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Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life - An Autobiography of a Dalit*: A Refugee Life Writings of Downtrodden Dislocation

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Abstract

This article seeks to explore how Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography remembers the Bengal partition, its subsequent forced migration, rootlessness, refugee crisis, poverty, and problems of identity and citizenship. This book is a powerful record of Byapari's life of extreme hunger, displacement, deprivation, and the forcible relocation of refugees to *Dandakaranya*, the Andaman Islands, and the inhospitable places of Malkangiri, Dalli, and Bastar districts. This life writing realistically elaborates on his first-hand experience of pathos arising from dislocation from East Bengal to West Bengal and of a tragic metamorphosis from innocence to experience. He depicts his own life in various refugee camps in which families were forced to endure filth and squalor, disease and death, as well as poverty and starvation. They were transferred to *Marichjhapi*, *Dandakaranya*, Andamans, and the wilderness of Madya Pradesh. He willingly becomes a prisoner for food in jail and learns letters and words from an inmate of the prison house. Finally meeting Mahasweta Devi metamorphoses him into the writer Manoranjan Byapari. This article will highlight Byapari's grand scale narrativization of pre cum post partition refugee exodus, identity destabilization, discrimination, vagrant lifestyle, struggle for sustenance, and questions of citizenship. This article will discuss the concepts of dislocation, abjection, and subalternity as an authentic testimony of partition and post-partition by the autobiographical *Namasudra* refugee narrative.

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Introduction

The central argument in discussions of *Dalit* autobiography concerns the relationship of the protagonist or individual to the larger community. According to Sarah Beth, "Since Dalit autobiographies are meant to be the life-story of an ordinary Dalit, symbolically represent the experiences of every Dalit, the Dalit protagonist is established as the representative of the Dalit community and Dalit identity" (Beth 46). *Dalit* Writings in Bagla, though started late in the 1930s and 1940's, surprisingly, most of the writings are autobiographical in nature and theme. These life writings or memoirs, so to speak, as written by Byapari to Manohar Moui Biswas, consciously reflect upon the partition and post-partition dislocation, identity, and refugeehood. Thematically, these stories revolve around the lives and refugee experiences of *the Namasudra* people, but their roots and inspiration are traced back to the *Matua* movement, *or Matua Sahitya*. The most organized and intellectual section of *the Dalit* community in Bengal is the *Namasudras*, also known as *the Matua*s. They are traditionally considered lower caste in Hinduism and are devout followers of Harichand and Guruchand Thakur. The history and historiography of *Matua Namasudra*s are histories of suppression, oppression, migration, statelessness, and of refugeehood. In contemporary times, the identity and citizenship issues of *Matuas* are questioned due to a lack of education and effective leadership. Recently, they have been facing the same refugeehood due to a lack of documents, and the most affected people in Bengal are *Matuas* due to the SIR process. These people, due to the partition of India and Bengal, were forced to migrate to the other side of the border in West Bengal. According to Byapari and Shipra Mukherjee:

> In the darkness of night, they crossed the border, leaving behind their land, houses, and all material possessions. Year after year, they lived under trees, on pavements, on railway platforms, in the refugee camps-existing at a subsistence level. In the name of rehabilitation, some were sent to uninhabited islands in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, others were packed off to the forest and unproductive terrain of *Dandakaranya* in Madhya Pradesh, and to other barren regions of the

> country. Thus, an organised community got fragmented and lost its strength (4116).

The *Namasudras* were referred to as *Chandal*, or untouchables, in colonial Bengal. However, they were recognised as *Namasudras* in the 1911 census. They were recognised as *Bangal* and *Dalit* refugees after migrating to West Bengal. Byapari shows that *Namasudra* refugees did not receive a respectful welcome from the national government or the West Bengal government. They were placed in overcrowded, filthy, and inadequately funded refugee camps. In the postcolonial period, *Matua* refugee issues remain a serious example of citizenship problems with human rights violations. In the past, their homelessness and suffering were undoubtedly caused by racial tensions and unequal growth in society. Manoranjan Byapari, the pioneer of *Dalit* literature in Bengali, through his autobiography, has clearly represented the constant sufferings and hardships imposed on the hapless *Namasudra* refugees who crossed the borders with a hope into a totally hostile host country, with a complex migrant identity. This refugee identity has remained a sole companion even today, in the postmodern period, in their daily lives. Even the citizenship questions are again being inquired into through the SIR process, and in the future, CAA and NRC issues in India, which are the most feared factors for these *Namasudra* refugees.

