
Editors' Note

Writing an editorial note on representation and its politics is not an easy task. Few words in English are so fraught with meanings, particularly in the era of post-Truth. A representation may be the copy of an original or, it may bear a synecdochic relation to ideas, ideologies or groups, manifested through a created image symbol, or, 'representative' lobby. To represent something is to admit a distance from the originary idea or entity, yet seek to epitomise its essence. It is therefore, an act of mediation.

In the arts, the idea of representation has long posed the problem of the relation between reality and shadow, cognition and communication, the absolute and the partial. Plato's opposition to the creative arts as mere mimetic gestures, at two removes from absolute reality has generated debates and clarifications down the ages. A few centuries later, Coleridge, standing at a point of literary history when the literal began to yield to the symbolic, observed the difficulty of transforming thoughts to words when he said, "The formation of a copy is not solved by the mere pre-existence of an original; the copyist of Raffael's Transfiguration must repeat more or less perfectly the process of Raffael" (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter 8). He was thus pointing out the affective power of the arts. Given such a view, representation becomes a process in which a reader or an onlooker becomes an active agent and not merely a passive receiver. Recent developments in fields like Media and Cultural studies, which use the prisms of Gender, Race, Postcolonial perspectives, among others, have further complicated our understanding of what representation entails.

Who decides what is to be represented? How objective can such an act of judgment be? How far does the representative, an image, object or a specifically constituted body, actually succeed in conveying the original? Who is at the receiving end of such representations? What effect does the representation seek to achieve?

In a world where group identities are increasingly getting fragmented, the same complications have invaded the field of Politics. The idea of ensuring social justice to different groups through political representation is increasingly becoming a contested territory. This is particularly true in India, where gender and economic status and even ethnicity are being added to the simple categorizations of caste and religion, often resulting in challenging the overarching narrative of the nation itself. Democratic politics, traditionally identified with the voice of the majority, is also learning to accommodate the aspirations of various minority groups who have learnt to leverage their numbers in the larger political games. This is bound to have its repercussions in the field of public policy making and developmental initiatives, which concern a wide group including sociologists, politicians, educationists and even industrialists.

The increasing reach of the celluloid, electronic and digital media, and their ability to manipulate popular perceptions has also added another potent tool for generating new realities through the power of their emotive outreach. Current world events like the unexpected political verdicts in the UK and the USA have manifested the unpredictable ways in which the representation of selected aspects of facts can work upon aggrieved groups, whose weapon maybe the ballot.

As the problem of representation becomes more charged with various kinds of politics, not only electoral, the need to re-examine representational strategies and their relation to the individual and the contextual, is also becoming necessary. The articles in this volume of Colloquium, drawn from the disciplines of literary studies, Political Science, History, Sociology, address these concerns and we hope they will generate ideas and debates in their respective fields.

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‘Un Chien Andalou’ and ‘Soft Construction with Boiled Beans’: The Politics of ‘Dream Logic’

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The silent short film ‘Un Chien Andalou’ or ‘An Andalusian Dog’ (1929) along with the painting ‘Soft Construction with Boiled Beans’ (1936) are the landmarks in the illustration of the movement of surrealism as an alternate political movement contrasting the social debasement of the Europe. ‘Un Chien Andalou’ is directed by the Spanish director Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. It was Buñuel's first film and was initially released with a limited showing at Studio des Ursulines in Paris, but became popular and ran for eight months. The painting ‘Soft Construction with Boiled Beans’ is a painting by Salvador Dalí. Dalí created this piece to represent the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. Both these art works are dream narratives and they produce a challenge to the hegemonic power control of the chosen few.

Dream narratives defy cognitive logic yet can access the ontological parameters to form cohesive political solidarity under the surface of fragmentary existence. Logocentric and mythocentric (plot based) narratives are often dissolved into decentred text, but no text is apolitical and so is art and film. Narratives, whether in fine arts or film require closure and teloscentric coordinates, despite its often apparent non-homogeneous structure. The contextual noumenon¹,

¹ The term ‘noumenon’ is generally used in contrast with, or in relation to phenomenon, which refers to anything that can be apprehended by, or is an object of the senses. Much of modern philosophy has generally been skeptical of the possibility of knowledge independent of the senses, and Immanuel Kant gave this point of view its canonical expression: that the noumenal world may exist, but it is completely unknowable through human sensation.

as discovered by the deconstructionist, is relatively more important than the textual content, which is always already known as a political phenomenon. In my paper I will discuss a short film ‘Un Chien Andalou’ and the Painting ‘Soft Construction with Boiled Beans’, to reveal the political signs in them. They follow dream sequence which is heterogeneous in its content and has their centre dislocated, yet the political tremors located deep inside them cannot be ignored. When Derrida writes:

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play (‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, 279)

he delimits Ontology, therefore questioning the imprisonment of the essence of the things inside the structure of reason. According to Derrida ‘All texts are mirrors of politically charged signs whose (always already political) meanings (i.e. relations to one another) require addressing, mapping and intervention.’ (*Writing and Difference*, 279). Every art makes foreplay with politics either in their conscious adventures or in their subconscious terrain. Political gaze is very Foucauldian, in relation to both the film ‘Un Chien Andalou’ and the Painting ‘Soft Construction with Boiled Beans’. Foucault’s concept of the panoptic gaze becomes evident in the film, when we see our ‘gaze’² substitute the Mareuil’s eye, as her eye is sliced by Bunuel’s razor. Here we are put face to face with the blindness imposed on the followers of Fascism as their gaze is

2 ‘Gaze’ is a term popularized by Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan, that talks about the ‘surveillance’ of the hegemonic powers to control and subjugate the masses, in Foucault’s analysis however power and the one exercising the power has raised pertinent questions.

substituted by Foucauldian panopticon³, (and we are the watchman here) which is brought out by the image of the moon and a cloud passing through it. Mareuil's eye symbolically becomes the moon and the cloud is the razor which destroys the gaze of the moon and the viewers'/spectators' panoptic gaze becomes the be-all and end-all. The Moon is traditionally regarded as a political symbol of communist heterotopia. Foucault defines 'heterotopia' as:

...real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable. ('Of Other Spaces', 5)

Garcia Lorca used the symbol of moon as 'heterotopia' in his poem 'Veleta':

Pones roja la luna
y sollozantes
los álamos cautivos, pero vienes
¡demasiado tarde!
¡Ya he enrollado la noche de mi cuento
en el estante!⁴ (Lorca, 4)

The Moon turned red in the moans of sufferings during the Spanish

3 'Panopticon' is a prison structure designed by Jeremy Bentham where a central tower can at all times monitor the inmates of the cells, and this was used by Foucault to analyse how this invisible control of an institution works.

4 Translated as:
"You turn the moon red,
Make captive poplars moan,
But you've come
Too late!
I've already scrolled up the night
Of my tale on the shelf!"

Civil war. The Moon is the heterotopia of synthesizing the thesis of Capitalism and the anti-thesis of proletarianism, but that synthesis is interrupted by the 'Terror Rojo', the red terror, as the communist heterotopia, soon turns into a nightmare, as they targeted the clergy. In the course of the Terror, 282 nuns, 13 bishops, 4172 diocesan priests, 2364 monks and friars, among them 259 Claretians, 226 Franciscans, 204 Piarists, 176 Brothers of Mary, 165 Christian Brothers, 155 Augustinians, 132 Dominicans, and 114 Jesuits were killed. In some dioceses, the numbers are overwhelming; in Barbastro 88 percent of the secular clergy were murdered, 66 percent in Lerida, 62 percent in Torrosa and between 20 to 50 percent in more than a dozen other dioceses. There are accounts of Catholic faithful being forced to swallow rosary beads, thrown down mine shafts and priests being forced to dig their own graves before being buried alive. Thus the dark cloud shown in the film is the darkness which blinds the individual gaze into 'collective unconsciousness' of the twentieth century Spain.

Baudrillard claims that our current society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that human experience is of a simulation of reality, the film 'Un Chien Andalou' provides an illustration. It provides a collage of fleeting independent images blending together to create a visual political symbol which is a simulation of the real Spanish society, and the audience feels substituting their own reality. We are transferred into a surrealistic world and interpret ours in terms of 'Simulacra' and 'Simulation'. What we see in the film are not merely mediations of reality, nor even deceptive mediations of reality; they simply hide that anything like reality is relevant to our current understanding of our lives. Thus this film re-asserts the methodology of 'a rejection of the idea that art must cling to the representation of an everyday visible reality' (Smith, 400) of dada and surrealism.

Applying Baudrillard, we can find out that the film masks the absence of a profound reality, because it is a copy with no original. Signs and images claim to represent something real, but no representation is taking place and arbitrary images are merely suggested as things which they have no relationship to. Baudrillard calls this the 'order of sorcery' (*Simulacres et Simulation*, 7), a regime of semantic algebra where all human meaning is conjured artificially to appear as a reference to the (increasingly) hermetic truth. Bunuel and Dalí are intentionally creating a montage of nonsensical dream-like events to take their viewer on a blind adventure. This becomes increasingly difficult as a spectator because there does appear to be a form of logic connecting each sequence.

Another example is the scene where Mareuil's antagonist (Pierre Batcheff) is struggling with the weight of the priests, Ten Commandments, grand pianos and dead donkeys, which suggests symbolically that he is struggling against the 'dead weight of a decaying society chaining the free expression of [his] desire' for Mareuil (Ades, 53). The film is at once challenging the viewer to find meaning in the madness and then condemning him/her for each attempt; once a connection is identified it is cast aside as the film proceeds into new and completely different symbolic terrain. But the political representation of socio-religious turmoil becomes visual in the madness of this struggle. Foucault presents a beautiful summary of this:

It is no longer the end of time and of the world which will show retrospectively that men were mad not to have been prepared for them; it is the tide of madness, its secret invasion that shows that the world is near its final catastrophe; it is man's insanity that invokes and makes necessary the world's end. (*Madness and Civilization*, 14)

The threat of the World Wars, reaction against the Jews and death of

music in Nazi Germany formulates the architecture of dystopian succubus, which dissolves reasons and logocentric expression; hence we are given the chairs of audience to cast a panoptic gaze at the end of civilization and beginning of insanity. That is why in the scene titled “Eight years later,” which follows the “Once upon a time” (where Mareuil’s eye is severed), Mareuil is depicted exactly the same age as she had been ‘eight years earlier’ and with her eye intact.

Idea of space and time is the branch of philosophy concerned with the issues surrounding the ontology, epistemology, and character of space and time. Time in relation to literature has more philosophical appendages than its relation to physics. The scope of studying the cartography of time and space in ‘Un Chien Andalou’, confronts us with five dimensions, existence in wormhole and alternate timeline; things we associate with physics. Let me first discuss what the five dimensions are: first dimension is a simple line with only the dimension length, with no width or height. The second dimension can be thought of as a plane which has both length and width. The third dimension is the space in which we live. A place which has length, width and height is three dimensional. We, living in three dimensional space can perceive all of the first three dimensions simultaneously. The fourth dimension is time. Just like a person living in three dimensional spaces can perceive all the three dimensions of length, breadth and height simultaneously, a person living in fourth dimension can also perceive all the events of a single timeline simultaneously. The fifth dimension is all possible timelines. If we consider a single timeline to be a series of events that can occur over time, then the fifth dimension is the entire collection of such timelines. That is, all possible timelines that could occur in the universe. If we were to sum this up in one word, then the fifth dimension could be labelled as ‘possibility’. So the film ‘Un Chien

Andalou' moves in fifth dimension, making the timeline defy chronological authority and sinks into the Kairos world. The film 'does not observe consistency of narrative time, place, character, or semantic universe' (Hedges, 46), appearing as "Once upon a time," "Eight years later," "About three in the morning," "Sixteen years before," and finally "In spring."

Einstein eventually identified the property of spacetime which is responsible for gravity as its curvature. Space and time in Einstein's universe is no longer flat (as implicitly assumed by Newton) but can be pushed and pulled, stretched and warped by matter. Gravity feels strongest where spacetime is most curved, and it vanishes where spacetime is flat. If we consider the relationship between human being, the 'agape' as the gravity that curves the time, the loss of it during the years of World Wars, cause rupture in the 'Kronos' timeline, and thus the titles in the film suggest such wide lapses of time, yet what they separate seems to be no more than minutes.

Furthermore, there is also the problem with the space for instance when Mareuil attempts to flee to an additional room in the home, she enters a room that is exactly the same as the bedroom she has just fled – this second room even has the same bed that she had just laid clothes upon only minutes before, this is an excellent montage of hell which the Jews went through in concentration camps: Auschwitz, Hailfingen, Vaihingen. Despite cartographic globalisation in creation of ghettos: Leopoldstadt and Wien in Austria, Zhetel and Dzyatlava in Belarus, Josefov in Czech Republic and Le Marais in France, like Mareuil, a Jew will not find any difference of demography in any of the ghettos, all of them have same white washed walls, same bed and escaping from one of them, will lead a Jew into another ghetto, no better or worse than previous. So the dilemma of Mareuil is the visual representation of the Nazi political system, the Third Reich.

The violence imbedded in the dream sequence of the film ‘Un Chien Andalou’ by Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dalí in 1929, depicts the violence of the then socio-political world. Thus Murray Smith claims that ‘films of this time were overtly political, a reaction against society and government, and sought change, such as the Soviet filmmakers who would use montage *to infuse the narrative with a conceptual interplay out of which a revolutionary argument would emerge*’ [Italics added] (398).

This brings me to the next topic of my discussion, as indicated by the title of my paper: a painting by Salvador Dalí, where a woman is disfigured by male violence (See Fig.1.)

Dalí’s sister was tortured and imprisoned by communist soldiers fighting for the Republic. This image brings out the autostrangulation due to violence, a woman’s body torn apart. For Dalí, it is not only her sister who is the victim of the violence of civil war, but Spain herself.



Fig.1. Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War) by Salvador Dalí. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 1936. Oil on canvas.

Let us discuss the political ‘signs’ imbedded in the painting. We can begin with the face: the face of a crone, mother Spain drained of Bergsonian ‘élan vital’, the vital life force. The trauma reflected in the visage of the woman signifies ‘belatedness’ of the actual political event triggered by the communists in Spain. The entire painting is

multi dimensional exposure to Sigmund Freud's notion of 'Nachträglichkeit'— 'an early Freudian concept developed in his studies on hysteria and one that refers to a non-chronological movement of remembering involving a link between two events; at a critical time of psychological distress previously forgotten memory traces return and are reworked or reinterpreted to match subsequent events, desires, and psychic developments' ('Writing Trauma, Writing Time and Space', 2). In the introduction to her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth starts her exegesis of a new mode of reading trauma by revisiting Freud's exposition in chapter three of 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'. In her reformulation of Freud's concept, Caruth emphasizes a belatedness inhering in the traumatic moment itself; the traumatic experience is not fully registered in the first place, but experienced as trauma only belatedly and someplace else when and where it re-surfaces in a fragmented form as traumatic flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and repetitive re-enactments. Dalí provides an illustration of such trauma in this painting, resulting from the violence caused by the communists during this time.

What Dalí has painted in 'Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)' is called 'Terror Rojo' by the historians. The 'leftist' unleashed 'red terror' in Spain in 1930's and massacred thousands of innocent civilians including 6,832 members of the Catholic clergy. The painting leaves no doubt how such acts of mass slaughtering left its impact on the 'face' of Spain. The hand that is brutally clasp the breast is the hand of Civil War in Spain that is draining the very source of nutrition: mother's milk is depleted. The painting reiterates the centrality of the attack specifically on maternal function: the menopausal crone, the milk-drained mother, the unsexed woman. The painting focuses on the cultural fear of maternal nursery – a fear reflected in the common worries about the

various ills that can happen if colostrum is lost to the civilization.

While critiquing Fanon, Habib rightly sums up Fanon's view on literature in *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present*:

The various tension caused by colonial exploitation-poverty, famine, cultural and psychological emaciation-have their repercussions on the cultural plane. Gradually, the progress of "national consciousness" among the people gives rise to substantial changes in literary styles and themes...It is only when national consciousness reaches a certain stage of maturity that we can speak of a national literature, a literature which takes up and explores themes that are nationalist. This literature, says Fanon, is a "literature of combat" because "it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation", and moulds the national consciousness". Hence literature is not merely a superstructural effect of economic struggle: it is instrumental in shaping the nation's conscious articulation of its own identity and the values at stake in that struggle (Habib, 743).

As is literature so is any piece of art 'it is instrumental in shaping the nation's conscious articulation of its own identity and the values at stake in that struggle' (Habib, 743) and the painting 'Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)' is of no exception.

Thus we can see that both the film 'Un Chien Andalou' and the Painting 'Soft Construction with Boiled Beans', has teloscentric political coordinates to reveal the ontological cartography of dream logic.

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Representational strategies in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Anamitra Chatterjee

In my paper, I aim to explore *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s projection of race and concern with 'purity'/'impurity' given the fact that a debate has always centered around the novel's representation of racial 'otherness' from the perspective of feminist and post colonial studies. On one hand while critics like Benita Parry contend that we need to recover historically repressed knowledges and to construct "the speaking position" of the subaltern, a "conception of the native as a historical subject and agent of oppositional discourse"¹, critics like Spivak and her followers emphasize that our very effort at resuscitating the subaltern's voice / self by invoking historical context reproduces the "epistemic violence" of imperialism- it acknowledges that the 'other' has always already been constructed according to the colonizer's self image and can therefore not simply be given his or her voice back.² Thus both for Spivak and for Parry, the novel's representation of black Creoles define their individual approaches.

While for Benita Parry the black obeah woman Christophine symbolically emerges as a point of counter discourse to the metanarrative of white European discourse, rooted as she is to the

1. Reference to Benita Parry's essay "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse".

2. Spivak discusses the colonialist perspectives of these two approaches respectively in "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern : A Woman's Text From the Third World" and in "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice". This thesis is derived from a study of indigenous and imperialist historical archives documenting the practice of Sati in 19th century India which shows that the widow's voice is caught between indigenous patriarchal and colonial constructions and can therefore not be heard (see "Rani of Sirmur").

practice of black magic real or imagined within the domain of African and West Indian cultures, for Spivak an unmediated access to the subalterns' history is impossible as Christophine is "tangential to a narrative written within the interests of the white Creole protagonist." ("Three Women's Texts" 253).

Recent critics are in agreement with Spivak's reading that the novel provides its readers with a sympathetic representation of the white Creole alienation at the expense of the black Creole perspective³. By foregrounding the West Indian racial and social divisions, Rhys perhaps metes out to Antoinette the same predicament as that has been the fate of Emily Bronte's *Jane Eyre*- which is that of being projected as being constituted within and by the processes of colonization and imperialism. However the double narrative structure of the novel which only gives the readers insight into the world of the black Creole's through the narrative registers of the two major characters bears testimony not only to Rhys' imperialism but also to her intuitive understanding of the various categories of representation. Rhys herself was deeply influenced by her Creole heritage – she was born in Rouseau, Dominica West Indies – her father was a Welsh doctor and her mother a Dominican Creole. She experienced being Creole both in the Caribbean and in England and was thus personally aware of the conflicting cultural tropes she depicts in the figure of Antoinette who by virtue of her Creole

3. According to the influential Caribbean critic Brathwaite, Rhys' "socio-cultural background and orientation" makes it possible for her to grasp the experience of the primarily black and poor West Indian people. Moria Ferguson similarly argues that "the text favours Jean Rhys' class – the former white planter class" and "does not allow the implied victors (Christophine) . . . to be articulated as victors". Mary Lou Emery and Veronica Greg also object to Rhys' representation of black and mulatto people and see her insight into the workings of ideologies as limited to dismantling Rochester's, the British colonialist's discursive constructions of his female Other (Antoinette). Rhys is thus perceived as unaware of the operations of imperial history when it comes to her black and coloured Others and guilty of "the usurpation of race/ blackness in the service of gender" (Greg 46).

inheritance is accepted neither by the black community nor by the white representatives of the erstwhile colonial European power.

Rhys by describing Antoinette's precarious sense of belonging implies the need for or right to a sense of belonging or solidarity within the Creole community and a justifiable sense of integration because "the Lord makes no difference between black and white, black and white the same for Him".

