, the presence of *Kamasutra* bewilders us. We find it difficult to digest that culture some two thousand years back should have been so modern as Doniger and Kakkar say "The *Kamasutra* has attained its classic status because it is at the bottom about essential, unchangeable human attributes – lust, love, shyness, rejection, seduction, manipulation – and it is fascinating for us to see ourselves mirrored in it even as we learn deeply intimate things about a culture that could well be described as long ago and in a galaxy far away" (Ixviii).

Kaam was a generally accepted important value and its recognition is celebrated by Vatsyayana who says "Because a man and woman depend upon one another in sex, it requires a method, and this method is learned from Kama Sutra"(Doniger and Kakar 9).

Therefore, with this view of giving Kaam priority over all other values, we could explore the Hindu tradition in a different light. Opposed to a hardcore philosophising in abstract matters, the culture's efforts have been to carve out a beautiful worldly existence, which undoubtedly finds itself torn between celebration and abstinence but creates a unique blend as Burton (1) emotes "The burning heat of the Indian Sun, the fabulous luxuriance of the vegetation, the enchanted poetry of moonlit nights permeated by the perfume of lotus flowers, and, not least, the distinctive role the Indian people have always played, the role of unworldly dreamers, philosophers, impractical romantics-all combine to make the Indian a real virtuoso in love." (Doniger and Kakkar Intro xxxix).

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BOOK REVIEW

1

Game of Desire: Review of Annie Ernaux's *Getting Lost*

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Ernaux, Annie. *Getting Lost*. Translated by Alison L. Strayer. Seven Stories Press, 2022, 239 pp. $18.95 US/$24.95 CAN

The famous French writer Annie Ernaux's new book, *Getting Lost*, tells of her love affair in Paris with a married Soviet diplomat through the pages of diary entries from 1988 to 1990. S, as she refers to him, is a younger man in his mid-30s and Ernaux is approaching 50 and fearful of aging out of the game the only game, to her mind, that is the fulfillment of sexual desire and writing. The book is brilliantly translated by Alison L. Strayer. This memoir is a haunting record of a woman in the grips of love, desire, and despair. It appears to be a sequel to *Simple Passion* (1991), a slimmer volume, written in more stylistic prose. In both books, we have the same man but in *Getting Lost*, we are offered a penetrating insight into Ernaux's fascination for Soviet culture which is probably the main source of her passion and desire.

The plot of this book is rather simple and easygoing without any external digression or extraneous matter. It is autobiographical in tone and written in the form of diary notes full of emotions and passions. Annie went to attend a writer's junket in Soviet Russia and on the last day of the tour of the lit fest in Leningrad, she had an interesting affair with a young married Russian diplomat (aged 35)

from the Soviet embassy in France while she herself was 48 years of age. After returning to Paris, they met each other many times and had a roaring affair. The Russian diplomat is mentioned here as S, a code name. He spoke French fast with a strong accent. During that period Annie Ernaux wrote nothing else but articles which she was asked to write for magazines. This love affair of eighteen months ends when S leaves France and Annie starts writing a book about their passion. Starting from September (Tuesday) 27, 1988, and ending on April (Monday) 9, 1990, this diary note is studded with passionate descriptions of love and sex, memory and desire, tension and anxiety, separation, and union.

The language is simple, colloquial, and straightforward without any complex framework. Ernaux's physical, psychological, and sexual desire for the Russian man is breathtakingly revealed page after page. Here we have glimpses of secretive, aggressive, and macho Soviet culture which attracts and appalls Annie who looks for equal measurement and fulfillment. Apart from love and lust, sex and desire political issues are sparingly explored. The historical background is captured through the facets of various human relationships. The memoir is written in the form of a diary with interesting narrations of love episodes and Soviet culture. One is reminded of the diarists like Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn. The writing is well-knit that we cannot stop turning pages. One must read *Simple Passion* for a better understanding of this book which is reminiscent of books like *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*.

The diary entries (from September, Tuesday, 27, 1988 to 9th April, Monday-1990) of eighteen monthly love affairs explore the concept of love, lust, and the fear of abandonment. Here we see that Ernaux is divorced and has two grown sons named David and Eric and they are living in Paris. Her lover, S, sees her there intermittantly and she waits with expectation of their reunion. While she is waiting for his next call she needs to feel desire, real desire, the kind she felt in the streets of Leningrad. When he is gone and the moment of desire has faded, she feels as if she is a step closer to death. She suppresses desire in all aspects. To quote Ernaux – "We make love, eat, inseparable, our sweat, our mouths joined, as we caress each other. Yes, what a beautiful story. Yesterday, I reached new heights of

pleasure. On his side, there may be an element of performance. But it doesn't matter, desire is all that counts" (*Getting Lost* 147).