Life Writing of Byapari as a form of Self-Revelation

Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography recalls the Bengal partition, its subsequent forced migration, rootlessness, refugee crisis, poverty, identity crisis, and citizenship problems. As will be shown, in this novel, this upheaval resulted in an intellectual hatred against the so-called lower classes, *Bangal* in general, and the *Namasudra Bangal* in particular. This book is a powerful record of Byapari's life of extreme hunger, poverty, and deprivation, and of the forcible relocation of refugees to *Dandakaranya,* the Andaman Islands, and the inhospitable places of Malkangiri, Dalli, and Bastar districts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. In this autobiography, Byapari, as an omniscient narrator, realistically elaborates on his first-hand experience of pathos stemming from his dislocation from East Bengal to West Bengal, his tragic metamorphosis into a Naxalite and a follower *of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha* under Shankar Guha Neogi, and his final conversion from innocence to experience.

He depicts his own life in various refugee camps in which refugee families were forced to endure filth and squalor, disease and death, as well as poverty and starvation. The death of refugees due to cholera, malaria, ill-treatment, and hunger in these unhealthy camps was the daily routine work in the rehabilitation camps of the refugees. His parents lived in the refugee camp with other displaced refugees. They were forced to spend their lives in hunger and, afterward, to be transferred to Marichjhapi, Dandakaranya, and the Andamans. He willingly becomes a prisoner for food in jail and learns letters and words from another inmate of the prison house. He is a perpetual victim of fate who, like the Greek tragic hero Oedipus, moves continually in search of individuation, is arrested and finds a temporary respite in prison, becomes a Naxalite, a local goon, a daily wage labourer, a shop cleaner, an insurgent of *Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha*, and finally, Byapari becomes a *chandal* rickshaw puller. A meeting with Mahasweta Devi metamorphoses him into the writer Manoranjan Byapari. Therefore, Byapari's grand scale narrativization of the novel is the account of pre cum post-partition exodus of refugees, identity destabilization, discrimination, vagrant lifestyle, struggle for sustenance, and questions of citizenship. The novel attempts to illustrate his chequered life as a criminal, a *Dalit*, an insurgent, and an indigent in *Interrogating My Chandal Life* (*Itibritte Chandal Jiban),* theoretically and thematically, as an authentic testimony of the partition and post-partition autobiographical refugee tale. This life writing becomes an authentic record of his life from childhood to adulthood, and, very frankly, he delineates his autobiographical record in the wake of the partition of Bengal, adopting the life narrative as the medium of his literary device. However, it is irrelevant to ask why all Bengali *Dalit* writings, which are a developing genre, uphold only the literary lineage of autobiographical narratives or life writing. However, they very accurately and vividly depict the social issues that the writers, as individuals, faced before and after the partition of Bengal, including prejudice, intellectual animosity, and other issues. They are the victims of the Bengal partition between the two sides because of caste, class, religion, and gender. Manoranjan Byapari has also undergone double hardships due to displacement and misplacement in India and the past in Bangladesh. Therefore, he views life writing

as a literary weapon to inform the public about the false, irrational, and unscientific vivisection of the nation for the formation of a new nation and nation-state. Therefore, the life narrative of Byapari:

> Is life Writing, art, or craft, history, or literature, objective or subjective? Can it ever be 'true,' adequate to a lived life, even possible at all? Should life writers tell a story, or should life writers tell a story or should they tell the facts? How much interpretation is available, how much speculation, how much fictionalisation? What are the ethical and legal problems of writing about real people, even sometimes members of one's own family? What are the problems of the memory, of evidence of myth-making? What is the role of the life writers? (Cline et al. xiv).