In Antoinette's 'mimicry' of other people and their habits or behavioural patterns lies concealed her desperate attempt to locate her own identity. Bhabha used the term 'mimicry' to refer to imitation, the capability of the marginalized people to construct, create or recreate their space or identity. Mimicry according to Bhabha becomes a complex strategy of recreation and subversion, the most profound setting involving religion, language and habits of the colonizers leading to the creation of a palpable sense of anxiety and insecurity culminating ultimately to a sense of inferiority. The white Creole female protagonist Antoinette gives vent to an obvious and marked sense of uncertainty and anxiety in her behavior – "I am afraid of what may happen" – she states to Rochester before agreeing to marry him. As the novel progressively unfolds and develops it becomes apparent that Antoinette's anxiety is related to the question of identity or lack thereof and that it bears a multiplicity of implications on her spiritual or mental being than with the reality of her life.

Rochester too displays signs of anxiousness but it for him is intrinsically connected with the repercussions of the choices he makes (his marriage with Antoinette) in his personal life. It is only after his marriage that his 'European'ness with its culture, prejudices and presumptions about the Creoles emerge and make him ponder on his decision which was taken on the basis of material and financial aggrandizement. Thus when he and his newly married wife arrive on

the island for their honeymoon, he starts to take note of her beautiful appearance as well of her Creole origin. Her eyes now appear “too large and can be disconcerting ...long, sad, dark, alien eyes”. The eyes which suddenly appear ‘alien’ make him wonder if he “did notice it before and refuse to admit what he saw”. From his European perspective he draws the inference that to him seems justified for his later on course of action – she is Creole of “pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either”. As the novel progresses, we find Rochester gradually getting obsessed by a sense of acute anxiety that Antoinette is not entirely white and this anxiety driven consciousness of his makes him regret his matrimonial choice. The only probable excuse that he is able to console himself with at least temporarily is that he “hadn’t had much time to notice anything. I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever”.

For Rochester the West Indian landscape is unbearably wild and menacing. He destroys Antoinette because she belongs with everything that he cannot understand: “I hated the sunsets of whatever colour. I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. And above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness”. Rochester starts the process of destruction by calling her ‘Bertha’. It is her mad mother’s name and the name by which she is later known in *Jane Eyre*. In *Thornfield Hall*, Antoinette recalls the effect of her renaming – “I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass”. The image is gone forever with nothing to replace it with. What follows therefore is madness. Antoinette becomes mad because she is dispossessed.

What is striking in Rhys’ novel is that Rochester remains completely nameless throughout. Described only as ‘the man’, ‘he’, ‘ husband’

and the “man who hated me”, this speaker is given no body – the physical description of the ‘man’ is deliberately omitted. Thus ‘castrating’ the formidable lord of Bronte’s English manor, Rhys rewrites him as an anonymous lost voice in a place where the very existence of his fatherland is under question⁴. Discrediting the father, Rhys recuperates the mother who mentioned in *Jane Eyre* only to suggest a genetic source for Antoinette/ Bertha’s madness is portrayed by Rhys to have been driven mad like Antoinette and under similar circumstances of loss, violence and exploitation in marriage. Thus by reimagining Bronte’s ‘monster’ in the land of her birth, Rhys recuperates for Antoinette/ Bertha’s plot “a space of privileged contact with the maternal “ for which Bronte’s protagonist might have longed⁵

With her marriage Antoinette completely loses her tremulous sense of identity to her domineering husband through a slow but steady process symbolized by images of hair. The image of the black West Indian women’s hair covering or handkerchief is made more comprehensible as being one of power, strength, independence when examined in juxtaposition with the contrasting hair images of white English women like Antoinette, Annette and Aunt Cora. The different images of hair as portrayed within the dynamics of the novel correspond to the women’s mental or emotional state – plaited, coiled, brushed or otherwise, hair emerges as a potent symbol of a woman’s mental composure and her ability to act in accordance with

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4. Chantal Delourne contrasts this ‘castrated’ nameless man with the ‘nom- roc’ ‘nom-forteresse’, that dominates *Jane Eyre*. Christophine doubts the existence of England because she has never seen it herself. It should be noted that Rhys’ depiction of Rochester is not entirely unsympathetic, for example she carefully delineates his legal victimization as a second son under the laws of primogeniture.\
 5. Klopfer links Antoinette’s madness to Rochester’s “denial of her language, her name, and her matrilineage”(“The Unspeakable Mother” p.145 -46). But by privileging the maternal Klopfer adds, Rhys’ rewriting “forces the son to experience. . .(female) psychological and linguistic space” (p.158). Similarly Nancy Harrison reads in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the construction of a distinctly female fictional space she calls a “woman’s text.” (see Harrison, *Jean Rhys and the Novel as Woman’s Text*, Chappel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
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the prescribed social standards. On the other hand, undone, unruly, unmanaged hair is again suggestive of a woman's mental instability and defiance of acceptable yardsticks of social behaviour. Also women's hair also became associated with their sexuality – images of long flowing shiny hair conveyed sexuality and desire. In a similar manner, loose hair besides representing a loosening of powers of sensibility and mental agility also stood for sexual freedom. Therefore what becomes obvious is that the exposure of a woman's hair becomes equated with the expression of her emotions, desires and motivations.

Interestingly enough, when Rochester appraises the hair of black West Indians he is degrading and dehumanizing in his attitude, calling them 'creatures' and 'savage'. Through images of hair Rochester displays his prejudiced perspective against black West Indian people as a representative of the English colonialist mentality - one that is based on the assumption that black inhabitants of the colonies were inferior on the basis of racial distinctions. Due to his racial and national prejudices that colours his personality and influence the choices he makes, he is repulsed by all that is black and foreign. As an English colonizer he makes a futile attempt to dominate his foreign surroundings which he considers inferior and antagonistic. This is perhaps also the reason why he pays meticulous attention to Antoinette's hair as he also feels alienated and different from her in the same way that he does from people belonging to the West Indian community.

Thus images of Antoinette's hair come to signify to the readers Rochester's convoluted intentions of lust and tyranny towards her. When Antoinette appears before Rochester, dressed in a fashion 'acceptable' to his English sensibilities, he immediately takes note of her hair, and it changes his attitude towards Antoinette from one of disdain and indifference to that of attraction – "I wonder why I had

never realized how beautiful she was”. In here, it is made obvious that Rochester is intoxicated with her beauty and desires a physical union with her. But even then there is a lack of emotional attachment and warmth and no attempt to relate to her on any level – she is just a beautiful object of sexual and physical appeasement. The morning after this intimate episode is also relevant on a symbolic level – as a contrasting image of the state of Antoinette’s hair discloses another destructive side to Rochester’s character – he wakes and sees Antoinette – “her hair was plaited and she wore a fresh white chemise. I turned to take her in my arms, I meant to undo the careful plaits, but as I did so there was a soft discrete knock”. What needs to be noted is that while the image of styled and managed hair is symbolically associated with mental stability, Rochester’s declaration to ‘undo’ Antoinette’s hair becomes synonymous with an intent to decimate Antoinette both mentally and emotionally.

As Antoinette finally succumbs to the relentless onslaught of mental and emotional torment that Rochester deliberately unleashes on her, her pain finds physical expression through images of her hair- her hair is unkempt and when Rochester meets her he is ‘shocked’ by the sight of her – “her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen”.

Towards the concluding section of the novel, with the house all ablaze Antoinette is made to confront the reality of her identity – she is forced to succumb to the definition of ‘the mad woman in the attic’ – she is the ‘mad’ Creole woman unfit to live in ‘civilized’ English society. Her only escape from this predicament of an enforced identity thrust upon her lies through an escape from life itself. The last and final image of Antoinette as she jumps to her death is that of the wind catching her hair like wings – symbolic of her last fleeting hope of creating her own autonomous identity. The image however is

strikingly reminiscent of the wing-clipped parrot Coco's jump from Caulibri as it burned.

Antoinette's tragic fate and the history of a relationship with Rochester thus assumes a symbolic significance in relation to the theme of existential chasm that Rhys portrays in the novel. It is also precisely this theme which gives the novel its title –physically situated between the West Indies and England, the Sargasso sea becomes a symbolic divide between the two worlds and the two people attached so deeply to their respective worlds with its individuated cultural identities that it hinders them from meeting each other in the most elemental way. It is only at the end of their disastrous relationship that Antoinette becomes fully aware of her real relation to Rochester and his world as she states –“We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it”. It is this sense of loss that permeates the dynamics of the novel.

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(MIS) Representations of The Transgender Identity: The Dominant Popular Narrative Culture Versus The Webcomics

Debanjana Nayek

INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights Campaign has recently presented a report on the escalation of transgender homicide in America. It documents at least twenty one murders within ten months of 2015 and also highlights several instances of transgender violence which went unreported. This historic rise in antagonism against the transgender community distinctively points out the widespread transphobia that is prevalent in the society. Furthermore, there is a staggering rate of suicides amongst the transgender individuals, owing to the social discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying that they regularly experience (*Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence*). To unearth the reasons behind this perpetration of violence on the transgender people, it is necessary to look at the “images” formed by the media and the popular culture which represent transgender identities. Although the issue of visibility gains utmost importance in the study of minority groups in popular culture, in the case of transgender community the real problem lies in their misrepresentation.

PROBLEMATIC REPRESENTATION BY DOMINANT POPULAR CULTURE

The social victimization of the transgender people is correlated with

the way in which they are portrayed in popular culture. Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) has been surveying and monitoring the depiction of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals in films and television shows every year, since 2005. By analyzing their reports till 2013, GLAAD proffered that “54% of all trans characters on episodic television were outright defamatory, another 34% ranged from simply problematic to acceptable, with only 12% of trans representations good enough to be considered outstanding” (Townsend 2014). It is startling that though in 2015 there was an improvement in the visibility and representation of gay, lesbian and bisexual characters on television, there were almost negligible transgender roles in primetime broadcast programming (“Where We Are on TV 2015-16”). The media representation of transwomen through the celebrated figure of Caitlyn Jenner is even more problematic due to her already privileged position and her association with big cosmetic brands as well as high fashion. The frenzied reactions of the media regarding her every move and their eulogizing of her as a prototypical transwoman as well as a beauty icon propels her far away from the long struggles of the transgender people and the abuses that they face in their quotidian life. In *The Guardian* Hadley Freeman addresses this issue of Caitlyn Jenner and states:

...this [media’s] rush to hyperbole is the due corrective for centuries of transphobia, which still very much exists. Yet not a single other trans person on this planet has enjoyed the privilege and public goodwill that Jenner has received since she came out. Moreover, true equality comes from being treated not as a special case, but as an equal.

Though there are a handful of transgender personas and activists, like Laverne Cox and Janet Mock, and some streaming series which feature transgender characters, they are not sufficient to bring about a

noteworthy change in society's perspective towards transgender people.

Another form of dominant narrative in the popular culture which makes an impact on the outlook of the youth is the comics or the graphic novel genre. The widespread popularity of the comic books of DC and Marvel as well as the graphic novels of Alan Moore and Art Spiegelman have manifested that they can be employed as a medium for constructing a social consciousness about the transgender people. Through the comics or the graphic novels young readers can be enlightened about the concepts of “gender fluidity”, “transgender” and “gender queer”. In the manner of the electronic media, the comic books too seldom fabricate stories around a transgender character. Most of the references to transgender in comics have been fleeting and restrictive. They are not projected as normal human beings or superheroes, rather they are the victims, the aliens, the robots and the shape-shifters. Though the portrayal of transgender characters have started to recuperate from their perpetual status of being a victim and a villain after the production of the Image comics and *Batgirl* by DC, there are still a number of “misrepresentations” or “bad representations” of the transgender people in the genre of comics and graphic novels. For instance, the transgender oriented stories of the Image comics are immensely innovative and they are highly lauded for their bold delineation of transwomen but in the second issue of one of its series, *Airboy*, the protagonist manifests that kind of transphobia which is prevalent in the society. He becomes hugely disgusted when he finds out that the girl he was with is a transwoman and she has a “penis”. The comic strip uses degrading words, like “tranny” and “drag queen”, to refer to the transwomen and also calls it a “sick, ugly world” (*Airboy* #2). GLAAD has severely criticised it and has also associated it with the number of transgender murders that occurred in America in that year:

Robinson and Hinkle not only use slurs to refer to trans women and assert that they are 'not girls' and really men, they repeat the trope that trans women are nameless (and largely faceless, in this instance) sex workers who have sex with unsuspecting men.

This trope is particularly dangerous, as trans women are often violently assaulted by men who feel they've been "deceived." In the past six months, nine transgender women have been murdered in the United States.

In the realm of printed comics the transgender characters are rarely visible and if at all they are limited to minor and secondary roles. They never become the nucleus of any plotline, rather they are depicted predominantly as the other persona in a subtext. This othering of the transgender community is also reflected in the society where they are often accused of deceiving and lying about their gender, they are looked down upon and are considered to be unnatural, mentally unstable as well as easy targets of sexual assault. These notions have repeatedly been encouraged by comics through their recurring illustration of the transgender characters as shape-shifters, aliens and prostitutes. In addition to this, even the graphic novels impart an infelicitous picture of the transgender community. The exceedingly fascinating graphic novel series by Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman*, too has employed the victim trope in representing the transwomen. The characterisation of Wanda in *A Game of You* erroneously interprets a transwoman in multiple ways which includes the persistent assertion that she is a man. George, an agent of the villain, refuses to take her to the fantasy world because it is only for women and repudiates Wanda's claim that she is a woman. He says that "the operation" would not "make much difference" and it is "chromosomes as much as uh anything. It's like uh gender isn't something you can pick and choose as uh far as gods are concerned"

(Gaiman *A Game of You*). It becomes unnerving for the genderqueers to perceive such rigid notions of gender binary of the society in a fantasy realm as well. Finally, Wanda faces a tragic death and she is buried like a man by her parents who conceal her real gender even on the tombstone. *The Doll's House*, the second book of *The Sandman* series, put forward another tragic death of a transwoman. In this episode the murderer stands in front of the transwoman's dead body and the narrative informs:

There's something about preoperative transsexuals that makes The Connoisseur [the murderer's name] uncomfortable. Something brittle and bright in the back of their eyes. He loves them. But he always feels they're laughing at him. He's only ever found eight that he's been able to talk to. (Issue 14)

Both the graphic stories of *The Sandman* associate gender with physical appearance which completely misrepresents the concept of "gender" itself. It further misconstrues the fact that every transgender person desires to transform his or her body through operation and their original bodies are "disgusting" for people, as in the case of "The Connoisseur". The effect that these representations have on a transgender person can be fathomed only through their own words. Mey is one such transwoman who has penned down her experience regarding these portrayals of transgender characters. In her article she reveals:

I remember when I was in high school opening up Volume 2, titled *The Doll's House*, and reading issue #14, *Collectors....* This was my first time seeing someone like me in a comic book. It made me terrified for my future. (*Autostraddle*)

She continues to share what representation in comics signifies for the transgender readers,

One of the big selling points of comic books is that they give us heroes to look up to and want to be like. They show us possibilities. They show us dreams and wishes. Not being able to see yourself in those dreams, wishes and possibilities can really have an effect on you, especially if you're a younger reader. When readers are told that none of the heroes look like them, it can seem like it's impossible to be a hero. That's why representation is important. It allows us to see a brighter future for ourselves and to set out for that future. For trans readers, that representation has been almost nonexistent until recent years. (*Autostraddle*)

The kind of representation that transgender readers desire to see in graphic stories has been achieved by the webcomics.

WEBCOMICS:AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND SEMI-AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

A factual and true representation of the transgender community through the printed graphic stories becomes challenging on account of the fact that these plotlines mostly revolve around a superhero of the fantasy world where the subordinate characters are also otherworldly. In contrast to that, there is a plethora of webcomics which are being created for the past few years that focus solely on the life of transgender people. They let the readers engage with the quotidian life of a transgender person, baring the insecurities of the community and their everyday struggles with gender prejudice. The webcomics mark their difference from the printed comics in treating the transgender characters as ordinary human beings who are capable of leading a mundane life. They are neither given any special status nor bestowed with any extraordinary characteristics. Webcomics, like *Becoming Me*, *The Princess*, *Rooster Tails* and *What's Normal Anyway I?* are in the form of autobiographies which are renditions of

the lives of transgender individuals. The characters of these genderqueer webcomics strive to provide the transgender community a respected and empowered position in the society as well as accord them an equal status with the other genders. The plots of these webcomics offer an honest, unpretentious and simple picture of a transgender individual owing to the fact that all these stories have been written and drawn by transgender graphic storytellers.

In 2010 Sam Orchard, a transman, started making comics and posted them in his webpage called *Rooster Tails*. He employed his comics as a medium to inform the world and his family about his gender, that is, he is not a woman but a man. In one of his comics he acknowledges this where he says:

How do I tell old high school mates that I'm no longer a shy girl, but an awkward boy?

How do I tell my parents that I want facial hair and to walk around topless?

How do I tell my friends that I'm a queer boy, and not a lesbian?

I could just start a comic-blog on the internet and wait for them to find it... (Orchard "How do I do this again?")

The confessional subject and tone of his webcomics appeal to several transgender readers who can relate to his fears in revealing their gender to their families and friends. It has also attracted non-transgender readers and helped them understand transgender people in a better way. One such reader of *Rooster Tails* has shared that her workmate was transitioning and she did not know how to be supportive but Orchard's comics has given her materials for research¹. *Rooster Tails* presents very interesting stories in a few

1 This comment is by Jude, under the comic strip "Roostering" in *Rooster Tails*.

panels and it attempts to cope with the complexities of sexuality and gender. Sam Orchard's partner is another genderqueer person who does not identify with any stipulated gender. This is again reflected in his work where he questions the necessity of determining or fixing gender as well as defining sexuality when it is "so anchored in gender" (Orchard *Types of Love*). There are other webcomics as well which are immersed in the culture of questioning gender binary and the standardisation of gender and sexuality. *What's Normal Anyway?* is one such webcomic series which posits a question against the stereotyping of genders and the association of gender binary with "normalcy" from its very title. Morgan Boecher narrates a semi-autobiographical tale of a transman, Mel, through this webcomic series. With the assistance of humour Boecher exposes the pains of a transman and the difficult situations that he has to undergo in his life. The artist has initiated a "cultural activism" through his work that aims to subtly convey a serious message to the readers (Tashlin). Mel is a representation of all those transmen who are undertaking medical transition. Boecher has modelled this representation with utmost care and thoughtfulness, by concocting his personal experiences with the stories of his transitioning transgender acquaintances. He allows his readers to have an insight into the ruminations of a transitioning person. By analysing the character of Sam in *Rooster Tails* and Mel in *What's Normal Anyway?* one realizes that even the transgender people have frequent doubts about their gender identity and their outward appearance. These two webcomics also divulge the fact that a surgical transformation of the body is not desired by every transgender person. In "Gross and Scary" Mel admits to his transgender friend that the physical surgery is the "grossest, scariest thing" (sic) for them and he believes that it is better for him to keep his "floppy chest and call it male" (Boecher). In another comic strip he is revealed to battle with a string of questions about his own gender

identity and the necessity to go through a medical transition. He enquires, “what if I’m not even sure I want to do the hormones or surgery? Would that mean I couldn’t be a real man?” (Boecher “Trans Is Queer”).

Although the stories and “images” formulated in different webcomics are diverse, the anxieties and fears of the transgender characters connect them. One such case is the striking image of a bare bodied transgender person who has not undergone any transforming surgery. In *Becoming me*, a webcomics series about a Chilean transwoman, the protagonist stands in front of a mirror and feels an unutterable pain of not having any breasts. On the other hand, Mel in *What’s Normal Anyway?* suffers a similar agony when he sees his reflection in a mirror and even after trying very hard he could not look like a man because of his breasts. This reality of bodies has united the “images” of a transwoman and a transman. These reflections of the body do not disgust the transgender protagonists, as in the case of the printed graphic stories, but generate several doubts and anxieties in their minds. This difference in perceiving the “body” of a transgender person makes the webcomics a much better narrative than the printed comics and graphic novels.