Ernaux specifies the historical context of the moment: "The Berlin Wall had fallen several days before. The Soviet regimes established in Europe toppled one after the other. The man who had just returned to Moscow was a faithful servant of the USSR, a Russian diplomat posted in Paris". (7). And she has an affair with this Russian diplomat with whom she came in contact with during a literary junket in Leningrad in the fall of 1988. Ernaux says candidly, "We had spent the last night together, in Leningrad." (7). After returning to France, they continued to see each other. Sometimes he would ring to know if he could come around to see her in the afternoon or evening or more rarely, a day or two later. He would arrive and stay just a few hours and they spent their time in making love. When he left and she would wait for his next call to fix a date for sex again. S was thirty-five and his wife worked as his secretary at the embassy. To quote Annie, "He spoke French quickly, with a strong accent. Though outwardly a partisan of Gorbachev and perestroika, when he had a drink, he mourned the time of Brezhnev and made no secret of his veneration of Stalin." (8). S is tall and handsome, given to drinking too much vodka and waxing nostalgic about Brezhnev and Stalin. He is a wonderful lover, somewhat comical as he won't remove his socks. Amasingly Annie doesn't much care about his culture or his official activities. All she is interested in is the satisfaction of her body. She admits "Today, I am amazed that I did not ask more questions. Nor will I ever know what I meant to him. His desire for me was the only thing I was sure of. He was, in every sense of the word, the shadow lover." (8). She even expresses in a dream that: "Sex has always been a source of anxiety in my life". (91). Deeply in love as she is with the Russian diplomat, she transvests and starts dreaming about Russia: "I dreamt in Russian, uttered Russian sentences, thought in Russian (What, I don't remember)." (146). Ernaux feels as if she is a teenager all over again. Everything else in the world falls away amid their passion, and she thinks only of the appeasement of her carnal desire "I felt was desire, all-consuming desire each time, it's as if I am going to lose my virginity all over again" (51). Kissing S reminds her of being kissed at age 18 as he gives her back her 20-year-old self of desire and lust.

In moments of self-reflection Ernaux contrasts herself with S who "likes fancy cars, luxury, and social connections, and is not much intellectual" (15) and "As for me, I'm the writer, the foreigner, the whore-the free woman too. I'm, not a good woman." (16). Passion and mourning are synonyms. Her whole life, as she notes, has been an effort to tear herself away from male desire and from her own passion even if it is violent. At 63, she is reflects on the words from the Bible "And I will extend my peace to her like a river, not even knowing that these words referred to my desire, sperm flowing over me like a river." (60). She does not think of S as a brute even though the bedroom scenes are bulldosing and erotic and their relationship is very erotic and simulative.

Annie Ernaux is influenced by the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre and it is a deeply revealing and intimate work that fully demonstrates her writing process. To quote Ankita Chakraborty, "The quality that distinguishes Ernaux's writing on sex from others in her milieu is the total absence of shame. Desire in her brings forth more desire, the impulse of death, happiness, and even past trauma, like her abortion, but never humiliation. Ernaux intends it to be a love story from the beginning, but it's not. Instead, it's a study of a woman at her peak desire. In the future I suspect, the book will become a kind of totem for lovers: a manual to help them find their center when, like Ernaux, they are lost in love" (The Guardian n.p.). Dwight Garner opines "*Getting Lost* is a feverish book. It's about being impaled by desire, and about the things human beings want, as opposed to the things for which they settle" (The New York Times n.p.). Jamie Hood, another critic, has commented "That we again face an era when gains of feminist and sexual liberationist movements are being reactionarily regressed, Ernaux's erotic manifesto and her radical exhortation of the value of foregrounding women's narratives in public and political context has perhaps never been more essential about ongoing demands for bodily integrity and autonomy" (The Baffler n.p.). Similarly, Sophie Haigney comments that "The memoir details an illicit affair in prose that feels startlingly immediate, full of particulars that seem to surface in real-time" (The Paris Review n.p.).

Indeed Annie Ernaux's *Getting Lost* is a vivid and candid record of her intricate and blazing affair with the Russian young man and their

attitude to love, sex, writing, passion, desire, and despair. Eroticism runs through the book along with the desire for sexual hunger that seem to be the stimulant. This memoir celebrates the body and its desires. Here Ernaux challenges social hypocrisy and the tendency of readers to be judgmental.

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