Life writing was basically defined in the olden times as "the story of one's life written by himself" (Cline et al. 02). The Greek term literally means self-life writing or writing about the events of one's own life. In 1980, the French theorist Philippe Lejeune added a more expansive definition of the term life writing. He confirmed by declaring that autobiography or life writing is a "retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence" (Cline et al. 02). What combines the most significant definitions formulated by autobiography researchers in recent periods is that the term life writing, which serves as a genre for description used for written autobiographical accounts in contradistinction to fictional genres such as novels. Autobiographical writing is a century-old phenomenon, reaching back to the earliest records of Christianity. It is found in the diaries of famous leaders in China and the memoirs of European philosophers. In the olden days, ancient rulers and public figures wrote down their lives in order to "share their insights and leave a legacy to their successors with their accounts serving as historical documents" (Cline et al. 10). The most famous and often-cited example of life writing is St. Augustine's *Confessions,* written in 397 AD. Jean Jacques Rousseau's autobiographical writings sketch this feature, which was published in 1782 under the title *Autobiography*. Life writing under the umbrella of autobiography comprises various forms, such as written and unwritten documents, memoirs, diary entries, poetry, etc. In addition, at present, these autobiographical representations are prominently found "in different media such as film, as well as new media formats like online diaries

and blogs, etc., which are included in the term autobiography" (Cline et al. 73).

Autobiographies, biographies, diaries, letters, memorials, and journals are all used in the highly authentic technique of life writing. It is also 2000 years old and, honestly, employed by the authors for self-expression and self-revelation. The autobiographical writings had not been developed or used in literature very abruptly. Indian b*hajans* of Mirabai are an apt example of life writing because they are emotional deliberations on her pent-up feelings of devotional outbursts. Mirabai expresses her thoughts and emotions through language; her autobiographical notes or collections of life writings, dedicated to *Lord Krishna*, have autobiographical subject matter and tone. In *The Work of Meryon Kempe* (1536), a female author from the 15th century first introduced this genre to English literature. Another person, Stephen A. Saphiro, writes about life narrative in "An Art of Perspective, an art of juxtaposed perspectives: the present commenting upon the past, the past commenting upon the present. It is an art of contrast and integration" (Kempe 119). Hence, life writing becomes a mode of resistance against repressive societal norms and mores, enabling the assessment and analysis of the decisive moment or moments. From the psychological point of view, this kind of autobiographical narrative is effectively used to release the tension of the individual self. It very rigorously gives the author a chance to improve and heralds an avenue for the coming generation to their moral and ethical significance. By the end of the 18th century, in the genre of life writing, a change came in respect of the theme and subject matter. The emphasis in the life writings shifted from the application of emotions and intimate life problems to the theme and concept of the texts. In his *Liber Amoris* (1823), William Hazlitt delineates the problems of the author's life, social problems, and the life story, which had also been assimilated into 18th-century English literature. However, very optimistically, with the rise of the printing press and the education of the 19th century, the modern concept of life writing began to develop and solidify in its current form. It is also spread among public figures and politicians, along with the romantic notion and the upbringing of other social problems. In the 20th century, these life writings became very prolific and popular for expressing common societal phenomena, as well as personal

experiences and feelings about life. Cline and Angier comment in their *The Arvon Book of Life Writing: Writing Biography, Autobiography and Memoir*:

> There are many reasons for the enthusiastic pursuit of the autobiographies and biographies of the famous and infamous, the confessional outpourings, or the mysteriously withheld secrets of politicians, sportspeople, writers, or those who have lived through extraordinary times. People read them because they want to know about many real lives, not just their own. Some people read biographies because they are quest narratives, like detective stories or engaging thrillers. Who is this person? Will we ever understand him or her? What is going to happen next? Some believe in autobiography because it gives them direct access to someone else's genuine experiences and feelings. It is not surprising that in our egocentric age of Twitter and Blogs, autobiography and memoir in particular – the genres based on the self, on inwardness, revelation and intimacy – are increasingly written and read (Kempe 71).