CONCLUSION

The transgender-based webcomics which are becoming massively prevalent in the cyberspace furnish multifarious stories of genderqueer individuals. They are not only easily accessible and readable but they also form a huge pool of information on the transgender community. While the electronic and print media have to weigh up their monetary profits from a transgender-based production, the webcomics does not merchandise gender identity. They present the reality without the restrictions of consumerism and capitalism. The representations of the transgender people through

webcomics are subjective, passionate and simplistic. They have constructed a platform for dialogue between the transgender readers and the non-transgender ones and, at the same time, they are inspiring and emboldening more genderqueer people to express their ‘self’. The misrepresentations of the transgender community by the dominant narrative are gradually being ameliorated by the graphic storytellers of the digital space.

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Magic, Mainstream and Marginal: The Representation of Racial Othering in J.K. Rowling's Potterverse

Rajarshee Gupta

The magical universe of Harry Potter, commonly known as 'Potterverse' among the fans of the *Harry Potter* saga by Joan Kathleen Rowling, has undisputedly carved a niche for itself in the universe of fantasy literature. In this series (which consists of the seven *Harry Potter* titles as well as three other books, namely *Quidditch through the Ages*, *Fantastic Beasts and where to Find them* and *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, associated with the saga and later published by Rowling as separate volumes) Rowling deals with a number of themes and draws heavily from a myriad of aspects of life and literature ranging from ancient mythologies and romances to contemporary socio-political contexts. This paper strives to explore how Rowling has dealt with the issues of socio-political marginalisation and how different facets of marginalisation have been represented in the series.

A deeper layer of symbolism arguably runs throughout the novels. Although Rowling's works contain a host of influences, the core of *Harry Potter* is inescapably mythic. Rowling refashions her modern fantasies with curious amalgamations of heterogeneous mythologies in order to furnish her magical universe. But she does not weave a Tolkien-esque secondary world with the help of these mythological and folk fibres. Harry Potter's Wizarding World is no Rowling-esque

counterpart of the Middle Earth where the protagonists as well as the readers encounter mystic truths. Rather it is a universe parallel to the non-magic “Muggle” world, a world putting up a mirror in front of the human “Muggle” idiosyncrasies. This we must understand because Rowling’s narrative is not merely a story of good versus evil, but functionally serves to highlight various predicaments of human existence in a mythical trope. Rowling herself admitted in an interactive session at the Carnegie Hall:

I wanted Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same problems in the Wizarding World. (Interactive session)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “marginalise” as a word of twofold meaning, both of which are not entirely unrelated. They are: i) “to make original notes upon and” ii) “to render or treat as marginal; to remove from the centre or mainstream; to force (an individual, minority group, etc.) to the periphery of a dominant social group; (gen.) to belittle, depreciate, discount, or dismiss” (OED). In *Harry Potter* we find both definitions in operation. But before going into the analyses of marginalisation we must recognise the subjects and objects of marginalisation in Potterverse.

As we have mentioned earlier, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter is essentially a reflection of the real, pedestrian world in which we belong with all our happiness and sorrows. In this everyday world commonness is mainstream, whereas the uncommon is the thing most strangely looked upon, most radically reacted at, and therefore also most feared. Consequently a process of Othering (to borrow the term from Edward Said) inevitably takes place, where the so-called mainstream non-magic people, the Muggles, develop a set of beliefs based partially on reality and partially on their own prejudices. But if the perspective is changed and the eye-glasses of the Wizarding World are put on, it would be seen that the same deep set beliefs are at work among Wizardkind as well – beliefs that objectify Muggles to

the Wizard subject. So here we see that the construction of the identities of both Muggles and Wizards is essentially discursive in the Foucauldian sense of the term. Foucault's term "discourse" has been interpreted as:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (Weedon 108)

and

... a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance. (Diamond and Quinby 185)

From Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* I largely draw the parentheses of the concepts of Othering and marginalisation. While marking the nature of Orientalism and thereby the initiation point of the process of Othering, Said remarks:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and... "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers... have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind", destiny, and so on. (Said 2-3)

The interchange between the academic and the more or less imaginative meanings of Orientalism is a constant one, and... there [is] a considerable, quite disciplined—perhaps

even regulated—traffic between the two. (Said 3)

...without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient... (Said 3)

This nature of discourse is applicable to the sharers of Pottermore as well – namely the Muggles and the Wizards, who constantly construct each other’s identities by means of objectifying the Other. This process of Othering inevitably leads to marginalisation of the Other in both meanings of the term, as defined by OED: the object, be it Muggles or Wizards, is made original notes upon them (everything about them is systematically, academically documented, creating the ‘epistemological difference’ of which Said speaks), and this eventually produces the historic knowledge which aids the subject to relegate or force the object to the periphery, to belittle and even dismiss the object.

This kind of formal documentation of the Other is not conspicuous among Muggles, because first of all the non-magic people are not aware of the existence of the Wizarding World, and secondly, the primary job of the Ministry of Magic is to keep the existence of the magical community secret from the non-magic people (SS 65). But whenever the two binary opposite communities come into contact, the response on the Muggles’ part is in general reactionary and dismissive. Of course there are exceptional Muggle families like the Evans and the Grangers (parents of Lily Potter and Hermione Granger) take a friendly approach towards the Wizarding community and look upon their children appreciatively for being a part of it. But the majority of Muggles is like Seamus Finnigan’s father who discovered his wife to be a witch only after marriage and it was a “nasty shock for him” (SS 125), or Mr Angus Fleet of Peebles who, upon seeing the flying Ford Anglia driven by Ron, went straight up to

the police to file a report of the bizarre occurrence (CS 79). To be specific, it is the Dursleys who exemplify this apathetic, abhorrent, marginalising attitude. To them the magical abilities of Harry is nothing more than abnormality, which Uncle Vernon assumes “probably a good beating [would] have cured” (SS 56); anything related to magic is intolerable to them, but at the same time the very existence, even any mention, of magic is absolutely scary for them. A common non-magic folk’s vehement reaction to the magical world is epitomised in this blurt-out of Vernon Dursley, in which he condemns the very existence of magic, Wizards as well as Harry’s parents:

...and as for all this about your parents, well, they were weirdos, no denying it, and the world's better off without them in my opinion... asked for all they got, getting mixed up with these Wizarding types... just what I expected, always knew they'd come to a sticky end... (SS 56)

Leaving the discussion of the Muggle gaze towards the Wizarding world here, we shall now turn our attention to the opposite gaze: the Muggle world from the perspective of the Wizardkind. It is here that we encounter the systematic, academic study of Muggles, the Others, which objectifies Muggles seemingly as an anthropological species completely separate and different from the Wizards. In Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry “Muggle Studies” is introduced as a discipline in the third year, which somewhat marks the beginning of the intermediate years of Hogwarts’ seven years educational course.

One wonders about the reason behind studying Muggles as a different discipline altogether. According to the saga, the magical and non-magical communities have been coexisting under the sun since long, and therefore it is very much natural that the magical community, well aware of the existence of the other sharer of the earth, namely Muggles, would want to know as much as possible

about this other entity. The attitudes in their discourse on Muggles are of monumental importance here. Primarily there is an academic, scientific, enthusiastic attitude – which results into the establishment of an impartial, scientific study of Muggles or manifests in some (like Arthur Weasley) in the form of a romantic fascination; and on the other hand there exists an apathetic, hateful attitude towards the Muggles, which a major chunk of the Wizarding community indulges in. This second type of attitude, needless to say, becomes the principal antagonist in the *Harry Potter* saga in the form of Lord Voldemort.

The entire series by Rowling celebrates the holistic, tolerant first kind of attitude that speaks of peace and harmony between the two ‘races’ – magical and non-magical. In the magical educational system the scientific subject of Muggle Studies is introduced in order to promote this attitude of harmony, but alongside it produces and reproduces certain knowledge about Muggles too. In *Orientalism*, while commenting on Arthur James Balfour’s remarks on the British-Egyptian relation, Said observes:

Knowledge to Balfour means surveying a civilization from its origins to its prime to its decline—and of course, it means *being able to do that*. Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a “fact” which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for “us” to deny autonomy to “it”—the Oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it. (Said 32)

The same kind of knowledge is produced by the scientific studies about the Muggles, which, primarily and definitely, Otherise the Muggles from the Wizards, if not directly marginalise them (from the third year Muggle Studies essay “Explain why Muggles need Electricity” [PS 250] to Mr Weasley’s eccentric fascination with every Muggle-related thing like plugs, postal service and telephone corroborate this). This is precisely the reason why such studies could be instrumental in preaching racial distinction and supremacy, as it does prove to be in the regime of Voldemort. After all such studies are interfaces of the opposite Gaze, precisely which Hermione Granger, and exceptionally brilliant student, wished to explore in her third year despite being a Muggle-born witch herself – she thought it would be “fascinating to study [Muggles] from the Wizarding point of view.” (PS 57)

The second type of attitude – the attitude of apathy and hatred towards Muggles – plays a crucial role in bestowing a shade of Manichaeian struggle upon the saga, and it is here that the issue of not only Muggles but other magical ‘creatures’ being inferior to, and therefore marginalised by, Wizards takes the front-seat. Here we must allude to the elitist, snobbish and segregational theory of blood-purity of the ‘dark wizards’, which has proved to be an apple of discord among the Wizarding community since long and upon which the autocratic theory of Wizard supremacy is founded. Voldemort’s takeover of the Wizarding world saw practical manifestation of this theory; however, considering Wizards of olden days like Salazar Slytherine and Gellert Grindelwald, who upheld the theory of blood-purity and Wizard supremacy, Voldemort stands at an end of the tradition, the racist ideology finding its acme in him. As is natural for any autocratic megalomaniac, Voldemort also uses systematic, scientific knowledge to preach his own ideology by promoting racial discord (noticeably Salazar Slytherin, a founder of Hogwarts and an

ancestor of Voldemort both philosophically and biologically, also emphasised upon the magical education being confined only “within all-magic families” because “he disliked taking students of Muggle parentage, believing them to be untrustworthy” [CS 150]); and not only Muggles, but Muggle-born Wizards and witches as well as various other magical beings ranging from centaurs and giants to house-elves and werewolves are thus marginalised by this sectarian and discriminating ideology.

Many including Rowling herself have found parallels between the ideologies of Hitler and Voldemort (Interview by *The Volkskrant*). Voldemort’s bigotry, megalomania and his notion of Wizard supremacy eventually leads to genocide of the Others that fall outside his circle of mainstream “pureblood” Wizards – a phenomenal occurrence strongly resembling the ethnic cleansing of the Jews by the Nazis. At the very dawn of his takeover, Voldemort kills Charity Burbage, the former Hogwarts teacher of Muggle Studies, for teaching “how [Muggles] are not so different from [Wizards]” (DH 12) and expressing positive views on Muggle-Wizard harmony. He later installs in the same post his faithful Death Eater Alecto Carrow, who starts preaching the ideology of racial discrimination, and above all, justifies it by referring to the ‘historical’ fact that Muggles have always been vicious to Wizards, and that “the natural order [was] being re-established” in the regime of Voldemort (DH 574). We come across this very kind of takeover of ‘scientific’, ‘historical’ and therefore ‘objective’ knowledge in Nazi Germany too, where it was taught in elementary history classes how the Treaty of Versailles was a conspiracy against Germany, how the hyperinflation of 1923 was a work of Jewish saboteurs and how the national resurgence started in the regime of Hitler; in biology classes students were taught comparative anthropology with the goal to teach them how different and inferior the Jews are to Germans, as they were taught the science

of heredity and the glorious necessity and meaning of blood purity (Simkin).

Probably the most important connection between the anti-Muggle and the anti-Jewish propaganda is the importance of ‘blood status’. In Nazi Germany the Nuremberg Laws (established to take away Jewish civil rights) categorised the Jews as a race as opposed to a religion or culture. Anyone who considered him/herself Jewish-born, or had more than two Jewish ancestors, were classified as Jewish. People with one or two Jewish grandparents were considered to be Mischlings (mixed race) (Stackelberg 256, 284). As is well known, anyone associated with people of Jewish blood was at risk in Nazi Germany. We can find a parallel to this in the Wizarding World, where distinctions are made between “pure-blood”, “half-blood”, and “Muggle-born” (or “mud-blood”, a degrading term for the Muggle-borns). The treatment of these classifications is more or less the same as in Nazi Germany (pure-blood = Aryan; half-blood = Mischlings; Muggle-born = Jewish). The depiction of the “Magic is Might” statue at the Ministry of Magic clearly shows the status and position the Muggles hold in the Wizard-dominated society (DH 242); they are not only depicted as marginalised, but literally crushed under the Wizard and witch of happy, comfortable demeanour. The Muggle-born Registration Commission is another tool in the system of the Muggle holocaust. The sectarian bigotry of the discourse not only denies the Other (the Muggle-borns) of their identity (as Wizards or witches), but puts a stigma of thievery on them, declaring that the Wizard or witch of “impure blood” must have “stolen” the magical ability from the real, rightful ones and therefore are actually impostors to be punished – an absurd and theoretically impossible proposition (DH 219). The Manichean, fanatic ideology even extends its propaganda through (supposedly) Dolores Umbridge’s pamphlet “Mudbloods and the Dangers they pose to a Peaceful Pure-

Blood Society”, the cover of which represents the Pure-Blood race as “a red rose with a simpering face in the middle of its petals, being strangled by a green weed with fangs and a scowl” (DH 249). This genealogy-based ideology therefore not only creates and segregates the Other, creating a heavily mythical discourse of the Other, but also implicates the means of dominating the Other by manipulating the historic knowledge among the sharers of the represented discourse. Curiously, we find parallels of all these in the history of Jewish holocaust in Nazi Germany – from the discourse discriminating the Jews to various commissions with the job of recording the profiles of non-Aryans.

The issue of marginalisation in Potterverse becomes further complicated when magical creatures enter the arena. Rowling writes that the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures of the Ministry of Magic is divided into three divisions: Being division, Beast division and Spirit division (FB xii). Whereas the Spirit division deals simply with ghosts, the definitions and identities of “beings” and “beasts” are confusing and much debated in the Wizarding ministry. It is after much debate that the Wizards define and identify the beings as “any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws” (ibid). This very definition reflects the Wizarding community’s attitude in general (irrespective of the blood-status of the Wizards) towards the identity construct of magical creatures – they are willing to bestow the status of a “being” rather than that of a “beast” only upon the creatures ready to comply to the laws of the centre, the mainstream, namely the human Wizarding community. Nonetheless, the Wizarding community acknowledges the beings’ contribution to the magical world at least, as we find that the Fountain of Magical Brethren at the Ministry in the pre-Voldemort regime features statues of a centaur, a

goblin and a house-elf too along with those of a Wizard and a witch (OP 127). However, after Voldemort's takeover we see this statue replaced by the Magic is Might statue, which strikingly features only Muggles and Wizarding people. The significance of this statue is not only in the depiction of the Muggle-Wizard relationship in the era of Voldemort's resurgence, but it subtly suggests that in the new dawn of magical supremacy Muggles are at least acknowledged to have a space of their own (howsoever marginalised and downtrodden they may be); but a space, an identity or, to say so, the very existence of magical creatures is denied by the blood-status-boasting Wizards in Voldemort's regime.

As the mainstream always wants to negatively identify and stigmatise the Other, an air of suspicion and anxiety always operates within the mainstream. In Pottermore we come across another kind of racism. As his origin as a half-Giant becomes exposed, Hagrid, a kind and widely beloved person, is all of a sudden treated as a malicious being to be avoided – all because his mother belonged to the popularly notorious race of Giants (GF ch. 24). Madame Maxime, originally a half-Giantess but an acclaimed witch, is so ashamed of her origin that she pretends to be offended when Hagrid recognises her true identity and denies of having any biological connection with Giants at all (GF 428-9).

Marginalisation of the werewolves is quite different a case from that of Giants. Since long lycanthropy has been represented as a kind of illness and Rowling also exploits another facet of this hypothesis. The question of the identity location of werewolves in the magical world is very much complicated, because, when not transformed, werewolves retain the intelligence of mainstream Wizarding beings, and yet magical legislators oscillate between "Being" and "Beast" about deciding upon the werewolves' identity status (FB xiii).

So severe is the marginalisation of werewolves that they are

deliberately outcast and denied of livelihoods, as we know from the poor conditions of Remus Lupin, an extremely efficient Wizard and a warm-hearted human being. Werewolves are the entities in Potterverse who are shunned because of their supposedly incurable disease with which much fearful myth is associated. One may go so far as to opine that their representation by Rowling reflects the traditional hateful outlook of ‘normal’ people toward those affected by such diseases like AIDS or leprosy in the world we live in.

The centaurs, renowned for their ancient knowledge and culture of their own, fare little better, though they have not been banished to the geographical margins of the Wizarding World. A group of centaurs resides in the Forbidden Forest on the grounds of Hogwarts, but remains aloof from humans wilfully. One of them, Firenze, is banished by his herd for what his people view as “peddling [their] knowledge and secrets among humans” (OP 698). Although they have a partially humanoid appearance, the Ministry of Magic treats them as a non-human class. Having been exiled from his own people, Firenze becomes Hogwarts’ Divination teacher. During his first teaching session we see Dean Thomas, a student, inquiring, “Did Hagrid breed you, like the thestrals?” (OP 601). Dean’s innocent curiosity reflects the prevailing attitudes of the Wizards that any non-human creature, however powerful or intelligent in his or her own right, surely have come into being under the supervision of at least a half-human like Hagrid. Dolores Umbridge also reveals while hurling insults at the centaurs that they fall under the jurisdiction of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures which “generously” granted “certain areas of land” (OP 754-5) to the centaurs.

On the other hand the house-elves stand at the bottom-end of a feudal relationship with the Wizarding people, and the subservient ideology is so deep-rooted in them that it is blasphemous for them to think or

act freely or contradict their masters. Among them, Dobby features as revolution personified. He not only gleefully leaves the job of the Malfoy family (CS 338), but takes up a paid job at Hogwarts (something unthinkable by other house-elves) and even declares “Dobby *likes* to be free” (GF 378-9; italics added). The Wizards’ point of view toward house-elves is in general derogatory; the extremists like the Malfoys and Crouches treat them degradingly, whereas ‘good’ Wizards like Fred and George Weasley exploit their servitude to sneak out food from Hogwarts kitchen. When Hermione, sympathetic toward the predicaments of house-elves, wishes to visit the Hogwarts kitchen, the Weasley twins are anxious that she might instigate a strike among the house-elves (GF 367). Nonetheless, Dobby’s standing up against the enslavement and for the freedom of the house-elves and exemplifies his radical thoughts might well earn him the status of a “Marxist hero”.

The issue of marginalisation as depicted in the *Harry Potter* series is multidimensional. The saga reflects myriad interwoven layers and facets of socio-political encroachment and segregation, and ideological, theoretical and practical problems of overlapping nature as we find them in our familiar world. By merit of this intricacy the *Harry Potter* series has attracted vast scholarly attention, and surely in future more scholarly works enlightening these complex issues will be produced. However, the success of the series lies not only in representation of the problems of our known world in its own peculiar way, but in the fact that it has made the readers of a wide-ranging age-group ponder over them by virtue of the fascinating literary style of J.K. Rowling.

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Jayan K Cheriyan's *Papilio Buddha* (2013): A Counter-Narrative

Anuja John

There are many Indian films depicting tribal life. Generally they focus on the selective aspects of tribal life such as community based life, superstitions and beliefs of tribal people. Some films reflect a racist attitude which reifies stereotypes that persist in mind of the mainstream towards Dalits and adivasis. *Papilio Buddha* is a 2013 Malayalam feature film written and directed by Jayan K Cheriyan. It is a counter-narrative questioning the legitimacy of grand narratives created and reinforced by power structures including the state and its machineries. The film depicts certain social realities based on several land struggles that happened in various dalit communities in Kerala, including Chengara, Meppadi, and Muthanga, and its effect on the Dalit population. It is also an attempt to examine the different perspectives in which the Dalits are considered by the society and also analyse how the voice of subaltern goes unheard by the mainstream society.