The autobiography of a *Dalit* or *Dalit* life-writing, in fact, cantered on the quest for an alternative identity, modernity, and the fight for emancipation. Two prominent *Dalit* autobiographies, which have not been given due attention, focus on two strong vernacular literary traditions in India. The novels *Uchlaya* (*The Branded*) by Marathi author Laxman Gaikwad and the more modern Bengali-language *Itibritte Chandal Jiban* (2013) (*Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit)* by Manoranjan Byapari have received critical and scholarly attention. In these texts, narratives of Dalit self-articulation and personal experiences of *Dalitism* created an effective counterpoint to predominant Anglophone, postcolonial, and postmodern literary and cultural modes focused on the ubiquitous middle-class citizen-subject. In respect of 'Bengali Dalit Literature' that originated in Bengal, most of it is autobiographical in nature and content, initiated by the literary canon of the *Matua* movement in Bengal's culture. This *Matua* resistance genuinely emphasizes the rootlessness, identity politics, trauma of partition, and caste and class discrimination of *the Namasudra* people. However, the first *Dalit* stories in Bengali literature are Rashbihari Roy Pandit's *Namasudra Darpan* (*A Mirror for Namasudras*). The work published in 1909 depicts the *Namasudra* community's dispersed settlements while building a genealogy of the group's identity. It asserts a more respectable history cum identity, which was practically dependent on the projection of an

alternative history. The other early twentieth-century texts, like Balaram Sarkar's *Namasudra- Jnanabhandara* (*Knowledge-Repository of the Namasudras*) and Haridas Palit's *Bangiya Patit Jatir Karmi* (1915) (*A Worker of the Bengali Depressed Classes*), also exhibit interaction between literary texts and sociological concerns. The latter is the first Bengali-language work and reflects the helpless account of a *Dalit* life. Writer Manoranjan Byapari, as a theorist of Bengali *Dalit* literature, calls attention to a long-ignored literary history of the oppressed castes of Bengal by citing *Matua Sahitya/Literature* of the *Matuas* - an early, well-liked section of the Bengali *Dalits.* The *Matua Sahitya* originated from the *Bhakti* cult and was established by Guru Chand Thakur, who, in undivided Bengal, politically united a sizable, endogamous segment of the rural poor, the *Namasudra*s, from the utter darkness of their daily lives. Byapari and other life writers, debarred from the first generation of Namasudra writers, try to focus on the post-partition vulnerabilities of *the Matua* community in Bengal and India, as the downtrodden, uprooted, and refugees in their daily survival and existential problems.

Memory of Downtrodden Dislocation in Byapari's Novel

Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* begins with a concise and convincing explanation of the author's motivation for penning an autobiography, or, more specifically, a life story. The narrator emphasizes the use of story in his life-writing as a deliberate, general decision rather than an accident. According to Byapari, any narrative gains from the narrator an invented name for certain persons and locations. According to Byapari, the narrative tenor of life writing is utopian as "The past has to be retold as the present and the present has to be pushed to the future" (Byapari 21).

The story must advance to reach the 'truth' which is the author's goal, as well as the writer's formal decisions. The purpose of the life story, which Byapari terms *Itabirite* or history, is to reveal the author's interpretation. Manoranjan Byapari starts his novel with the events of "His hapless and vulnerable childhood, emotions of intense pain and anger. The agony is so close to the bone that at times takes refuge in the third person, naming his younger self Jeeban" (Byapari 15). The partition of Bengal brought two different kinds of stories among the displaced people of Bangladesh. The affluent and wealthy settled in

West Bengal and its big cities with their money and intellect. However, this scenario became worse for the poor and marginal men and women as well as for the subalterns. This dislocation is actually due to the partition that created traumatic lives through radical disjunction in a linear sense of time and a sense of progressive history. It had a tremendous impact on West Bengal Bengalis and especially on the lives of Hindu lower-class refugees. The displacement and migration from Bangladesh became an inescapable part of the political reality for *Namasudras.* The governments of India and Bangladesh had no well-thought-out plan for curbing infiltration and rehabilitation for the Hindus who took shelter in India as rootless people. They had the tale of individual loss, of escape and survival in a new land, a traumatic narrative rendered especially by the sudden whiff of nostalgia for a lost homeland or death. This dislocation in Byapari's life began early. As he says, "Five of us arrived in the Great land of India: my father, me, my brother Chitta, and my aged grandmother who was too fond of her only daughter to let her go" (Byapari 93). The dislocation in the protagonist's and his family's lives began early, due to the partition-induced mass exodus and migration to India. A. K. Biswas, in respect of the dislocation and displacement of the narrator as a downtrodden *Namasudra,* comments that caste discrimination and its sharp edges were significantly tempered by the partition of Bengal, which was a major contributory cause not only in political life but also in social life, and in the initiating sad historical event which set off a *Tsunami*.

The chapter 'Banished from the East' also recalls the narrative of the downtrodden, dislocated by partition-induced displacement. The narrative of Manoranjan Byapari offers a vivid description of belonging, citizenship problems, forced displacement, and the painful experiences of a *Dalit* refugee's life. As a *sharanarthi /udvastu* (*refugee*), the author, from his childhood to an aged man, faced violence, rootlessness, loss, and anguish of the post-partition trauma. Moreover, as a displaced *Dalit* who spent most of his life in different parts of India, he wandered as a rogue in a picaresque novel from refugee camps to unauthorized colonies, such as Bankura's Shiromanipur refugee camps, to Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Bastar, *Dandakaranya, Marichjhapi*, and many more places. Due to the partition, the author, like a parasite, moves from one place to another

in extreme hunger, poverty, and miserable conditions along with his parents and other refugee family members. After missing his parents, the narrator, Jeeban, travelled for five years across different parts of India as an orphan, seeking food and shelter and trying to regain his identity or forge a new one. Byapari's family faced the triple victimised condition as they were not the representatives of the *babu* or the *bhadralok* (gentleman) section of the society in East Pakistan or India. With full of tears in his eyes, Manoranjan Byapari, a dislocated and wretched of the earth through his refugeehood, confesses:

> We are refugees. We lost everything in the riots in East Pakistan. Our house, fish-filled pond, rice-laden stores - we left all and escaped with our lives. The government kept us in camps at first and then took us *to Dandyakaranya*. I was traveling with my family, my mother, my father, my sister, and my brother. At a station where the train stopped, my mother asked me to get some water. So, I got down. But before I could get up again, the train left. And now I have lost them all (Byapari 223).

The protagonist's life narrative is a refugee *Dalit* dislocation, which Byapari does not confine to childhood memories or to his life as a runaway boy. Even after this displacement of life and partition trauma, the search for roots haunts his life throughout his entire life as a vagabond. The *Naxalist* movement influenced his life when, as a displaced person, he returned to Calcutta. His entry into the *Naxal* movement and 'Afterward Bomb Explosion in Bardhaman' metamorphosed his entire life as Byapari finally finds himself 'Into Jail and World of Letters.' The narrator in this stage, metamorphoses himself into an *avatar* (emanation) like figure, enters the world of education inside the jail, and instils within himself the divine manifestations of goddess *Saraswati.* Like the conversion of *Ratnakar* to the sage *Valmiki*, Manoranjan Byapari transformed his inner self and spirit, with the full blessings of divine omniscience, in jail and in the Jadavpur area as a rickshaw puller. "A Rickshaw-wallah's Meeting with Mahasweta Devi," as in Indian myth, "Mahasweta " is another name for Saraswati, helps him to understand the meaning of the line "If you want a lifetime's happiness, read books" (Byapari 217) as a rickshaw puller asked this rickshaw wallah's passenger the meaning of the word *jijibisha* (wish to live). Mahasweta Devi gradually transformed his life and veered away Byapari from the direction of the rickshaw puller. His life moved from abysmal darkness and animalism to a life of dignity and respect. The narrator becomes a