The film was denied censor certification and entry into the International Film Festival of Kerala. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) had cited nearly 30 instances, including visuals and dialogues denigrating iconic leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, E. M. S. Namboodiripad and Ayyankali apart from visuals of extreme violence and extreme torture of women by police. Usage of filthy language and calling caste names such as 'Pulaya', 'Pulakalli' in a derogatory manner. In January 2013, the board decided to give certification to the film after the makers agreed to mute a controversial speech by Ambedkar in the movie. Later *Papilio*

Buddha won the Kerala State Film Special Jury Award for Best Direction in 2012; Saritha received a Special Jury Mention for her performance in the film. Special mention by the Kerala Film Critics Association Award for Best Debut Director, and Second Best Feature Narrative at the Athens International Film & Video Festival. It also screened at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and the Montreal Film Festival.

The title *Papilio Buddha* (Malabar Banded Peacockis) refer to a rare species of butterfly founded in Western Ghats, one of the richest areas of bio diversity in india. It is disappearing due to deforestation, the use of pesticides, ecocide and corporate land-grabbing. The connection to the movie is that it explores the life of a group of displaced Dalits in the Western Ghats of India. People of that area are also endangered and victims of ecocide just as Papilio Buddha. The film also cast 150 Adivasis and completely shot at Muthanga region, the integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, in Wayanad district, Kerala.

The film unfolds in fictional Dalit settlement called Meppara. Sankaran (Sreekumar), a young JNU dropout is the central protagonist, who befriends a white gay American lepidopterist Jack (David Briggs) to escape from the fetters of his caste and to identify himself upper class.. Manjusree (saritha), a strong-minded Dalit woman auto rickshaw driver, struggles to avoid prejudice in a male-dominated career. As a woman she is doubly suppressed, at the level of gender and caste. She faces all sorts of atrocities. Meanwhile Manjusree hits a lecherous union leader, and was brutally raped; Sankaran is also arrested for illegally catching butterflies and tortured physically and mentally. The events spark off two acts of violence which politicise and radicalise the community. Some of whom are queer, who decide to shun the peaceful tactics proscribed by Gandhi in favour of rebellion and Ambedkerism. The state uses its police to suppress the revolt. Dalits shout that “we are not anybody’s

harijan”, “we banish Hinduism” and Sankaran quote what Dr. Ambedkar said about Gandhi’s fast in Yervada Jail in 1932: “Satyagraha is a foul and filthy act.” The film ends in violence as well as forced migration of Dalits.

Papilio Buddha is important because it brings all these human-rights violations and racism issues to the front. There is almost a parallel between the violence suffered by the young male protagonist Sankaran in police custody and the gang rape suffered by the woman auto rickshaw driver Manjusree. Both are violated by gangs in different kinds of uniform; both involve deep sexual hurt and more importantly, terrible pain and injury to both the physical body and the inner self. In other words, the movie completely does away with the conventions of representing rape in Malayalam cinema, and in a way that is definitely anti-patriarchal.

The various political parties’ Savarna philosophies have used the Dalits for their growth but failed to help them and contributed to their oppression to cater to their own interests. There is a Gandhian leader in the film who tries to use Satyagraha as a means to win over Dalits who are squatting on government land. But the Dalits led by Sankaran consider “Satyagraha is a foul and filthy act.” And they go on to burn an effigy of Gandhi. It has been alleged that the film is anti-Gandhi, but there is a deliberate attempt to present a counter narrative to the official narrative of Gandhi as a blemish-less embodiment of non-violence and a champion of the Dalit cause. This act of burning Gandhi’s effigy is juxtaposes with the parallel destruction of photo of Ambedker.

The Dalit colonies in Kerala are best examples of social segregation of Dalits. These colonies historically serve as the main sources of muscle power for traditional parties including the communists. Communist party which advocates the rights of working class also behaves indifferent to Dalits. Sankaran’s father Karian a one-time communist, who feels let down by the failure to achieve equal rights.

Naturally they see Dalit activism as a threat to their existence, and Dalit movements are marked as terrorist groups' in order to suppress them.

The film makes biting comments on the caste system and doesn't spare anybody, including the NGOs working in the region. The upper class intellectuals and NGO workers who pretend to stand for Dalits are shown in the film to be the products of the long tradition of casteism in Kerala. Incapable of accepting the equality of Dalits they preach themselves. The indifference of the westerners to caste system is portrayed through the role of Jack.

So many voices go unheard in the media- the oppressed, the minorities; those fighting for their very existence are blotted out of society. The Dalit representation in the media is very poor, and Dalit movements like DHRM (Dalit Human Rights Movement) are consistently framed as terrorist movements in popular media, which enables the middleclass intellectuals to turn a blind eye towards the caste atrocities happening against Dalits. As an experimental documentary filmmaker Cherian tries to give a voice to indigenous Adivasis in Kerala. Who are attempting to hold on to ancestral land, which is being forcibly taken away from them by a government only interested in serving the interests of larger mining companies. Based on true events, Papilio Buddha is a drama that unapologetically showcases the reality of Dalit lives, atrocities and violence that committed against Dalits, women and environment. The movie also sheds light in to the identity problems faced by the youngsters among Dalits. Sankaran's attempts to get away from the fetters of his community and identify himself with the upper class but his constant failure make him realize the realities and accept his identity as Dalit and fight for them.

Lolita: Re-presenting Dolores Haze

Vedatrayee Banerjee

Lolita: the ‘haze’

Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* is a character problematized by the politics of representation. Lolita exists in a world where her existence is questioned. Lolita might be real; she might as well be unreal. There is no saying if Lolita is a flesh and blood character, or a “little ghost,”¹ a figment of Humbert’s fevered imagination. While her presence is detailed on the one hand, on the other hand, the vague narration suggests her absence. Her features are emphasized to the minutest detail, while her emotions do not speak. They are silenced. The girl is also at an age when she is on the threshold of adulthood, pendulously swinging between innocence and experience. She is twelve. She is not a child, and not a grown – up either. While she savours on candies and Hollywood and music, she is also a little dazed by her physical changes and her sexual awakening. She is almost in a stupor, where she does not know who she exactly is. She does not conform to any distinct classification. In every respect, she is neither ‘this nor that’. This girl, who might be real, or unreal, is on the threshold of womanhood, at the moment of transition from innocence to experience. She steals bright lipstick and red nail colour from her mother’s possessions to appear grown – up, to play ‘mother’ for a while. She is in constant transition, as Sarah Herbold says in her essay ‘Fantasies of Lo,’ that “Lolita’s different names allude to many

1 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)10.

different versions of her.”² She is a crossover of different binaries herself as Nabokov complicates her representation deliberately.

The style of narration is extremely comic at times when tragedy in the plot has reached its height. In most tragic of situations Humbert manages to poke fun at himself or joke about the circumstances. The narrative does not lapse into a dull and gloomy style for once. It is written in a high spirited, jocund style of an adventure story, while the plot itself is capable of gravely dampening one’s spirits. HumbertHumbert, says Michael Holquist, is a “cosmic detective, who wishes to solve the crime of his own existence,”³ and truly enough, while the plot has nothing to do with detection, the structure would suggest distinct similarities with a detective story. In fact, Humbert’s search for Quilty is almost Holmes’ search for a criminal.

Lolita was a popular novel then when it was banned, and is popular till date. It deals with serious psychosocial issues, but, that never affected its best – seller status and has been made into two successful Hollywood productions. In fact the term Lolita became almost significant of a coquette, a promiscuous child then on. It is also a blend of misogynist and feminist readings. Sarah Herbold, in her essay ‘Lolita and the woman reader,’ explains how while “Nabokov’s intended audience was male,”⁴ *Lolita* was supposed to evoke feminist sympathies. The crossover in *Lolita* is there, both directly and indirectly. The girl herself and the modes of narration are all crossovers of sorts. It is not only a crossover of the so – called ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ genres, but also, a tremendously powerful blend of opposite emotions, techniques, and modes of narration.

2 Sarah Herbold, “Fantasies of Lo,” *Nabokov Studies*10 (2006): 199-201, 13 Sept. 2011. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v010.1herbold.html>>.

3 Michael Holquist, “Whodunit and the other questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction,” *New Literary History* 3.1 (1971): 135-156, 13 Sept. 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/468384>.

4 Sarah Herbold, “Fantasies of Lo,” *Nabokov Studies*10 (2006): 199-201, 13 Sept. 2011. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v010.1herbold.html>>.

Therefore, one might say, as Humbert does, “You are a funny creature, Lo.”⁵

Who is Dolores?

“She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.”⁶ Lolita then she was only in Humbert’s arms. Where then is Dolores Haze? Who then is she? Or the same question might as well be asked of Lolita. Who is Lolita, if the girl peering at Humbert “over dark glasses,”⁷ is the daughter of Charlotte Haze, Dolores Haze?

Vladimir Nabokov, very artfully titles his much controversial novel, *Lolita*. He interestingly begins with the three step pilgrimage of HumbertHumbert’s tongue in his attempts to pronounce the word “Lo. Lee. Ta,”⁸ the “light of his life,”⁹ “the fire of his loins.”¹⁰ The reader keeps looking for a ‘Lolita’ at every turn of a page, while gradually Humbert lodges onto the details of his long stays at asylums, and finally his marriage to Valechka. Lolita still is nowhere in sight. Nabokov however does not divulge who this myth is, but craftily manages to hold on to the reader’s attention through his descriptions of a very pervert paedophile, HumbertHumbert. Lolita however features every now and then in Humbert’s narrative, but does not cease to be a mystery.

The question is, does her mystery ever get solved? Do we really ever see her? When finally the reader knows whom Humbert is referring

5 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)237.

6 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)7.

7 *Ibid*, 41.

8 *Ibid*, 7.

9 *Ibid*.

10 *Ibid*.

to by the name of Lolita, does the veil of enigma shrouding her really lift? Or does it become more mysterious by confusing Lolita with the girl Dolores Haze?

Lolita is probably as much a mystery to Humbert, as she is to the readers. Humbert does not like to acknowledge this, but, to a certain extent Lolita is a blend of all the feminine characters that affect Humbert's life and the readers are made to tread on Humbert's life, experience Humbert's experiences to give them an understanding of three different characters and at the same time keep them in the dark regarding who they really are.

One could venture to say, Lolita never existed at all and Dolores, who did exist was almost absent throughout the expanse of the narrative. Humbert's fantasies of Lolita are juxtaposed against the background image of a certain Dolores Haze. What Dolores feels is never said, only glimpses of her flashes into the narrative. The real girl is overshadowed, her voice overpowered, by Lolita. "In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all,"¹¹ as Humbert says. What was, was his childhood love Annabel, where his pervert imaginations held its roots, as he "grew, a happy, healthy child, in a bright world of illustrated books, clean sand, orange trees, friendly dogs, sea vistas and smiling faces,"¹² nevertheless, "with nobody to complain to, nobody to consult."¹³ So, "in the sepulchre by the sea, in the tomb by the sounding sea,"¹⁴ of Humbert's "beautiful Annabel"¹⁵ Leigh, began Humbert's quest for "incarnating her in another."¹⁶ There "Lolita began with Annabel."¹⁷

11 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)7.

12 *Ibid.*, 8.

13 *Ibid.*, 9.

14 Andrew Barger, *Edgar Allan Poe's annotated Poems* (United States: Bottletree, 2008)97.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)14.

17 *Ibid.*, 12.

The moment beside “the piazza,”¹⁸ that moment, when “without the least warning,”¹⁹ Humbert met Dolores Haze peering at him “over dark glasses,”²⁰ he, at that very moment kills Dolores to reconstruct his “Riviera love”²¹ against the frame of Charlotte Haze’s teenage daughter, influenced by Hollywood and too young to figure out their new tenant’s evil designs. The first glimpse of Dolores is definitely not a vision of Charlotte Haze’s girl, but the first glimpse of Lolita, the girl whose “precursor”²² was Annabel and who later “completely eclipses her prototype.”²³ The reader is never introduced to Dolores Haze, because Humbert’s “passionate recognition”²⁴ of “the same child – the same frail, honey-hued shoulders....”²⁵ casts a shadow of Annabel on Dolores and, there at the fusion of the two, is born, Humbert’s Lolita.

Lolita almost haunts Humbert through the “sunny blur”²⁶ of the “lost loveliness”²⁷ of Annabel’s memory. All that Humbert retains of Annabel is the photograph where “Annabel did not come out well,”²⁸ and his own picture next to hers was “dramatic conspicuous,”²⁹ and “looking away.”³⁰ Humbert remembers small details of Annabel’s complexion, clothing, perfume that she stole from her mother, and desperately tries to reconstruct her in every small girl of Annabel’s age, which gradually almost convinces the readers of Humbert’s perversion. Lolita is born of Humbert’s fevered imagination and is nurtured by the memories of all the women who influenced him. Lolita is the “little ghost in natural colours”³¹ whom

18 Ibid, 41.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*
(Australia: Penguin, 2008) 7.

23 Ibid, 42.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid, 41.

26 Ibid, 11.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid, 10.

Humbert cannot define. He pathetically confesses that, “I would like to describe her face, her ways – and I cannot.”³² All he can recollect with shut eyes is a “cinematographic still,”³³ and “immobilized fractions”³⁴ of her, like “the freckles of her bobbed nose, blond down of her brown limbs,”³⁵ her hair, her skirt when she bends down to buckle her shoe, but not the girl. This probably is his memory of his imagined Lolita that he wants to see in Dolores Haze. His schizophrenic vision conjures up a Lolita for him in Dolores who also steals lipstick from her mother, who resembles Annabel the most. It is in fact, highly probable, that Monique, the French prostitute, who suited Humbert’s definition of a nymphet, had every potential of becoming a Lolita had Humbert continued to see her.

Who is Humbert?

Humbert’s disorder is more psychological than sexual. He lives in his own cocoon that he shares only with his Lolita. Interestingly enough, all the women that came in contact with Humbert have a very disturbed sexual and marital life. His “photogenic mother,”³⁶ as Humbert imagines her to be, dies only when he was three, leaving nothing, but a “pocket of warmth in the darkest past.”³⁷ His aunt, Sybil, who brings him up, had been violated by Humbert’s own father, neglected by her own husband, and had stayed as an “unpaid governess”³⁸ to Humbert. She never got any love out of the relationships she had and she also dies a premature death. Annabel was the first girl Humbert met, who was his age and therefore

32 Ibid, 47.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008).

36 Ibid, 8.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

sympathized with him and they shared a relationship of warm companionship. And this Annabel also dies, Annabel, with whom Humbert was “madly, clumsily, shamelessly, agonizingly and hopelessly,”³⁹ in love, a “love that was more than love,”⁴⁰ and the devastation of her death leaves Humbert unfit for having “any further romance throughout the cold years”⁴¹ of his youth. The disturbed adult relationships that he had grown with had forbidden him to love an adult it seems. Young girls resembling Annabel to an extent seemed to arouse his passions, not girls his age. He, himself realizes it quite late. He tries hard to “be good,”⁴² and marries Valechka in anticipation that “regular hours, home - cooked meals,”⁴³ would help him “if not purge”⁴⁴ himself, at least to keep his dangerous desires under “pacific control.”⁴⁵ But, his marriage turns sour in a few days, as all love grows cold and Valechka leaves with Mr. Maximovich. Monique, the young prostitute had been the only one who somehow seemed to reflect flashes of the girl that Humbert was looking for. Just any girl did not fit in his mind’s image of Lolita. Humbert got his fair share of shocks in the process of his search, in the shape of Marie, a bulky small girl child. And then Humbert comes across Dolores, who almost resembles his ‘brainchild.’ Even Charlotte Haze, whom he marries is a woman whose dead husband was twenty years her senior. HumbertHumbert’s passion can therefore, under the circumstances, probably be explained, as a fright for adult relationships.

Almost like the refrain from Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘Annabel Lee’ Humbert admits his love, to be a demonic or, angelic form of the

39 Ibid,10.

40 Andrew Barger, Edgar Allan Poe’s annotated Poems (United States: Bottletree, 2008)97.

41 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (Australia: Penguin, 2008)12.

42 Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (Australia: Penguin, 2008)19.

43 Ibid, 25.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

virtue, at least not human, as he refers to his normal relationships as relations with “human females.”⁴⁶ The very term “nymphet”⁴⁷ is suggestive of the non – human feature of his love. Also the conclusion that one derives is that Lolita is the “*etre?de fuite*”⁴⁸ of Humbert. He escapes from the world of failed adult relationships and retreats into his own cozy world where only he and Lolita exists, very much like, his escapes from adult games of bridge with Annabel, into the open under the Mimosa grove. Dolores was the “small ghost”⁴⁹ of somebody Humbert had “just killed.”⁵⁰ As Humbert’s “able psychiatrist,” is convinced and anxious, to have him take his Lolita “to the seaside,” and obtain “release from a subconscious obsession of an incomplete childhood romance with the initial little Miss Leigh.”⁵¹ Humbert himself defines Lolita, saying, “Annabel Haze alias Dolores Leigh, alias Lolita appeared to me.”⁵²

There in fact is a constant friction between Humbert’s Edenic Lolita and the very clinically described Dolores. As Marie Bouchet mentions in her essay ‘The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores’ that “eroticism is much more suggestive when it withholds information and lets the readers imagination fill in the blanks.”⁵³ Humbert’s “imagined Lolita,”⁵⁴ is also left to the imagination of the readers. While the narrator consistently feeds the reader with intricate details about Dolores, her

46 Ibid, 17.

47 Ibid.

48 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September. 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

49 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)158.

50 Ibid.

51 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008) 188.

52 Ibid, 189.

53 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September. 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

54 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)17.

white sock on a single foot, her charm bracelet, her tennis uniform, and minute details about her clothing, including her “hip girth, twenty nine inches, thigh girth, seventeen....”⁵⁵ and so on, his very own Lolita remains hidden under the piles of Dolores’ costume. Physically, Dolores is more present than Lolita. She is more a physical representative of Lolita. As Bouchet says, “The real nymphet’s body has to be guessed under the profusely detailed description of her clothes.”⁵⁶ Lolita, she suggests “is a parodic Eve”⁵⁷ and she is not wrong in saying so, as the imagery of apples and cherry red colours keep leaving their trail throughout the plot line, while Humbert would prefer to call himself the “helpless Adam.”⁵⁸ Dolores is seen holding a “beautiful, banal, Eden – red apple,”⁵⁹ on the day Humbert is first left alone with her. She is described as “apple sweet”⁶⁰ and at the end of the day’s adventures she is seen to “chuck the core of her abolished apple into the fender.”⁶¹ Also when Humbert meets Dolores at camp Q after long weeks of separation, she is dressed in her “brightest gingham with a pattern of little red apples.”⁶² While Dolores is “dotted with sensual details,”⁶³ Lolita’s is the “desired body.”⁶⁴ Even in a later poem when Humbert is deserted by Dolores, he writes how he is dying without Lolita Haze and how

55 Ibid, 121.

56 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September.
2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)121

60 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)65.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid,125.

63 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September.
2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

64 Ibid.

Dolores Haze is “wanted”⁶⁵ “ninety pounds is all she weighs, with a height of sixty inches.”⁶⁶ In other words, the body of Dolores is invaded by the presence of Lolita. While Dolores on the one hand is violated by Humbert, on the other hand she is violated by Lolita.

“But what happens to you my orphan?”⁶⁷

What happens to her who “had nowhere else to go?”⁶⁸ Yes, what happens to Dolores? This young orphan, enthusiastically tries to impress Humbert “with the world of tough kids,”⁶⁹ Humbert, who looked so like a star from Hollywood who held Lolita in his thrall. In her candid admiration for Hollywood, candy bars, comics, clothes and magazines, she does not realize that she has become the ‘Lolita’ of a “deranged mind.”⁷⁰ This girl of twelve, still a “typical kid, picking her nose,”⁷¹ “a disgustingly conventional little girl”⁷² still unable to resist the lure of “sweet hot jazz, square dancing, gooey fudge sundaes, musicals, movie magazines and so forth,”⁷³ little knew that the “blue”⁷⁴ “Vitamin X”⁷⁵ was the end of her life as Dolores Haze. The clothes that filled her with supreme glee at the ‘Enchanted Hunters’ were not clothes for Charlotte Haze’s girl, but clothes for Humbert’s Lolita, for whom Dolores’ body was to serve as substitute. From then on she was “an orphan, a lone child, an absolute waif, with whom, a heavy – limbed, foul smelling adult, had

65 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)292.