famous writer with the help and blessings of Devi Mahasweta in the literary field. Mahasweta Devi declares, "Madan is a great fellow. He drives a rickshaw, she writes" (Byapari 213). Like other *Dalit* writers of India, Manoranjan Byapari undergoes numerous kinds of trauma due to his refugeehood, due to his birth into an untouchable lower class of *the Namasudra* community, and on the other hand, a representative of the labour force branded as an *Itar*. In Sanskrit, the word *Itar* comes to mean 'other', which therefore implies inferiority in a negative sense. The respectable middle class of the colonial period, known as *bhadralok*, was separated from the *Itar* portion of society throughout the 19th century. Before starting his own biography, Byapari made an earnest plea to the reader to leave their own world and enter the *Itar* or 'other' one, which he would be describing thoroughly in his autobiographical text. In the postcolonial context, this *Itar* connotes the meaning of 'other' who are somehow or other marginalised by the metropolitan or centre of society. This 'other' can be discovered in Byapari's novel in the urban wilderness or in the robust centre of the so-called *bhadralok* society. The downtrodden hero of the novel or omniscient author may serve as a periphery, an edge, or a cowherd. He may be a young worker in a tea shop beside the road, scrubbing Chinese vessels with his skeleton-like hands. Here, Byapari, as an 'other', is a downtrodden, displaced, rootless self, trying repeatedly for the construction of his identity, but time and again becomes a misplaced, dislocated one. As an impoverished person, he is found to be colonised by the same colonised representatives who are always muted by another 'other' in their utter voiceless condition. Shreya Chatterjee, in her article "Dialectics and Caste: Rethinking Dalit Life Writings in the Vernacular Comparing Dalit Narratives," comments:

> Through the invocation of multiple others that could be the protagonists of this particular life story, the narrator in fact contextualizes his own life and life-writing as a narrative of and from the periphery; significantly, the narrative underscores the fact that the social construction of these others takes place through the appropriation of surplus value of labour rather than the discursive, ontological, or psychoanalytic regime so common in certain kinds of cultural studies parlance (215).

In his autobiographical novel, Manoranjan Byapari recounts the ups and downs of his life, including repeated relocations,

estrangement from his family, hunger, insecurity, imprisonment for joining the *Naxalite* movement, a chance meeting with Mahasweta Devi, the articulation of his literary self, and breaking into the literary world of *the bhadralok* (gentlemen). He had to alter his vocation as frequently as his fragile life and circumstances dictated, driven by persistent hunger and a rebellious attitude. In tracing the history of his life as a cheap rickshaw puller, revolutionary, and litterateur, he utilizes post-partition West Bengal as a backdrop, a region that had a profoundly negative impact on the chain of events in his life since childhood. His memories, experiences, feelings, emotions, and rage are clearly shared as he records them in this autobiographical narrative. Damayanti Das, in her "Problematizing the Hegemonic Conceptualization of Refugeehood in West Bengal: A Study of Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit*," writes:

> His autobiography is a valuable social document which acts as a counter-narrative in dismantling the strategic silence and hypocrisy in partition studies regarding the caste issues. He unfailingly underlines the importance of 'speaking up' which has the potential to reorient the normativity of refugee perspective (84).

Manoranjan Byapari was forcibly migrated and dislocated from his family members after their forced migration from East Bengal, from their home to a new kind of hostile environment. This journey of his life, from childhood to adulthood spent in various refugee camps, does not end his vulnerability. He runs from Bankura refugee camps to Sealdah railway camps, from *Dandyakaranya* to *Marichjhapi,* and his displacement kept him alive more heroically until the end of the novel. The protagonist is forced to migrate to an alien land with a different culture and environment. They are unable to cope with the environment, and from their homeland to an alien land full of anguish and pain, as they are still branded as outsiders. They are refugees who are unable to cope up as they have been burdened by the host as well as by their land. They are underdogs, mostly from the downtrodden section of society, known as the exile *Namasudra* people. Therefore, their dislocation and the question of relocation or location are meaningless to the *bhadralok* and so-called educated section of society. This dislocation of Byapari is related to the literal, cultural, and emotional levels of the rootless people. The expectations of the rootless people in the alien land are not met very easily and

immediately as refugeehood involves a process of disruption and fully brings into their lives one kind of dislocation and disruption. The feeling of alienation and dislocation, and a sense of anxiety caught in a conflict with the world, which the narrator explored very realistically in the novel. This dislocation is a postmodernist feature, used in the novel as a consequence of the crying of the Bengali refugees, which is used in the following lines of the novel:

> We are people who have lived off this air and soil, Babu. Give us some land here in Bengal. The land of Dandakaranya is alien to us, its soil hard and rocky, its language and culture foreign. Moreover, the government of the land is totally indifferent to us. We can hardly survive there. There in this inhospitable island to the corner of your state – let us stay there (Byapari 236).