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*, 169.

68 *Ibid.*, 160.

69 *Ibid.*, 151.

70 *Ibid.*, 137.

71 *Ibid.*, 186.

72 *Ibid.*, 166.

73 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)166.

74 *Ibid.*, 138.

75 *Ibid.*

intercourse three times a morning.”⁷⁶ Her sexual awakening and the daze that left her with wanting to “try what it was like”⁷⁷ for “sort of fun,”⁷⁸ soon wrung out all fun that she would ever imagine having. She became Humbert’s young prostitute. The ill – mannered, un – ladylike daughter of Charlotte Haze, the brat who ate up guests’ bacon, ceased to exist that day, when at the ‘Enchanted Hunters,’ a young and curious Dolores, enchanted by the mysteries of adolescence is hunted by HumbertHumbert. She travels all over the country then on, but, her situation is worse than a caged bird. She has no choice. More so, the narrator very coldly chokes her voice. She starts living Lolita’s life the way Humbert wants her to, while dying her own death. She dresses the way Humbert wants her to dress. Even her morning coffee is at the mercy of her predator, who finds it “sweet, to bring that coffee to her and then deny it until she had done her morning duty.”⁷⁹ She was paid like a “concubine”⁸⁰ as Humbert calls her, in the form of lavish clothing, entertainment, music boxes. She was not allowed to ask for anything more, for what more could she want? She was only imitating Lolita, playing for a while, “darling, this is only a game.”⁸¹ When Humbert breaks the news of her mother’s death to her, he just states that “your mother is dead,”⁸² and does not really think it necessary to do anything more than buy her “four books of comics, a box of candy, a box of sanitary pads, two cokes, a manicure set, a travel clock with a luminous dial, a ring with a real topaz, a tennis racket, roller skates with white high shoes, field glasses, a portable radio set, chewing gum, a transparent raincoat,

76 Ibid, 158.

77 Ibid,155.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid,186.

80 Ibid, 153.

81 Ibid, 19.

82 Ibid, 160.

sunglasses and some more garments.”⁸³ Ample compensation for her mother’s death. All Humbert needed was to keep his companion in “passable humor from kiss to kiss.”⁸⁴

Humbert is the narrator, and he narrates with not a very guilty conscience, that he was generous to Dolores. He in fact goes to the extent of patting his own back calling himself “Humbert the kind.”⁸⁵ Dolores is seen, as Humbert sees her, as Lolita. She has no voice of her own, no narrative where she could safely pen her feelings, her grudges, her claustrophobia. She is almost absent from the text. Humbert’s narrative at times even succeeds to convince the reader that it was “she who seduced”⁸⁶ Humbert. She is portrayed as such a child, that the reader does not really ever see through her feelings for Humbert. One could imagine in one’s sympathies for Humbert that she was the spoilt child who encouraged Humbert’s activities and poor Humbert was the “helpless Adam”⁸⁷ pitifully at the mercy of his promiscuous Eve. One almost forgets to pay heed to the “simple, happy, neglected child’s”⁸⁸ “weeping grimace,”⁸⁹ the “expression of pain”⁹⁰ that flits every now and then across her twelve year old face at being threatened to be sent either to Miss Phalen’s place or the reformatory. One does not notice how she has lost all pleasure in living when Humbert states that “every morning during our yearlong travels, I had to devise some expectation, some special point in space and time for her to look forward to, for her to survive till bed time.”⁹¹

83 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)160

84 *Ibid*, 174.

85 *Ibid*, 180.

86 *Ibid*, 150.

87 Marie Bouchet, “The Details of Desire: From Dolores on the Dotted Line to Dotted Dolores,” *Nabokov Studies* 9(2005):101-114, 13 September, 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v009/9.1bouchet.html>.

88 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)170.

89 *Ibid*, 157.

90 *Ibid*, 158.

91 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)170.

In one's enthusiasm to sympathize with Humbert's helplessness, one loses sight of the fact that every night Dolores sleeps on a tear – soaked pillow, how she must pine to see the familial bonds of love that others of her age share with their fathers, and how she too must want to have boys of her age admire her.

Dolores rushes out of her room when her friend Mona Dahl sits on her father's lap, teachers at Beardsley school complain about her performance. Their general impression is "Dolly remains morbidly uninterested in sexual matters"⁹² and "refused to discuss the home situation."⁹³ But, except for these incidents, the author does not give the reader much of a chance to understand Dolores' situation. We see faint glimpses of the real girl within the shell of Humbert's Lolita only when Dolores Haze attempts to rebel. Her actions are not very clear though one is never sure if she really guides the car to follow Humbert's trail, one can never say if she had genuinely confided in Mona Dahl. What looks like an attempt to escape after a heated argument with Humbert, ends in Humbert appeasing her once again by treating her to lemonade. The nurse's behaviour at the hospital is also a mystery. The reader wonders if she is aware of the relationship between Dolores and Humbert. That she was "ready to turn away"⁹⁴ in "plain repulsion"⁹⁵ does not become very clear until she really escapes from the hospital. Her desperation is so much, her need to escape is so great that she chooses to escape with Quilty of all people, Clare Quilty, who was no better, *indeed*, probably worse than HumbertHumbert.

The reader is kept thoroughly in the dark, as to the workings of Dolores' mind. What she thinks, what she plans and how, nothing is

92 Ibid, 221.

93 Ibid, 222.

94 Ibid, 187.

95 Ibid.

told. There is suspense throughout every action of this victim of Humbert's perverse passions. Even her feelings for Humbert are unknown. One does suspect if she really does not love Humbert at all. Humbert, her violator after all, receives quite a sympathetic treatment from Dolores. While on the one hand she decides to jump from the 'frying pan to fire' by choosing to escape with Quilty, on the other hand her disgust for Humbert is never very well expressed. She never exposes him, although threatening him always to gain some pathetic small favour. Dolores Haze remains a mystery throughout, as she is eclipsed under the garb of Lolita.

Although, as Todd Bayma and Gary Fine found that "majority of critics share Humbert's misogynistic interpretation of *Lolita*. By using similar arguments, as used by convicted rapists in order to view themselves as non – rapists, reviewers depicted Dolores Haze as both morally unworthy and at least partly responsible for her own victimization,"⁹⁶ but, "Humbert's 'angle of vision' is not the only one we have of Lolita, although it predominates,"⁹⁷ as Eric Goldman mentions in his essay 'Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov's *Lolita*.' He suggests "an alternative interpretation of *Lolita*, one which views her not as a special, nymph – like girl already perverted before Humbert exploits her, but rather as an ordinary, juvenile girl whose 'normal' sexual development is warped by a maniacal myth – making pedophile."⁹⁸ The science of sexology undermines Humbert's Edenic perspective of *Lolita* and establishes her behaviour and development as normal. "She is a normally developing young woman who is exploited by an imaginative man who ironically sees her as the deviant."⁹⁹ For

96 Eric Goldman, "Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov's *Lolita*." *Nabokov Studies* 8 (2004):87-104, 13 Sept. 2011
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/voo8/8.goldman.html>.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

Humbert “images of a fallen woman, prostitute and Dolores are identical,”¹⁰⁰ says Goldman, however, “reference to the Miranda twins is an allusion to Shakespearean heroine who connects Lolita to a character who is the quintessence of juvenile discovery. Lolita, like Shakespeare’s Miranda, is discovering a brave new world.”¹⁰¹ However, this is not to be confused with what Humbert does to her. She just realizes too late what the experimenting had led her to; she does understand the grave intentions of Humbert. Humbert, unlike Charlie is not an experiment in Lolita’s sexual awakening.

Therefore Lolita can have both misogynist and feminist readings. Nabokov relates the story from Humbert’s perspective which obviously lends the serious issue an ironic humour and at the same time avoids becoming a nagging cliché of a ‘fallen woman’ novel. He does injustice to Dolores’ character possibly, but he has his reasons too. This path – breaking, almost scandalous story of a distracted criminal becomes the controversial rage of Nabokov’s time. It is banned in numerous places, but being banned helps in securing publicity and thereby securing the book’s best – seller status for years. Had it been told from Dolores’ perspective, it probably would not have been such a successful book with war – ridden readership. It would have been the sad story of just another ‘fallen woman,’ just another story of betrayal. Nabokov’s narrative style ensures that the readers give Dolores more sympathy than ‘fallen women’ get in Victorian novels, by not so elaborately describing her agony. Dolores’ suppressions win her sympathy from the readership. If her plight would have been discussed at length, it would not leave anything for the readers to imagine. Here the imagined suffering of

100 Ibid.

101 Eric Goldman, “Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov’s Lolita.” *Nabokov Studies* 8 (2004):87-104, 13 Sept. 2011 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/v008/8.goldman.html>.

Dolores pains the reader. “In this sense,”¹⁰² as Goldman says, “the novel is as much a part of feminism as it is of modernism,”¹⁰³ because “Nabokov suggests the inadequacies of conflicting ways of knowing Lolita. Lolita has sometimes been criticized as a misogynist work. But, just as contemporary feminist critics such as Baym, Powers and Heller highlight the ways myths are used to stigmatize and belittle women, so Nabokov reveals the damage that a misogynist myth can inflict on a young woman.”¹⁰⁴

Lolita is a quest for a nymph – like Annabel in the beginning when Humbert finds her in Dolores. Then when Dolores escapes, it is Humbert’s quest to find her back. There is confusion then as to who he really looks for, Lolita or Dolores, for the poem he writes, remembers Lolita, but, searches for Dolores, as Humbert writes “wanted, wanted, Dolores Haze.”¹⁰⁵ But, the end is surprising and oddly poignant. When Humbert sees the pregnant and grown – up Dolores, he knows that she is not his Lolita, but, he also knows definitely that he loves her still for what she is. Dolores is no more a nymphet, but he loves her. He had, previously not seen Monique, the street – walker, for the fear of losing all love for her once she ceased to be a nymphet, But, Dolores had cured him of that disease it seems. In the end he is almost not a paedophile any longer. In fact, his murder of Quilty suggests the murder of his own darker and “deranged”¹⁰⁶ image. Lolita is a ‘serious’ novel that discusses grave issues under the guise of Humbert’s picaresque travels and good humour. It is almost, as Auden had said like a detective story, with equilibrium at the

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Eric Goldman, “Knowing Lolita: Sexual Deviance and normality in Nabokov’s Lolita.” *Nabokov Studies* 8 (2004):87-104, 13 Sept. 2011 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/nab/summary/voo8/8_goldman.html.

105 Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Australia: Penguin, 2008)292.

106 Ibid,137.

beginning, which is disrupted, and then towards the end equilibrium is restored, though, in this case, one does not feel like asking if “there’s honey still for tea.”¹⁰⁷

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107 Rupert Brooke, *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*(Charleston: Nabu,2010)

Presence in Absence: Experiments in Representation in Badal Sircar's Bhoma

Tirthankar Sengupta

Among the personalities who influenced Indian theatre in the final half of the twentieth century, Badal Sircar occupies a unique position primarily due to his experiments with newer modes of communication with the audience and innovative usage of performing spaces; he is best known for developing the 'Third Theatre'. In seeking to define it, one needs to be aware of the dichotomies that are harmonized in it. The traditional forms of rural, folk theatre from different parts of India, most notably the *jatra* are considered as the First Theatre while the western-influenced (primarily urban) theatre that uses the proscenium stage is considered as the Second Theatre. Sircar was working towards creating an art form that would synthesize the two as well as have qualities beyond them. His dramaturgy is essentially experimental in nature; the alternative and unconventional modes of representing characters, events and issues make the exercise of reading or watching his plays a different experience.

Theatre, in representing reality, always reformulates it to a certain extent. It is a live art form, generating multiple complex symbols each moment at various levels for the audience to receive and interpret. Everything on stage, so to speak, becomes a sign. Even in the most realistic plays, the invitation and impact of the symbolic is always felt. Several thespians, including Sircar believe that theatre should never see itself as a mere tool of reproducing mundane, superficial naturalistic reality. It should never attempt the fatal

proposition of trying to realistically imitate the detailed spectacle, illusion and glamour of life as cinema is able to do. Sircar considered it the reason why the audience increasingly preferred to visit cinema halls and lose interest in realistic theatre. He believed that the strength of theatre lay in the sense of immediacy of the performance; and that it was always live, and eternally new.

Sircar believed that the distance and difference in levels of the stage and the audience seats, that separated the audience from the performers (and hence, the performance) hindered effective communication. This led to the concept of performance in Anganmancha, where the performance was held in an empty room; the audience sat on chairs scattered across the room in such a way that the performers performed all around them and often came in physical proximity or even made contact with the audience. Sircar considered this much more vital than using relevant props, costumes, make up or lights to create an illusion of reality.

Sircar's plays used alternative and unconventional representations of reality as early as the well-known critically acclaimed *Evam Indrajit* (1963). Throughout the sixties, his works systematically move away from conventional proscenium theatre. He founded his own theatre group Shatabdi in 1967, concretizing the process of creating alternative theatre. The first experimental non-proscenium production by the group took place on 24th October, 1971 in the All Bengal Teachers' Association Hall. It was an unconventional performance of *Sagina Mahato*, a play initially written for the proscenium stage. It was *Spartacus* (1972), which was the first play that Sircar conceived and wrote exclusively for non-proscenium space. He recounts the evolution of his ideas, his trips to Europe and America where he met contemporary avant-garde thespians, and the experiments of workshops throughout India in his work *The Third Theatre* (1978).

Sircar's Third Theatre, thus, sought to do away with most elements which attempt at creating the illusion of a real-life situation during a performance. The actors used no make-up or wore no specific costume to 'turn into' fictitious characters; there were no props or conventional set designs, the plays were often performed in open spaces. The other feature of Sircar's plays is their engagement with contemporary socio-political issues. He believed in using theatre as a tool to depict the prevalent condition and ask questions about society. He also wished theatre should be 'free'; it should be a part of social life available for every individual from all spheres of society, and not as a 'commodity' to be sold. Theatre should thus be 'free', both physically as an art-form with minimum difference between the audience and the performance, and also financially, available to one and all. This gradually led to the concept of Muktamancha, where the performers played out in open spaces like fields, surrounded by hundreds of interested spectators. Shatabdi gradually began undertaking rural tours, taking their theatre to every corner of Bengal.

Anjum Katyal summarizes the salient features of Sircar's Third Theatre by referring to it as a means of communicating directly in theatre, thereby utilizing the strength of the live art form; a flexible, portable and inexpensive 'free' theatre that can assume the form of both an intimate theatre with intense communication, as well as be performed outdoors that can travel far and wide to people of rural areas.

In these regards, *Bhoma* (1975) is one of Sircar's most important plays. A classic example of a Third Theatre play, *Bhoma* is written about the pitiable poverty-stricken condition of the villagers of the Sundarbans. In my analysis of the play, I shall comment on several subtle representational novelties used by Sircar. However, I intend to

devote the maximum attention to the central ‘character’ or ‘presence’ that gives the play its the name, the figure of Bhoma.

In the preface to the play, Sircar recounted the creation of this play and claimed that the members of his theatre group Satabdi had a direct influence and involvement in writing this play (Sircar 57). Individual members besides Sircar wrote down different scenes in response to different observations, impulses and experience of contemporary events. The single most significant source of the play was a conversation that Sircar had with Tushar Kanjilal, head master of the Rangabelia Village School in the Sundarbans. It was from him that he heard about Bhoma, a villager. Sircar recalls that the knowledge about the wretched condition of the rural masses and the utter ignorance of the urban population concerning these matters hurt and infuriated him. As various pictures, incidents and scenes began to be strung together to form the play, then “somehow it was Bhoma’s image which started to become the link; in the end, the play could not be called anything but Bhoma”.

Like several of their other productions, the actors generally switched swiftly between different roles, often expressing social voices rather than portraying a specific human being or a character. Bhoma, the character, only appears a handful times in the play and has very few dialogues.

Satabdi performed this play using six performers. There are no fixed characters; the performers are merely designated numbers—‘One’ to ‘Six’. In the preface, Sircar suggests that it would be better if a specific actor plays the character ‘One’, representing the man who is eternally searching for Bhoma, and another plays the role of ‘Three’, the one who speaks of love

(Sircar 58). Both interestingly and importantly, Sircar gives no stress that a fixed actor should speak all the (though limited and infrequent

as they are) lines of Bhoma. This clearly shows that he was least bothered about creating a conventional central character.

In the beginning, the actors assume various postures and positions to represent a growing seed, the outstretched branches of a tree and other elements of nature. While some 'become' trees, the others get into the role of wood cutters; finally, they jointly assume the shape of a machine in action. Although it is not made clear, this abstract representation probably introduces the thematic concern of human beings using and destroying natural resources for their sustenance and greed.

The play is basically written in the form of a conversation between six individuals. The issues mentioned or discussed reveal them as urban middle class individuals. One gets a series of information regarding the Calcutta of the 1960s and 1970s. The things discussed include the newly constructed VIP road to the Calcutta airport, the lure of technological miracles like television, Maruti and Fiat cars, political tensions between India and Pakistan, Sitar maestro Ravi Shankar's exploits in America and so on. One character (designated generally as 'Two'), time and again, narrates a monotonous monologue of sorts revealing his middle-class life, work, family and financial condition while another ('Three') constantly fumbles to describe his failed love-story. It is 'One' who reveals his interest in knowing and understanding Bhoma; but for a considerable amount of time, the readers/ audience is not sure if Bhoma is a human being, an object or something abstract. Shanta Dutta (nicknamed Topu), a Satabdi actor, recalled to Anjum Katyal how the team-members had specifically decided that the point of view from which the events in the play are being seen would be that of an ordinary middle class person (Katyal 153).

The apparently disconnected series of images and comments

nonetheless paint a picture of the struggles and aspirations of the middle class. There are references to the ongoing development projects—the construction of the Second Hooghly Bridge, the Calcutta metro rail and so on. However, there emerges simultaneously the image of poverty, hunger and deprivation, images of growing human apathy. An abstract issue that recurs is the one of cold and warm blood; human blood is expected to be warm and full of life-force, indicating emotions and humanity; however it has turned cold like that of fishes. The lack of humanity is increasingly suggested to be a result of the changing times; a passing comment is made concerning Darwin's Theory of Evolution suggesting that an empathetic, selfless human being will not be able to 'survive' in today's world (Sircar 60).

It is 'One' who expresses to the others to a desire to tell a story. In it, he narrates and paints the picture of perpetual poverty and struggle of the people of the Sundarbans. The picture of a grim reality gradually emerges as the lack of the basic necessities of life in the villages gets juxtaposed constantly with statements expressing fanciful aspirations of the relatively better placed urban middle-class. Manujendra Kundu correctly observes that in this play Sircar has woven two realities together—the urban story and the pictures of multiple "nameless Bhomass" (Kundu 170).

Among a series of statistics, the most impactful one documents the contrast between the allotments to rural and urban sectors. There are no funds for the agro-based economics of the entire Simulpur region, which could be transformed by an aid of three million rupees. In contrast, six hundred million rupees have been used for construction of the Hooghly Bridge, two thousand million for improving the city's streets and sewers, and three thousand million for the metro railway project. And at the end of this sequence appears the country's most ambitious project, a recurring thematic trope in several of Sircar's

plays, the atom bomb. India's elevation into a state with nuclear power is 'celebrated' in an ironical air as members of the middle class see the weapon of mass destruction as a symbol of progress.

Yet who or what Bhoma is, is not made clear. The character 'One' seems to be the one in quest for Bhoma—he occasionally defines Bhoma on indefinite, abstract terms—he states on various occasions that Bhoma is “the village”, “the paddy field”, or “the forest” (Sircar 64). He often cries aloud Bhoma's name yet gets no response. His inability and the essentially ambiguous nature of Bhoma's identity is revealed when he shouts out: “Bhoma, why doesn't your story flash like the straight blade of a sword? Why does it curl up in a confused, rusty heap of barbed wire?” (Sircar 82). He cannot define Bhoma—“Bhoma is a—Bhoma is one—Bhoma is...I can't, Bhoma. I just can't put you into a neat and tidy formula”. Yet he has a crucial gut-feeling: “I haven't seen Bhoma. But Bhoma is there! I also know that unless Bhoma lives, unless Bhoma sustains us, I can't live, nobody lives!”