The term dislocation is commonly used in the literature on Byapari because it is intended to encompass even covert and subtle forms of expropriation, making it a more relevant classification than displacement. When residents of a specific living space, state, or nation are forcibly removed, this is understood as a form of dislocation, specifically physical displacement. This displacement, compensation, and resettlement are feelings of disturbance and loss that rootless people experience, even when they may not have physically left the place or their own space. This disruption could result from repercussions of development projects, such as the closure of an enterprise or the formation or expansion of an enterprise that has adverse effects on their current source of livelihood. Additionally, by concentrating on polymorphous dislocations, we become more sensitive.

Furthermore, by focusing on polymorphous dislocations, we become more aware that the problem extends beyond simple spatial expropriation and that space itself should be interpreted in a broader sense. The core issue is the daily existence of the very forms of life that are affected by these various forms of dislocation. Sometimes this takes the form of expropriating the space for living, which can be more totalizing, while at other times it appears to disrupt and demolish that space covertly. The word dislocation is still applicable to the subtle and covert instances of hegemonic re-articulation of everyday life across its economic, political, and cultural aspects, as well as to instances of a forcible redesign of physical space that result

in significant physical displacement. Thus, the term dislocation is both inclusive and pliable in the life of the narrator of the novel. Manoranjan Byapari here, through the dislocation, retains a close relationship to the underlying *Dalit dislocation*, which in turn denotes a variety of expropriation-related events. He was never solid in their life, having fled to another nation as a refugee and rising to the lowest rank in society. He tried to find food and work there but was unsuccessful. We can think of him as a wanderer who was making his way through a pitch-black tunnel in search of a way out of his miserable predicament. Hence, Manoranjan Byapari's life tells the story of the downtrodden's dislocation, which is neither easy nor free of indescribable miseries and intermittent hardships. He was moving into the dark, which symbolises the life of *Dalit*s who were unable to find answers to their issues. The *Dalit* torchbearers, Ambedkar, Phule, and others, suggested solutions to help them exit the dark tunnel that was leading them to destruction.

Additionally, to continue the tradition started by their teachings and sermons, *Dalit* autobiographies have been written by *Dalit*s. However, his autobiography or life writings are different from the traditional genre because the partition of Bengal and its displacement marked his entire life and the lives of other refugees from the lower section. Manoranjan Byapari writes:

Life was forcing me into the notorious profession. It is only the swan that can glide un-drenched through the waters of life. But humanity could not. If a man spent too long a time in the jungles, his animal-like instincts came to the fore. When the water of the holy Ganga is poured into the gutter, the Ganga becomes the gutter, not the gutter of the Ganges. Had I ever been holy, clean good? I don't know. But now, my environment swallowed me. I drank, I gambled, I quarrelled (Byapari 152).

Byapari, in his novel, recalls the various events that are responsible for bringing traumatic effects into his life and for psychologically deranging him as a wretched of the earth. Time and again in Jadavpur, as the unfortunate residents of *Marichjhapi*, a maximum of 30,000 families were missing. In alien and inhospitable environments, Byapari and other refugees are unable to cope with the hostile, unproductive land and alien culture in Bastar, *Marichjhapi*, or

the uninhabited regions of Madhya Pradesh. At Bagha Jatin Crossing, in the neighbourhood of Jadavpur, his father began his employment. Every day at three in the morning, his father awoke to catch a train from Ghutiari Sharif Railway Station. However, the problem worsens day by day. The income they earn is very meagre and cannot sustain their family.