As the play proceeds, there are a couple of phases when the name and reference to Bhoma is not raised for long periods of time. It is the picture of a haplessly materialistic and ambition-driven urban society that emerges, accompanied by a sense of moral and ethical degradation. Consequently, an extremely dramatic moment is achieved when one of the actors assumes a sleeping posture, mildly calls out to the others as “sir” (*babu*) and upon being asked who he is, simply replies: -“I am Bhoma” (Sircar 87).

The ultimate appearance of Bhoma is certainly anti-climactic. Yet it was done deliberately and masterfully by Sircar. The only substantial dialogue that the figure of Bhoma has in this play is a straightforward, poignantly simple imploration; an expression of his hunger and a desire to have rice: “Bhoma will have rice, sir. Bhoma is hungry” (Sircar 104).

The final quarter of the play contains a section where certain details of Bhoma's life are narrated conventionally. The picture that emerges is that of a hapless farmer plagued by poverty and hardship, yet one with commendable courage and strength. His mother died of snake-bite, his father was killed by a crocodile and one of the younger brothers died of diarrhea having consumed poisonous salty water. Yet Bhoma could alone fell a giant tree in three hours when he was twenty, and eat two kilograms of rice for a meal even at the age of seventy two (Sircar 99). He is blind in the right eye and has a gaping wound on his cheek caused by a tiger, a tiger that he ultimately managed to kill himself (Sircar 100). Yet all that we get to see of him in the play is a poor, weak and probably aged individual who is dying of hunger.

As the pace and intensity of the action increases, the impact of Bhoma's simple demand to be fed assumes great dramatic and thematic significance with regards to the prevalent society. The bitter irony in the revelation that this society cannot provide the rural poor with food and shelter, the basics of life, is clearly conveyed to the audience. The climactic moment is reached when in response to Bhoma's demand to be fed, "Is the rice, ready Sir?" One helplessly replies "There's no rice, Bhoma" (Sircar 108). The greater and bitterer truth is however revealed when he states: "How can you eat, Bhoma? If you eat rice we don't get our delicious biriyani" (Sircar, 105). There follows a series of implicit as well as explicit confessions that it is 'we' who destroy Bhoma—"Bhoma lies almost lifeless with hunger...There's the smell of poison in the air...We drink Bhoma's blood, and laugh and play" (Sircar 109).

The concluding portion of the play depicts an anguished realization of the unjust state of affairs and expresses an opinion that it is Bhoma who is the solution to the prevalent socio-economic problems. However, that is not simply in the role of being a nourisher to all

because that has already led him to be exploited. There is an implicit call to revolution as ‘One’ continues to urge Bhoma to utilize and convert his hunger and suffering to anger and use it as a catalyst to meaningful action. In the absence of rice, he offers Bhoma salt to apply on his gaping wounds that would infuriate him and urge him to resistance and rebellion—“I know Bhoma is there...Bhoma has risen. He has taken up his rusty axe, he’s grinding it, sharpening it...You pick it up, Bhoma. Come on, hit it” (Sircar 110). The play ends anticipating the resurgence of the force of Bhoma.

In commenting upon the representation of Bhoma, it should be remembered at the outset that very few of the Third Theatre plays can afford to, or do depict or develop concrete characters in the conventional realistic way. Yet Bhoma has been constantly used in the play primarily as a symbol rather than an individual. The fact that he refers to himself in the third-person adds to this effect. It could not be about the individual because it is revealed in the discussion that Bhoma is dead, a statement historically true for the man and prophetic in anticipating the bleak future of his own kind. Yet, not only does he represent thousands of rural peasants, he is also recalled by ‘One’ as the spirit of the region itself. Anjum Katyal notes that the paradoxical presence of Bhoma throughout the play despite his concrete absence makes him “the cause, the motivation, the victim and the symbol” (Katyal 153). When this symbolism is projected upon the fact that it is the peasants coupled with the natural resources of the agricultural lands and forests which sustains the urban population, Bhoma becomes an embodiment as the source of life, even in the cities. A realistic play where a central character is always present could not have achieved this effect. The actual appearance of the figure is massively out of proportion with this thematic significance; yet the impact is not of bathos but of anguish and pain. We shudder at condition that the actual life-givers have been reduced

to. Sircar himself states that “Bhoma gradually became more and more important in the play, to the extent of lending it his name, but he did not appear as a character in the play, nor did his life-story figure in it. The play speaks not of Bhoma but of the Bhomas who constitute a phenomenon, a social reality” (“Voyages in the Theatre” 117).

Rustom Bharucha has an interesting observation regarding the way Satabdi portrayed Bhoma. He notes that there have been several plays written keeping in focus the figure of the poor rural peasant. Yet a serious problem arose in the process of acting; even when actors from the city tried their best to master rural dialects, wear tattered clothes and ‘pretend’ to be frail and underfed, their essentially middle class identity got exposed on most occasions one way or the other. According to Bharucha, the fact that the Satabdi production completely rejected this process of identification yielded positive results. There was no need to think or analyze on the matters of a credible ‘realistic’ portrayal of Bhoma; it is the issues which remained prominent, and the message clearly got across to the audience (Bharucha 175).

There are several accounts recalling how popular *Bhoma* became in the villages. In fact it was first performed in Bhoma’s own village where a surviving brother of his was a part of the audience. Yet, one can and perhaps must raise certain critical questions of the play. What did it, at the end of the day, have for the villagers? It has already been discussed how the play was written from a middle-class point of view and vision of rural Bengal. Similarly, it is the sensibilities of the middle class that the play seeks to touch—“Bhoma is the conscience of the privileged urban Indian” (Katyal 154). As such, it remains little other than consolation of solidarity for the rural masses, a portrayal of their struggle. There has been another strand of criticism that there are different sections even within the middle class and some of them are equally struggling for survival against hostile conditions.

They and the urban poor have not been represented enough in this play, making the divisions too simplistic. The call to revolution to the rural masses is implicit and not substantial, and remains strongly within the confines of urban academic and intellectual discourses. The call to action from inertia seems a distant hope as long as there is obliteration, killing, wiping out, and mopping up in different ways (Kundu 179).

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One Mirror, Myriad Reflections: The Politics of Indigo Cultivation and its ‘Representation’ in Dinabandhu Mitra’s *Nil Darpan, or The Indigo Planting Mirror*

Partha Sarathi Nandi

Before meditating on the ‘politics of representation’, let me begin my article with a well-known anecdote, which I find relevant to this topic. During the Second World War, a German officer once visited the cubist painter Pablo Picasso, in his Paris studio. There he saw *Guernica*, and being shocked by the explicit representation of the modernist “chaos” in the oil painting, he asked: “Did you do this?” To which Picasso calmly replied: “No, you did this!” Art has always been a discourse on the objects it represents. It attempts to represent the world and be authentic, gestural or emotional (*Guernica* was a response to the bombing of Guernica in 1937 by the Fascist forces, during the Spanish Civil War). However, the status of representation of objects in art had changed considerably during the twentieth century. ‘Modernist’ art increasingly abstracted objects from their social space and transformed them into signs which no longer directly referred back to moral, psychological or symbolic values that used to be ties to the social order (in fact the “avant-garde” artists attempted to throw pots of paint at the systematized world). Likewise, literature (due to its identificatory dimension with the subjective and objective qualities of the individual and the society) is also considered to conversely represent the society; and therefore, is

often perceived naïvely, as a ‘mirror of the society and the people’ (from which it evolves). However, for its literal verisimilitude (mostly due to representational or mimetic nature), the genre of dramatic or performing arts can be considered as literature’s closest apparatus to function as a mirror of the society. “This emphasis is also reflected in the word ‘drama’ itself, which derives from the Greek “draein” (“to do,” “to act”), thereby referring to a performance or representation by actors” (Klarer 43). But in case of drama too, the representational process is a highly complex one, filled with multiple nuances. For example, the ‘external reality’ represented (in the text) through the dramatist’s perception of the ‘real’, may be ‘non-real’ for others. Moreover, when depicted on stage, the ‘performative reality’ of that ‘non-real’, attempts to replicate a microcosmic view of the reality, but the modified mirror image becomes more of a distortion, than an exact reflection. Also, it is impossible to expect exactitude from the ever-iterative ‘performative reality’. And if the text gets translated, there always remains a chance of it getting further removed from the ‘real’ (both from the text and the context). Thus, the representative quality of this art form (drama) seems to be ‘thrice removed’ from reality, in Platonic terms.

I

Dinabandhu Mitra’s play *Nil-Darpan* (1860) has long been hailed by the nationalist critics and historians as a remarkably bold representation of the depredations of English planters in rural Bengal, and as a classic portrayal of the bravery and firm determination of the ryots, in their resistance to colonialism. *Nil-Darpan* heralded a tradition of *Darpan* (Mirror) plays in Bengali (depicting oppression and exploitation at different walks of life) like Prasanna Mukhopadhyay’s *Palligram Darpan* (Mirror of Rural Life, 1873), Mir Musharraf Hossain’s *Jamidar Darpan* (The Landowner’s Mirror, 1873), Jogendra Ghose’s *Kerani Darpan* (The Clerk’s

Mirror 1874), Dakshinacharan Chattopadhyay's *Chakar Durpan* (The Tea-Planters' Mirror, 1875) and *Jail Darpan* (Mirror of the Prison, 1876), Nagendra Nath Bandopadhyaya's *Gaekwar Durpan* (The Mirror of Baroda, 1875), Gopalkrishna Bandhopadhyaya's *Banga Darpan* (1885) and so on. "A class of dramatists was perhaps coming into existence which considered that a play should hold the 'Mirror' to social conditions" (Rangacharya 100). *Nil-Darpan* became a milestone in the history of Bengali theatre, and was so popular that even during the forties (1945 onwards), IPTA and other leftist groups (like Natchakra Natyadal, 1956), frequently performed *Nildarpan*.

Mitra published *Nil-Darpan* anonymously in 1860. In 1861, the governor John Grant asked for an English translation of *Nil-Darpan*, "[t]hinking this would be a good way of knowing how natives spoke of the indigo question among themselves when they had no European to please or to displease by opening their minds" (P. Chatterjee *Nation* 22-23). Seton-Karr (secretary) asked the Irish missionary Rev. James Long to supervise the translation "by a native" (Madhusudan Datta). The circulation of the translated version resulted in the prosecution of Long by the landholders and the Planters' Association, "for the publication of an indecent and scandalous libel" (Dutta 110). Long was "convicted with imprisonment for one month and a fine of one thousand rupees" (Das 4). "The white missionary" instantly came to be perceived as "a champion for the downtrodden" by the urban elite literati. For instance, many prominent Calcuttans opposed the prejudicial verdict and Long's fine was paid by Kaliprasanna Sinha. However, Long's interest in exposing the planters through *Nil-Darpan* was, to propagate Christianity among the natives by upholding "the missionary sense of justice as opposed to the injustice inflicted on ryots by planters and local magistrates" (Bhatia 28). Although Long

became the epicentre of the on-going conflict, he was neither the author nor the translator of the impugned play and “it did not strike him that Dinabandhu Mitra, the author of the play, had not even been deemed worthy of being named in a suit of libel” (P. Chatterjee *Nation* 24). With the emergence of organized nationalism (during 1870), Bengali theatre escaped the confinements of ‘private realm’ (that is, performances in the homes of the wealthy) and the first public theatre (the National Theatre) opened on Saturday, 7 December 1872, with the performance of *Nildarpan*. A combination of the ‘realistic representation’ and political fervour: for instance, the violent scenes of torture on the ryots by the planters or Rogue’s attempt to sexually assault Khetromani, a married Bengali woman [which “recalled a similar true case of a native woman named Horomoni which was the subject of widespread discussion throughout the Indigo districts and was also sought to be carefully considered by the Indigo commission” (Dutta 105)], appealed strongly to national sentiment. The play was repeatedly performed onwards. Interestingly, the “National Theatre was invited to perform at the seventh session of the *Hindu Mela* [...] On 16 February 1873, a few scenes from *Nildarpan* were presented along with a dramatic spectacle” (Mukherjee 35).

Having pointed out the changing politics subtly operating behind these three representations of *Nil-Darpan*, I will now, analyse the incongruities within the text, to further elucidate the ‘politics of representation’.

II

During the first half of the nineteenth Century, there existed no ‘original’ Bengali drama and apart from some indigenous folk-forms (like *Jatra*, *Kathakatha*, *Kabigan* etc.) and Sanskrit classics (which were mostly performed in translation). However, with the emergence of a nationalist consciousness (which insisted on pointing out the

essential cultural and spiritual difference between the alien and the native) in the latter half of the nineteenth Century, a desire to search for a distinctive self-identity emerged mostly among the Bengali aristocracy and the Western educated middle class (although they, failed to shed off their admiration for the English literature and drama). Thus, being stuck between the influence of the *bilati* and the traditional Bengali culture, the ‘enlightened’ *babus* became the early patrons of the Bengali theatre (which were mostly Private theatres strictly for invited audiences). But, within this restricted arena of the ‘Private theatre’, bloomed the first original Bengali play *Kulinakulasarbaswa* (1857), by Ramnarayan Tarkaratna. This protest play (against the polygamous practices of the ‘Kulin’ Brahmans) “launched a strong trend of social drama; it was followed by a host of playwrights appearing on the scene with plays on social issues. This predilection for social plays gradually slipped into making political statements through theatrical means” (S. Chatterjee 222).

While describing the *mise-en-scene* of the nineteenth Century Bengal, Partha Chatterjee observes: “[t]he great figures of literary nationalism in the late nineteenth – century Bengal – Hemchandra Bandhopadhyay, Dinabandhu Mitra, Nabinchandra Sen, Rameschandra Dutt, and above all Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay – all devoted their professional lives to careers in the colonial bureaucracy. In their literary lives, they were the first nationalists” (*Black Hole* 225). Dinabandhu Mitra too, worked as an employee in the British Post and Telegraphic Service. While in service, he toured the rural areas of Patna, Orissa and various districts of Bengal, witnessing the actual living and working condition of the peasants, their poverty and their exploitation by the British Indigo planters, who forced them to grow indigo against their will (being fully aware of its harmful effects on the fertile soil). The planters also brought

false law suits against the native landowners and ryots, who refused to cooperate with them.

There was also the system of *dadan* (advanced payment), which the planters used to lure Indians to work for them. Unfortunately, many illiterate and impoverished villagers failed to realize that the *dadan* was a subtle form of exploitation. By accepting it, they faced terrifying consequences if they happened to offend the planters in any way or if they failed to cultivate sufficient indigo. The oppression had such an emotional impact on Dinabandhu Mitra that he was compelled to write a play about it: *Neel-Darpan*. (Bharucha 17)

In the play, Nabin Madhab, the eldest son of *Zamidar* Goluk Basu, championed the cause of the poor *ryots* in Swarpur village against the undue demands and oppression of the British planters. A false criminal case is instituted against Goluk by the planter Mr. Wood (resulting in his suicide). Nabin Madhab, with Torap, a Muslim *ryot*, attacks Mr. Rogue, the other planter, when he is about to violate the chastity of Khetromani (daughter of a *ryot*). Though fully aware of her pregnancy, Rogue kicks her in the belly. Khetromani is rescued, but dies soon after. Nabin kicks Mr. Rogue, but succumbs to injuries after Rogue fractures his skull (causing his death). Sabitri (Goluk's wife), is driven to madness and kills her younger daughter-in-law Saralota, in a fit of insanity. When she returns to her senses, the shock of her own deed kills her. Thus, the drama ends in a series of deaths (just like a regular English 'revenge tragedy').

Mitra's naming of the play *Nil Darpan* or *Nil-Darpanam Natakam* (literally, Indigo Mirror) can be traced back to the Sanskrit tradition of naming treatises with Darpan (Mirror) as suffix. For example, Nandikeshwara's third Century treatise on acting *Abhinaya-*

Darpanam or Vishwanath Kaviraj's fourteenth Century treatise on rhetorics and dramaturgy *Sahitya Darpana*. In the classical context, the *darpan* (mirror) was a way of grasping the 'reality of the non-real', but the nineteenth Century English-educated Bengali intelligentsia perceived the term in a more Platonic way. "The function of the *darpan*/mirror had been inverted: in the nineteenth-century, it reflected the 'non-reality of the real', although it was based on certain social realities. However, at the surface level at least, the *babus* too were trying to elucidate reality, to educate. But the sameness of purpose is misleading. Especially so when we ask: whose reality and to educate whom?" (S. Chatterjee 231).

The play (which focuses on the total devastation of an Indian landowner's family and his *ryots* due to the indigo planters), in all possibilities was written for an elite literate intelligentsia (many of whom were landowners themselves). Hence, Mitra presented the subaltern (*ryots*) and the elite (landowners) as allies (bonded out of a shared fellow feeling), fighting side by side against a common self-proclaimed enemy: the indigo-planter. The play with some moving situations, sensational scenes of violence, madness, and a number of deaths under pathetic circumstances, "acts out a fantasy of middle-class liberalism and humanism" (224). However, this was a 'non-real' representation of the real, considering the socio-cultural scenario of the nineteenth Century Bengal. Marxist scholar Narahari Kaviraj, in his essay on the Peasant Uprisings notes the birth of a new social and political order during this time:

At the head of the village society there now stood a new set of zamindars, mostly recruited from unscrupulous gomoshthas or agents. Add to the picture, the Europeans who invested their capital in the indigo industry or in agricultural farms. At the head of it all, there was an alien government who not only extended protection to these blood-suckers

but were themselves interested in draining away India's wealth as best as they could. (142)

The peasants therefore, became the victim of two-fold oppression – feudal and colonial.

The Bengali intelligentsia did not share a common opinion over the situation of indigo-plantation, since many of them were planters themselves (mostly during the first half on the nineteenth Century). For example, in a meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall on 15 December 1829, “Ram Mohan said: ‘As to the indigo planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts in Bengal and Bihar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo plantations evidently better-clothed and better-conditioned than those who live at a distance from such stations’.” A similar opinion is evident in Dwarakanath Tagore speech: “I have several zamindaris in various districts and I found the cultivation of indigo and the residence of Europeans have considerably benefited the country and the community at large” (qtd. in Bhattacharya 58). However, a few decades later, the Bengali intelligentsia started entertaining liberal and humanitarian views and displayed sympathies for the peasants but from within the framework of colonial subjectivity. This inconsistency within the native intelligentsia has been pointed out by Ranajit Guha, in his essay ‘Neel-Darpan: The Image of Peasant Revolt in a Liberal Mirror’. “Guha shows the innately liberal-humanitarian assumptions underlying Dinabandhu’s criticism of the planters, assumptions he shared with virtually the entire new intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. Thus, underlying the criticism of the lawlessness of the planters and of the actions of a few foolish and inconsiderate English officials, there was an abiding faith in the rationality and impartiality of English law and in the good intentions of the colonial administration taken as a whole” (P. Chatterjee *History of West Bengal* 12). For example,

in the First Act (fourth Scene), when Reboti (wife of Sadhucharan, a ryot) reports to Sabitri (zamindar Goluk's wife) about Rogue's ill intentions regarding her daughter-in-law Khetromani, Sabitri proclaims:

What more in the Burmese (Mug) power? Can anyone
take away a woman from a house in the British Dominion?
(*Nil Darpan* 24)

A little later, she assures Reboti by saying :

Very well, I shall make this known to Sadhu, through my husband; you need not say anything. What misfortune is this! The Indigo Planters can do anything. Then why do I hear it generally said, that the Sahebs are strict in dispensing justice. Again, my son Bindu Madhab speaks much in praise of them. Therefore I think that *these are not Sahebs; no, they are the dregs, (Chandal) of Sahebs.* (24)

Not only that; in the Second Act (first scene) too, we can observe a similar elitist belief in the myth of benevolent British rule from the on-going conversation among the ryots.

Second Ryot. I went to that Andarabad once or twice; as also to that Factory of Bhabnapore, every one speaks good of the Saheb of that place; that Saheb once sent me to the Court, then I saw many things pleasant in that place.

Torapa. Did he find any fault with you? The Saheb of Bhabnapore never raises a false disturbance. "*By speaking the truth, we shall ride on horseback.*" Had all Sahebs been of the same character with him, then none would have spoken ill of the Sahebs. (27)

So, from these few instances we can see that Mitra not only distinguishes between the 'good' Sahebs (the colonial administrators) and the 'bad' (indigo-planters), but also emphasises

on the fact that all planters are not the same, making the exploitation a highly localized event (with spatial variations). Though Mitra was critical of the planters and their subordinates in the interior, he blatantly extolled the virtues and wisdom of the colonial administration in the Author's Preface (regardless of the fact that it was published anonymously):

The most kind-hearted Queen Victoria, the mother of the people, thinking it inadvisable to suckle her children through maid-servants, has now taken them on her own lap to nourish them. The most learned, intelligent, brave, and open-hearted Lord Canning is now the Governor-General of India; Mr. Grant, who always suffers in the sufferings of his people, and is happy when they are happy, who punishes the wicked and supports the good, has taken charge of the Lieutenant-Governorship, [...] these great men will very soon take hold of the rod of justice in order to stop the sufferings which the ryots are enduring from the great giant *Rahu*, the Indigo Planter. (*Nil-Darpan 2*)

Sadly, Mitra and the newly 'enlightened' babus (despite their fondness for justice and liberty), never pondered over the legitimacy of British rule in India. Partha Chatterjee rightly observes that;

the image of the resolute peasant defending his rights against the predatory planter, as represented in elite accounts such as Dinabandhu's play, is that of an enlightened liberal, conscious of his rights against recalcitrant officials, even succumbing to 'brief, intermittent bursts' of violence, but all the while believing in the fundamental legitimacy of the social order. This was a far cry from any truly revolutionary appreciation by a progressive intelligentsia of the strength of peasant resistance to colonialism and of its potentials for the

construction of a new ‘national-popular’ consciousness.
(*History of West Bengal* 12).

With the renewal of the Charter Act in 1833 (for Laissez faire or free trade), all restrictions on the settlement of British nationals were withdrawn and the British capitalists were free to invest capital in plantation crops. It also granted the indigo-planters the right to own land.

So, a legal relationship was established between the planters and the cultivators and the planters used coercion on peasants to impose indigo cultivation. In the beginning the peasants sought to draw the attention of the Government through mass petitions. But when this failed, they took to combination and organised a non-co-operation movement on a gigantic scale which reached

an explosive state in 1857. Then came Act X, which restricted the rights of landlords and planters. But, the “instantaneous opposition of planters to Act X led to a ruthless use of Act XI of 1860 which made cultivators completely vulnerable to planters through legal procedure. Only when the resulting resistance of cultivators in Bengal was even more violent, and threatened the British order, was it proclaimed at the end of 1860 that growing of indigo could not be imposed against the will of the cultivators” (Sah 71). The rebellion became so formidable that it led Lord Canning to declare that “for about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi”, and “from that day I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames” (qtd. in Kaviraj 149).

Although, the peasants were drawn into a war against the oppressive planters, they had no clear idea about the working and nature of the Colonial order. However, “[t]hey knew fairly well about their immediate enemies, viz., the zamindars and the indigo planters: and

they felt they were sufficiently prepared to fight against them” (151). While Mitra’s represented “reality” talks about the unity between the landlords and the ryots, or the knowledge of the common masses about the colonial administrative system, the socio-historical ‘reality’ states otherwise. Mitra, was a part of that middle-class intelligentsia (having supreme faith in the righteousness of the British government and its justice system), who “sought to establish themselves as the true friends of the peasants and thus their legitimate political representatives” (Das Gupta 71). However, in their attempt to legitimise the representation, the peasant’s own voice was largely ignored. “To Guha, middle-class attitudes towards peasants were ‘a curious concoction of an inherited, Indian-style paternalism and an acquired western-style humanism’” (71).

Although *Nil-Darpan* is championed as a phenomenal ‘protest’ play in nationalist circles and critics like Rustom Bharucha perceives it as “the first instance of theater as a political force confronting the British government, the first attack on the Raj’s commercial exploitation and, indirectly, its political tyranny and disregard of human rights” (17). Contrary to popular belief, this ‘myth’ was created during the era of political nationalism, “in the perceptions of those who staged it and of those who saw it” (Dasi 169). As the distinction between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Englishmen blurred, the violation of Khetromani became “symptomatic of the violation of a country” and Torap’s beating up the exploitative ‘Nil’ Saheb, began to be perceived on a symbolic level (where Torap represented the resistance of colonized against the colonizers).

The poetics and politics of the representations in these cultural texts (works of literature, and other art forms), are a major preoccupation of the Cultural Materialists and New Historicists.

The essential difference between the textual and performative representation of *Nil-Darpan* can be seen as that of aesthetic vs.

political. As the play's aesthetics makes clear that the representation of the "real" is a *removal* from "reality", therefore, a critical perspective on it and within it, is necessary. While the aesthetic representation tends to foreground its status as a 're-presentation' of the 'real' social scenario, but it ceases to correspond with the 'original', and becomes only as 'real' as perceived by the early nineteenth century pro-British sycophantic Bengali intelligentsia. And although, the later political representation in the form of onstage performances (propagating mostly an anti-imperialistic sentiment and not an anti-feudal one), denies this earlier mode of 're-presentation', it too is further removed from "reality". Thus, though the myriad reflections (in the form of vernacular drama, its English translation and its multiple stage adaptations) of the Indigo-cultivation in Bengal, emerges from one 'Darpan' (*Indigo Mirror*), but the 'cracked' Mirror, seems to reflect only a distorted image of the 'reality'.

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Equivocal queerness in classical myths, Marlowe and Shakespeare

Pema Gyalchen Tamang

“You can transmute love, ignore it, muddle it, but you can never pull it out of you.”. The idea of love has been the central theme of some of the greatest works in arts and literature. However, the vast world of literature has also attempted to map the queerness in love; Love that does not fall within the preview of heterosexuality. The presence of Homosexual love has always been an equivocal argument. From classical mythologies, folk tales and art to theart and literature being produced today, one could find countless references to such love which not only challenges the notion of heterosexuality as the norm and the normal but also raises an important question of how natural is normal. The various depictions of love have been received with the most ambiguous treatment in Literature and have generated much controversial response. While these are complex issues which would require a more detailed discussion, I would now present to you a few instances in classical myths, and in the works of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

Beginning with classical myths we find several classical mythologies of same sex relationship often reduced to just homoeroticism in light of the *Greek Custom of Pederasty* in ancient Greece. It was a socially acknowledged erotic relationship between an adult male and a younger male (usually in his teens). This has been one of the main reasons for critics to point out the lack of presence of love in these myths. One such greek narrative myth, presented in

multiple ways such as homosexual love and homosocial bond as well as homoeroticism, is the Myth of Zeus and Ganymede. Zeus was the king of the Gods and in fact the most powerful among the Greek Gods. Ganymede as described in *Illiad* (Book XX, line 233) “was the loveliest born of the mortals”. Zeus in the guise of an eagle abducts Ganymede to Mount Olympus from Mount Ida. It is believed that Ganymede also became Zeus’ lover, thus he granted Ganymede eternal youth and immortality and office of cupbearer to the gods. Zeus abducted Ganymede out of sheer lust but as Xenophon, an ancient Greek historian and philosopher, in his *Symposium* claims that Zeus loved Ganymede in a non sexual manner; also, pointing out the fact that Ganymede was the only one of Zeus’ lovers who was granted immortality and a post of cupbearer, a post of quite a distinction. That in itself hints the theme of love in this classical myth. The myth of Zeus and Ganymede can be found in *Metamorphoses* and also in Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II*.

This brings us to Christopher Marlowe who has blended homosexuality in his plays *The Massacre at Paris* (1593), *Dido, One of Carthage* (1594) (in which Jupiter is discovered dandling Ganymede upon his knee) and in his great tragedy, *Edward the Second* (1594). The conflict of love and duty is an issue in *Edward II*, where Edward II is a man torn between his hereditary role as king and his personal proclivities as expressed most fully in his love for another man. The play is the Renaissance’s greatest dramatization of homoerotic love. Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* provides a supple analytic tool for investigating the regimes of unknowing and unacknowledgeability that structure the place of homosexuality in Renaissance culture. When Edward II succeeds his father on the English throne, he lavishes affection and unwarranted titles on Piers Gaveston, a man hated by Edward’s court because of his low birth. Gaveston’s opening monologue in itself has reference

of the Classical Myth of “Leander” (Act I Sc 1 L8), which Marlowe also retold in his Narrative poem *Hero and Leander* (c. 1593). Leander fell in love with Hero and swam the Hellespont to Sestos every night in order to be with Hero. One night the light in the towers which guided Leander to the shore was blown out by a storm and Leander drowned. Hero committed suicide when Leander’s body washed up on the shore. Gaveston’s analogy to the tragic lovers in the context of his arrival in London to meet King Edward, not only sets the close bond between the king and himself but also hints at the various interpretations regarding the nature of their relationship. Further more we see Edward II’s strong passion and love for Gaveston that he is even willing to give up his kingdom for the company of Gaveston. When he reluctantly has to banish Gaveston again, Edward II has an outburst and says “to banish him I love!” (Act I Scene IV L95) Edward II constantly scorns his wife Queen Isabella for Gaveston. Marlowe gives numerous classical analogies to indicate the homosexual love between the two characters, namely with analogies of Zeus and Ganymede in lines “Jove on Ganymede” (Act I Sc IV L180). One finds brilliant presentation of Homosexual nature of Edward II’s love for Gaveston in Derek Jarman’s 1991 film *Edward II*.

Another notable instance of such queering of love in Classical mythology is the Relationship of Achilles and Patroclus in *Illiad*. Their relationship has been a subject of dispute. Homer never explicitly casts the two as lovers. In *Illiad*, Achilles and Patroclus are close comrades in the fight against the Trojans. Achilles is arrogant to everyone however he is tender towards Patroclus. Achilles chooses not to participate in the battle and as the tide of war turns, Patroclus convinces Achilles to let him lead the army. Patroclus is successful in beating the Trojan forces back but is killed by Hector. In the surviving fragments of the lost tragedy *The Myrmidoms* (5th Century BC),

Achilles publicly laments Patroclus's death, addressing the corps, criticizing him for letting himself be killed and is seen speaking of "The reverent company" of Patroclus' thigh and how Patroclus was "ungrateful for many kisses". When Patroclus is killed, Achilles laments more greatly than any other character upon another's death. Thetis, his mother, suggests that it is now time for him to take a wife. This can be seen as a rebuke for him being too long in a homosexual relationship. The rage after the death leads to the return of Achilles to the battle field with the sole aim of avenging, by killing Hector which he eventually does. The relationship between the two is deep. When Patroclus is killed, the intensity of Achilles's sorrow indicates a relationship deeper than simple friendship. It is often conjectured to be friendship formed during war fare or to the idea of male bonding and even to the early discussed *Pedestry* (which brings us back to its structure). The ideal structure of *Pedestry* consisted of an older erastes (lover or the protector), and a younger eromenos (the beloved). The age difference between partners and their respective roles (either active or passive) was considered to be a key feature. Writers that assumed a pederastic relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, such as Plato and Aeschylus, were then faced with a problem of deciding who must be older and play the role of the erastes. The speaker Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium* suggests that Achilles is the eromenos whose reverence of his erastes, was so great that he would be willing to die to avenge him. Thus, in *Oxford Classical dictionary*, David M Halper writes, "Homer, to be sure does not portray Achilles and Patroclus as lovers, but he also did little to rule out such an interpretation".

Elizabethan writers had in front of them classical works of love between men. To the modern imagination, the homo-erotic and same sex love potential of some of Shakespeare's writing often seems a truth that has not been dared to be spoken. The great actor Sir Ian

McClellan who is also a well known gay activist was quoted in a press event saying that Shakespeare himself probably was gay. This is nothing new for it has been frequently expressed in Shakespeare's works especially in his sonnets, though not in the same explicit manner as his contemporary Christopher Marlowe. Shakespeare's beautiful beloved in his first part of the collection *Sonnets* was in fact a young man and the rest of the first 125 sonnets is addressed to the man in his twenties. Shakespeare's most idealized sonnets fall among those that are addressed to a male. The speaker expresses passionate concern for the young man, praises his beauty, and articulates what we would now call homosexual desire.

However, the debate of the sonnets being only a specimen of homoerotic desires and themes becomes invalid in sonnets like Sonnet 20 where the narrator tells the youth to sleep with women, but to love only him: "mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure". The narrator calls the younger man the "master-mistress of my passion". In Sonnet 13, the youth is called "dear my love", and in Sonnet 15 the speaker announces that the poet is at "war with Time for love of you". The poems refer to sleepless nights, anguish and jealousy caused by the youth, all of which indicates pure love for the same sex that does not involve intimacy of bodies. There is no analysis of these sonnets without keeping in mind Shakespeare's sexuality. The historian G. P. V. Akrigg wrote, "One is forced to suspect that some elements of homosexuality lay at the root of the trouble. The love which he felt for Southampton may well have been the most intense emotion of his life."

These instances from literature give us ample evidence that queer love is much a reality as heterosexual love and even though queer love is repressed socially, literature continues to provide a voice to it, which cannot be silenced and that will continue to tell the tale of queerness of love.

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Coleridge's Meta-language: The Non-representational Turn in Romantic Poetry

Dr. Suchandra Chakravarty

I pass like night from land to land;
I have strange power of speech.

These lines from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* describe the fascinating quality of Coleridge's poetry which draws the reader into a world that lies between utterance and non-utterance - a world which is co-created by the reader. But where, according to Coleridge, does this "strange power" originate? In the utterance or in the imagination? How do ideas transfigure into images which 'communicate' rather than 'say'? In this essay I would like to discuss two indicative statements made outside the *Biographia Literaria*, which are helpful for our understanding of Coleridge's aesthetic philosophy and seminal ideas about poetry, poetic representation and the role of the poet.

The first statement occurs in *Aids to Reflection* where Coleridge says, "For if words are not things, they are living powers, by which the things of most importance to mankind are actuated, combined and humanised."¹

This statement clearly indicates the poet's awareness that words not only denote outward things, but also bring to life the imaginative faculty of a reader or a listener, thus opening up a world of ideas far

¹ Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, (London: G. Bell and Sons LTD. 1913), Preface, Pg. XIX.

beyond the one circumscribed by the text. In a letter to James Gillman junior the same idea is reiterated in Coleridge's assertion that words relate to thoughts, not things.² They may thus convey multiplicity of meanings, subject to the particular associations of the individual. Such a theory could have nullified altogether the possibility of any definite meaning which may be communicated by the poet to the reader. But such dislocations of meaning, so dear to modern critical theory, did not form a part of Coleridge's philosophy. To him, the mesmeric power of poetic language acted as a spell which could draw the reader into the charmed circle of the poetic vision. In the appendix to the first *Lay Sermon* Coleridge said:

“Join with me Reader! in the fervent prayer, that we may seek within us, what we can never find elsewhere, that we may find within us what no words can put there, that one only true religion, which elevateth Knowing into Being, the Being and the Life of all genuine Science.”³

In other words he invites the reader into a privileged realm of true intelligence, the gates to which are unlocked by the “strange power of speech” to be found in poetry, or evocative prose; but the final revelation comes in the moment of recognition occasioned by the coming together of the poet's and the reader's or listener's imagination. Though Coleridge is indebted to German idealism, he was critical of the emphasis on pure reason, which he found in Kant,

...I could never believe it was possible for him to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or thing in itself, than his mere words express; or that in his own conception he

2 E.L. Griggs, ed. Coleridge: Letters (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) Vol. VI, pg.630.

3 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual; or, The Bible The Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight: A Lay Sermon, Addressed to the Higher Classes of Society, With an Appendix, containing Comments and Essays Connected with the Study of the Inspired Writings*(London: Gale and Fenner, J. M. Richardson, 1816) Pg. XXX, <https://books.google.co.in>

confined the whole plastic power to the forms of the intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the *material* [stuff] of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable.⁴

He was more attracted to the myth-making, ‘plastic’ powers of mystics like Jacob Boehmen. In Chapter IX of *Biographia Literaria*, he acknowledges his debt to them for having taught him the potency of symbols.⁵ From them he seemed to have gleaned that no true philosophy can be expressed, except through symbols. But going beyond symbolical language, his originality as a poet lies in his use of non-utterance, particularly in the eloquent silences of his so-called fragments, which provide a space for the readers’ imagination to come into play. The non-endings of some of his so called fragments are crucial to the cognitive process which transforms “Being” (*esse*) into “Knowing” (*sciere*).⁶

For Coleridge, whose poetry came from an intrinsic desire to write himself into his verse, in a language that is rich in suggestive power, the desire to express is always balanced by reticence in what he articulates. Recent scholarship has claimed that this may have been a matter of creative choice as well as political prudence. Writing in an age of repressive political paranoia, living in a society still largely guided by Christian morality, pursued by the reputation of radicalism, he mastered the art of making silences speak. His tantalizing fragments tease the reader’s imagination, thereby giving to his poems a life beyond the physical boundaries of the text. They haunt and entice the readers into deep introspection, grasping at meanings which take shape in the profound depths of the subconscious.

4 *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter IX, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works, ed. H. J. Jackson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985) Pg.233.

5 *Ibid*, Pg. 229-230

6 *Biographia Literaria*, op. cit. Pg.229

The Mariner in *The Rime* is driven by the compulsion to tell his tale again and again in an impulse to utter his personal vision.⁷ But, the written word is frozen within the leaves of a text, open to interpretations in which the intervention of the authoritative poetic voice may be pushed to the margin by the interpretative freedom of the reader. Between the covers of any volume of Coleridge's poetry lies a predominantly black and white world which translates into the reader's mind as a living, breathing space, animated by feelings, landscapes, colours, straining at the limits of individual choice. It is as if, in each of them, he offers us "A sight to dream of, not to tell!"⁸ His best poems contain such uncharted realms of vivid sensations and psychotic experiences which reach out from the pages of the text and live on in the mind of the reader as imaginatively apprehended experiences over which the poet does not have unchallenged control, but neither is he completely absent from the representation.

This connection between the imaginative worlds of the poet and the reader is probably what Martin Heidegger means, when he says that "to be a work means to set up a world". Yet, he also points out,

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or the uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home.⁹

7 Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Ll. 582-85.

8 *Christabel*, Ll. 247

9 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of The Work of Art", from *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971). Reprinted with permission from Harper Collins Publishers Inc., in *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism*, eds. Richard Kearney and David Rasmussen, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) Pg. 193.

He sees the existence of the world, not in its objective presence, but in the individual's consciousness of its being, a consciousness that is "brought forth" in the work of art. The work material, language, in the case of poetry, not only sets up, but also sets forth, the world as it is conceptualized and represented by the mediating consciousness of its creator; but, it is reimagined by the sensitive reader who is not just a passive receiver, but a co-creator of the mindscape which is brought into existence. As the poem transcends the world of things to the world of essences, which are set forth in the material and non-material dimensions of the literary experience, it is subtly guided by the controlling imagination of the poet, ensuring that his original vision is not completely effaced by the readings to which the poem is subjected.

Coleridge's comments on poets and poetic language, scattered over his innumerable prose works, shows us how he kept faith in the communicative power of poetry. He believed its words and its silences, could work within the readers' mind, holding them in fascination and compelling them towards a shared understanding of the vision which the poet strives to embody.

The source of this confidence may be understood through the next pronouncement which I shall examine at some length. It is a notebook entry in 1804 where he wrote,

Idly talk they who speak of Poets as mere Indulgers of Fancy, Imagination, Superstition, etc.-They are the Bridlers by Delight, the Purifiers, they that combine them with *reason & order*, the true Protoplasts, Gods of love who tame the Chaos.¹⁰

A 'bridler' is a gear to control the direction in which a horse moves, and hence seems to suggest the poets control over the readers'

¹⁰ Kathleen Coburn, ed. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) Vol. II entry no.2355 21.539.

imaginative adventures. But ‘to bridle’ is to become excited and agitated; Coleridge here seems to be regarding such agitation as a positive excitement of the imagination through the words of the poet. Taken together, these connotations of the word ‘bridler’ (probably the poet’s own coinage), may mean that the poet both brings alive and subtly guides the stream of thoughts experienced by the reader.