In an unfortunate condition due to extreme poverty and labour without food, and lack of proper treatment due to financial pauperised condition, Byapari's sister Manju passed away without receiving medical care, and his father died with a broken heart. They were forced to wear ripped clothing in the refugee camps and slum areas of Calcutta. Because of the worn-out saree she received while living in the Shiromonipur refugee camp, his mother was unable to leave the house during the day. Byapari eventually left his home with a heavy heart, an empty stomach, and an empty pocket when his mental state gradually deteriorated. Therefore, he also, one after another, missed everything and every family member, and became a runaway boy, an insurgent, and a local goon in Jadavpur district of Calcutta. Byapari's autobiographical novel delineates how he also lost his father, mother, brother, and sister in his abject conditions, lack of proper treatment, hospitality, and starvation. However, they hoped that, after migrating to India with great expectations, they would live as respectable human beings. However, these expectations proved useless, futile, and figments of their imagination, as the scenarios and treatments for refugees were totally different here in West Bengal. They are considered a polluted segment of humanity. Therefore, Byapari's tale is a highly documented testimonial of refugee *Namasudra* historiography of displacement, along with the dirge of personal cum collective melancholy of partition-induced pangs of *Namasudra* dislocation, exile, statelessness, trauma, suffering, refugeehood, and abject condition of subalternity.

Conclusion

Dalit author Manoranjan Byapari writes this refugee autobiography to inform and enlighten members of his clan about the numerous obstacles they cannot even escape, and are forced to face the shackles of refugee-hood and untouchability simultaneously. As the torchbearer for those *Namasudra* refugees who are uprooted and

marginalised in alien lands and find themselves in the dark tunnel surrounded by various terrible characteristics of society, such as oppression, marginalisation, subjection, and dominance, as a downtrodden refugee writer, Byapari inspires his communities to know the victimisation due to wrong vivisection and the unscientific way of partition. Ananaya Parida in "Autobiographical Narratives and Indian Literary Canon: Practice and Praxis" says, Byapari's life narratives instrumentally is therefore, "Playing both the signifier and the signified - signifier being more prominent here, an author has all the authority to construct or deconstruct history from his/her perspective" (5). This autobiographical narrative of Byapari, as a writer who is not dead, serves as the omniscient narrator in all his texts. Byapari takes on the role of an omniscient narrator to portray his lifelong hardships and displacements, even after settling in another land, culture, and nation. How a refugee *Dalit* who lacks access to education can find inspiration in an autobiography by a *Dalit* author is undoubtedly a vexed question. This question repeatedly emerges during the pre- and post-partition of India and is portrayed by Byapari in his fiction as a hopeless, exiled, uprooted, vagrant-like situation. The observation of a person's development by a specific lower-caste writer provides the solution. The observation of a person from a certain lower-caste community who grew up and achieved his aim of becoming a renowned writer despite many trials obviously inspires one to understand the displacement of *Matua* refugees. As Manoranjan Byapari, a displaced wretched of the earth, writes:

> The partition of the East is a history of humanity that is yet to be written… Today, a half-century after the event, haunted by the question 'Why,' we may arrive at more than one answer. But the key reason has been given by Manoranjan Byapari, the displaced *Namasudra* from Barishal. This is how this short memoir ends.
>
> The sole reason behind the Hindu-Muslim riots was revealed to me many years ago when I was a boy. One cannot expect to be treated with respect and love if one's attitude towards the rest of humanity is that of hatred and contempt. This lesson was brought home to me when, after Muslim guests had left, the mistress of the house asked me to wash the utensils they had eaten from that very night, and return only after taking a bath. It all fell one me to 'purify' the spot with cow dung – water (Byapari 345).

At last, it can be said that Byapari essentially reclaims and explores this refugee identity, employing the novel as a prism to highlight the brutal realities of social exclusion, poverty, violence, and displacement. The novel challenges preconceived notions of refugeehood, displacement, and the dislocation of Bengali society cherished by middle-class or upper-caste people, but which are harsh and occasionally disturbing to lower-caste *Matua* refugees. It depicts the suppressed experiences of the entire *Namasudra Dalit* migrants rather than only narrating the existence of one person. Therefore, it serves as a testimony that affirms Dalit agency and voice, challenges societal injustices, and validates the collective experiences of Matua readers.

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