“Protoplast”- a biological term - provides another key to the passage. The inmost part of a cell, it is the building block of life. Coleridge seems to be likening the poet to this generative impulse. In an age of enlightened materialism he sees the poet’s relevance in the synthesising power of his imagination (Gods of love who tame chaos). The passage contains one of the key propositions of his theory of poetry. It points out the affective power of poetry which, like the compelling mariner in Coleridge’s poem, holds the reader captive and makes him confront unfamiliar territories of thoughts, which he may otherwise choose to avoid.

Another notebook entry dated 13th November 1809, hints at where the poet might find a fit register. He records “-the extenders of Consciousness – Sorrow, Sickness, Poetry, Religion”.¹¹ Familiar with all four experiences in full measure, Coleridge was adept at creating poems which like the music of the “damsel with a Dulcimer”¹² opens up for the readers, worlds of infinite possibilities within himself. As he transformed his personal predicaments, psychological, as well as political, into the metaphorical, he used what the twentieth century American critic Eugene Jolas calls the “mediumistic” language of

11 Coburn, Coleridge: Notebooks, op.cit. Vol. III, entry no.3632 L 100

12 A damsel with a dulcimer

In a vision once I saw:

.....

Could I revive within me

Her symphony and song,

To such a deep delight ‘twould win me’

That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,

That sunny dome! Those caves of ice! – Kubla Khan, Ll. 37-47

poetry. Writing in a society where the healing methods of Franz Anton Mesmer had become a rage, Coleridge was acutely conscious of the power of non-verbal communication and the hypnotic possibilities of poetic language. Though critical of the insidiously hypnotic power of the political rhetoric practised by William Pitt, he was acutely aware of the power of poetic language over the minds of men. The pleasures and estranging effect of poetry may lead the reader into a world where buried instincts surface through the suggestive power of the language of night-time experiences like dreams and nightmares, which assume importance as symbols. It is a world where self-division is subtly suggested, even when the framework appears to follow conventional Christian morality. The crime, punishment and remorse of the Mariner, the terrible secret vision of Christabel, are famous examples of the curse that is brought upon those who transcend the boundaries set by society, religion or conventions. But they also suggest our inevitable fascination with such transgressive acts which lie buried within our instincts.

Eugene Jolas in *Workshop* pointed out the need to evolve a new kind of language capable of communicating the undercurrents of a troubled age by moving away from logical, representational narrative, to what he calls the “meta real value” of language.¹³ This “meta real value” may be understood to belong to the pre-logical and suggestive realm of intuitive understanding, which, Jolas suggests, is to be found in the *language of night* that is the symbolic representations occurring in dreams, nightmares, and reveries. Such trans-rational states may result in a de-rationalised language that can encompass experiences beyond the scope of rational intellectual discourse. To Jolas the language of night is, therefore, a “mediumistic

13 Eugene Jolas, “Workshop” reprinted from *transition* 23, 1933, in *Imagining Language : An Anthology* ed. Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998) Pg.44.

organ” in the sense that it acts as what Coleridge would term “the extenders of consciousness”. It brings within its range elements of the pre-logical, the daemonic, the sub-human and the supra-human and cosmic. It is a language created out of the re-interpretation and re-integration of the language of religious symbols, myths and trance-like states; Jolas rightly saw the beginning of such a language in the Romantic era. According to him,

They were the first to emphasise the importance to the creator of irrationalism, of day-dream, of mysticism and mythos. The preoccupation with the dream, especially, haunted all romantics from Coleridge to Nerval, to Petrus Borel, to Novalis, to Tieck, to Jean Paul.....They interpreted the symbols through metaphysical categories.¹⁴

Coleridge chose the role of a man who wants to share his long, perilous inward journey with his readers, the pause between utterance and meaning, animating the reader with the excitement of discovery. His attitude is clear from his critique of Wordsworth’s “common language of men” in the *Biographia Literaria*,

The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man;¹⁵

The same idea, when transformed into poetry, finds expression in the masterly conclusion of *Constancy to an Ideal Object*,

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
The woodman winding westward up the glen

14 Ibid. pg.43

15 *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XVII)Pg. 342. Coleridge was contesting Wordsworth’s pronouncements regarding the common language of man.

At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
An image with a glory round its head!
The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows, he *makes* the shadow he pursues! Ll. 25-32

The importance of 'internalacts' which are generated by the imagination of a discerning reader, which is central to Coleridge's aesthetic principles, cannot be underestimated in the context of appreciating the power of his own poetry. Though he moved away from the radical politics of his younger years, his emphasis on the processes of the mind and the desire to use symbolic experiences to connect to an internal world free from the oppressions of politics or community, mark him out as one of the first moderns of English literature who pushed the boundaries of verbal representation, and realized the subversive as well as suggestive possibilities of meta-language.

The Collapse of Idealistic Love

Debapriya Maitra &
Syed Mikhail Ali

The Modern Age was pervaded by a strand of thought that it was necessary to break away from established norms and conventions in favour of new modes of self-expression. Perhaps, of no age more than this, is it apt to assert that the state of the society is perfectly reflected in the literature of the time. The cultural breakdown and the quest for a better future produced a mirror image in the varied experiments with both the forms and themes of literature. Love was not exempt from this transition and its depiction in literature underwent massive changes. The depiction of love in literature has always been a vital means of understanding the society of the time --- true love was unquestionable and won out in the end. Even when the end of the lovers was tragic, it was not their love itself that was the culprit, but rather its opposing forces in the story --- cases in point being the societal discord that culminated in the tragedy of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the political pressure that caused the collapse of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the cultural gap that contributed to the deaths of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. It was readily accepted that love made life worth living through all difficulties. And yet, as Virginia Woolf famously declared in 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', "...in or about December, 1910, human character changed", and this change automatically imposed itself on love, changed the way in which love was depicted in literature and the other arts.

The experiments in literature manifested itself clearly in the depiction of love. The cultural breakdown was reflected in the moral breakdown of the time, and the disillusionment of the age was

reflected in the disillusionment with idealistic love in literature. Love was not thought of as an escape any longer --- it did not stand segregated above other emotions, but was subjected to the same fall and disintegration as everything else. Though it still remained thematically integral to Modern art, it was not the hero anymore, but, the common man.

The Victorian Age, on the surface level, was an idealistic age where the great ideals of conventional love were brought to the fore in literature. But there was a darkness lurking beneath the surface that reared its ugly head in the Modern Age. One of the factors that had an immense impact on the collective psychology of the Victorians was Darwin's theory of evolution, published in his *Origin of Species* in 1859. This played a major role in shattering their religious belief system and it shook their faith to the core. The Victorian artists' view of what was significant in human affairs was public and agreed; the loss of the confident sense of a common world, of a public view of what was important to people, directly affected themes in fiction. The superficial morality and the facade of happiness of the Victorian era was gradually stripped away through a series of cultural shocks, the greatest of these being the First World War. Though the true dawning of disillusionment was seen in the Modern Age, its signs can be traced back to an earlier time.

For instance, Matthew Arnold clearly held up his disillusionment with religion in 'Dover Beach'. He holds up the reality of the Victorian Age where pain was suppressed with a mask of joy. And he turns to love for any possible consolation --- it is tentative, but nonetheless, it is there. But in the Modern Age, love was not an escape from worldly troubles, rather it was a part of such problems like all else in life --- herein was seen a disillusionment with love. An instance is seen in T.S. Eliot's 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock', which is an examination of the tortured psyche of the prototypical

Modern man --- overeducated, eloquent, neurotic and emotionally stilted. Here there is no consolation in reaching out for love, but rather, that poses as yet another problem. Conventional love is abandoned here in favour of expressing the concerns and mental isolation of a middle-aged man, trying and failing to find solace in love. Prufrock's vision is incommunicable, and whatever he says to the lady will be perhaps answered by," "That is not what I meant at all; /That is not it, at all." Just like him, she too is imprisoned in her own sphere and the two spheres can never join to become one --- they live in their own worlds that are impenetrable by love. This is antithetical to the idea of the lovers in Donne's 'The Good Morrow', where each lover possesses their own world, but also form one whole world together as a couple. This degenerative conception of love reflects in the degenerating relationship in Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady'. Here the relationship is between a young man and an older lady, although the nature of the relationship is not explicitly defined. The narrator occupies himself with superficial matters, he avoids serious questions and seems satisfied with his prosaic lifestyle; we only find out what the lady says to him, but not what he says back. There is an emotional detachment and a sort of air of indifference about him. It is as though the "buried life" of the older woman generates in her more youthful energy than the young man, who is already living a dead life. It is a far cry from conventional love lyrics when she tells him," "Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know/ What life is, you who hold it in your hands '...' You let it flow from you, you let it flow,/And youth is cruel and has no remorse/And smiles at situations which it cannot see." The more idealistic " 'I am always sure that you understand/My feelings..." is described by its listener as "out-of-tune". The poem ends unconventionally; neither in happiness, nor in the tragedy of death, although death is hinted at; but in the apparently permanent separation of the two when he leaves her to go abroad. But

in spite of all his indifference, he does feel “a slight sensation of being ill at ease” and feels as though he had mounted the stairs to her door on his hands and knees before he informs her about leaving. In ‘Burnt Norton’, Eliot said “Love is most nearly itself/When here and now cease to matter”; and in both the poems formerly mentioned, we find that love plays second fiddle to the “here and now” and is controlled by it.

A work of the early Modern Age, ‘Heart of Darkness’ by Joseph Conrad also shows a very unconventional depiction of love on multiple levels. It has a striking similarity in narrative structure and depiction of a dark, mysterious atmosphere with Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*; but perhaps even more striking is its deviation in the depiction of love from the Victorian work. The love of Catherine and Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* has become an archetype --- it expresses the passionate longing to be whole, to give oneself unreservedly to another and gain a whole self or sense of identity back, to be all-in-all for each other. This concept may find a resonance in Conrad’s idea of the double self or doppelganger that Marlow and Kurtz seem to find in one other. In the earlier work, the focus is on finding a soulmate and the completion of oneself through love; in the Modern Age, the focus shifts on to the alter-ego or double self; conventional love is clouded over by other emotions and other factors, its importance in human affairs takes a downward turn. Catherine and Heathcliff’s love is based on the shared perception that they are the same --- Catherine declares, famously, “I am Heathcliff” and Heathcliff laments after her death, “I cannot live without my soul!” The relationship between Kurtz and his Intended stands on an entirely different plane from this. Kurtz dies not thinking of her, but rather of “The horror! The horror!” --- a fact that his double self, Marlow, distorts and lies about while speaking to his grieving widow. And neither can this be called a case of unrequited love --- we find

that his Intended is actually devoted to an image of Kurtz instead of the man himself; she is full of praise for his “words” and “example”, but not for who he is as a person. Perhaps this is because she hardly knows him as a person --- no one really knows anyone in this society and no one really understands Kurtz --- perhaps except Marlow, who forms an indescribable, intricate psychological bond with him. In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine and Heathcliff have an affinity for each other which draws them together; in ‘Heart of Darkness’, this sort of relationship is aptly applied to Kurtz and Marlow rather than Kurtz and his Intended. From here comes in a suggestion of homosexuality or at least, a homosocial bond. Victorian literature revolved around a heteronormative society, but gradually elements of homosexuality were woven into literature from the early Modern Age. Even greater suggestions of homosexuality are found in some works of D. H. Lawrence, one of the most important authors to break the conventions of and change our perceptions about love. He is one of the few artists of the Modern Age who primarily worked upon the theme of love. There are unavoidable sexual undertones in the relationship between Ursula and her tutor Miss Winifred Inger in *The Rainbow*; and between Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich in its sequel, *Women in Love*. The bond between Rupert and Gerald is as compelling and important as their relationships with the women and the intense psychological and physical attraction between them adds a different dimension to our understanding of their heterosexual relationships. At the end of the novel, Rupert places his relationship with the deceased Gerald on an equal footing with his relationship with Ursula --- he needs them both in different ways. In Lawrence, we find great deviations from accepted and appropriated literary traditions, and one work of great merit is his *Sons and Lovers*. Lawrence uses Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex to explore the relationship between Paul Morel and his mother, which travels beyond the bounds of a conventional mother-son relationship. At the

end of the novel, he seems to have subverted his Oedipal fate by killing her instead of his father and we see some hope within the ruins of his life.

Thus, in Modern literature, we find long established conventions being subject to critical examination and change – with norms being broken and new perspectives being examined and entertained. We see a transition and marked change in the way ‘love’ was interpreted, gone were the traditional conventions of courtship, where talk, conversation and ‘things being said’ were vital, replaced by the more complex subtleties of psychology and the underlying connotations of ‘what is not said’.

Gone with the Wind written by Margaret Mitchell starts off in a conventional manner, but as one maps out the progress of this classic tale, one can see that it does not conform to traditional rules, and is much more than a quest for love. The novel can be approached from an anti-romantic perspective, or as an ironic use of the conventions to undercut our expectations of the genre. There is certainly a focus on romantic relationships, and marriage and all the social conventions surrounding it are important themes, but the plot should not be confused with the vehicles of the plot. The two male leads in this story are Rhett Butler and Ashley Wilkes. Rhett acts as a foil and plays the North to Ashley’s South – the contrast between the two men serving to deepen our understanding of the clashing cultural attitudes and tensions that were present in the South. Ashley stands for the romantic and doomed values of the Southern world, while Rhett represents the hardened, practical Northern world that rises up victorious after the war. The real import of the narrative is not Scarlett O’Hara’s love life, but a more ambitious portrayal of war and its aftermath as they affect a specific group of people. The flirtations and marriages certainly help move the plot along, but the give-away is that they are not ends in themselves, but always a means to an end.

The flirtations, the marriages, the ‘love’, all of it, are simply a vehicle to progress the overall scheme of things. We do not see a charade of courtship being played out; instead, we see actions driven by fortitude and desperation. Love here, is used as a means to depict this willpower and desperation, to the extent that one is forced to question its very definition. Scarlet’s marriages (Frank Kennedy and Rhett) are borne out of a need to survive, her real love/affection lies with neither for Frank, nor Rhett, but for Tara – and for Ashley. Her marriages are simply used as a device to further the plot, and to create situations that may depict the divide between the old southern and the new northern influx. Love and marriage are, for the most part simply used to depict the more pertinent issues of the civil war ravaged southern states.

Virginia Woolf was an author imbued with the spirit of Modernism, who explored the destructive side of love. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa leaves Peter as she feared that his all-pervading love would have left her devoid of something vital to the Modern society --- an individual sphere. She feared the destructive force of love that would destroy the “privacy of the soul”, and thus, this privacy presides over love, and “To love makes one solitary”. This idea is also used in *To the Lighthouse*, where the characters are disturbed by realisations that no form of love is exempt from destructiveness. Woolf was afflicted by a mental disorder which ultimately drove her to fill her overcoat pockets with stones and walk into the River Ouse to drown herself in 1941. With this, a whole pattern of literary culture is broken, and it can be said that Modernism died with her death.

Daphne du Maurier is one who has been classed as a romantic novelist. Her novels are anything but conventional romances – described as being “moody and resonant”. Her works, which contain overtones of the paranormal, the dark and the gloomy, are notable for their lack of a “happy ending”.

Rebecca is an intriguing work, with a strong undercurrent of the Goth theme. It is a love story – that of the unnamed protagonist and Maxim de Winter. Yet, it is shrouded in an air of mystery and gloom which leads to utter hopelessness and despair, before giving way to a few fleeting moments of happiness which is as soon dashed out as it arrives. It is symbolic that we do not know the name of the protagonist, as the struggle in *Rebecca* is not a struggle to find love, but to establish one’s own identity – a concept echoed in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. The only way for Mrs. De Winter to find her love, is by establishing her own identity – by becoming the mistress of Manderley, and ousting the ghostly omniscient presence of Rebecca which haunts the estate. For a love novel, *Rebecca* spends very little time dwelling on ‘love’, and the irony of Maxim and the protagonist being brought closer through the revelation of murder cannot be lost on the audience. Mrs. Danvers, is the vessel through which the spirit of Rebecca lingers. It is she who drives the protagonist to the point of utter desperation and misery, almost resulting in her committing suicide. Thus we can see, the novel is less about completion of one’s self through the discovery of a soul mate, but more about self-identification in the presence of what may be dubbed as a moral opposite. Through the gloom, tribulations, anxiety, desperation and death, the De Winter’s do seem to get a chance at love, life and happiness, but this too is taken away as the couple return home, only to find Manderley in flames. The book, which is a memory narrative, with statements such as “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again”, and “We can never go back again, that much is certain”, leaves an ominous taste in the mouths of readers and represents a certain lack of fulfillment. The protagonist is haunted not only by the ghost of Manderley, but also by Rebecca – whom she sees instead of her own reflection in her dream. All of this begs the question as to if Maxim and she will ever find love and solace.

Yet, they are not without hope. They are still together and may yet have a chance at love.

During the Victorian times, a constant over-stimulation of the senses immunised people to shock; and many believed this numbness could be counteracted only with an even greater shock. Thus, the shock that the secret affair in Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' fails to bring, is brought about by the act of murder when the speaker strangles the lady to death with her own hair. In an ironic resonance, when the society was recovering from the cultural shock of the First World War, and began to gain hope for a better future, it met with the even greater cultural shock of the Second World War, wherein all hope was lost. But instead of a sense of panic, there was rather a strange, ugly calmness --- the despair of the post-World War I period was replaced by a numbness or indifference to everything. Modernism had been about breaking conventions in favour of something new, and hence arose a new outlook on love, for better or for worse, and new ways to present it. But in post-Modernism, the quest for something new, the quest for anything at all, was abandoned. In a society characterised by hopelessness and indifference, it was only logical that love be depicted in the same vein. It was like an acceptance that when life itself is treated as a painful pathway to death, even love cannot save you, cannot help you, cannot move you.

This hopelessness was reflected in a post-Modern work by Du Maurier where we see a deviation from the concept of love in *Rebecca*. Richard "Dick" Young, the protagonist of Du Maurier's novel *The House on the Strand* reluctantly decides to act as a test subject for a hallucinogenic drug created by his friend, and finds that it enables him to enter into the landscape around him as it existed during the early 14th Century. He feels compelled to follow Roger, steward to Sir Henry Champernowne and secret lover to his wife, Lady Isolda Carminowe. He comes to share this love. Du Maurier

manipulates the parallels between Dick's real and imaginary worlds so as to enlist sympathy for Dick's rejection of the real world. Dick's disenchantment, emptiness and boredom with daily life are symbolic of the tediousness of society. It is made clear that Dick does not truly love his wife — which makes plausible his increasing desire to escape into the past. He is aware that his life in the fourteenth century is all a fantasy and that he is killing himself pursuing it, but he would rather live vicariously in the glorious past, even if it is a dream, than die of boredom in what is called reality. As the book closes, Dick attempts to pick up the phone but suddenly finds he is unable to grip it. The ending is ambiguous; the reader is left to wonder if Dick is dead, paralysed or simply collapsing? Daphne du Maurier said of it: "What about the hero of *The House on the Strand*? What did it mean when he dropped the telephone at the end of the book? I don't really know, but I rather think he was going to be paralysed for life. Don't you?"

This dark attitude is resonant of the cynicism of the time, displaying a lack of belief in love and society.

The Stranger written by Albert Camus is an existential novel which brought out Camus' beliefs and philosophy strongly. Through this work, he explores his absurdist ideas in life and its relations – his words resonating the cynicism and nihilism present in the general population due to the cultural shock of the two world wars. "Amor vincit omnia, et nos cedamus amori" ('Love conquers all; let us all yield to love!') – a line from Virgil's eclogues shows how, since the earliest of times, the concept that 'love makes the world go round' was one which was accepted and believed in. But under the morbid atmosphere of the world wars, even love proved to be too weak a force. In *The Stranger*, Camus brings out the irrationality of the ideas of society, its futility and meaninglessness and the importance of the physical world – of things that are, rather than ideal abstractions.

The first two sentences of the book are - "MOTHER died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. That doesn't mean anything; it could have been yesterday." Spoken by the protagonist – Meursault, the lines introduce the readers to his emotional indifference and bluntness, his two principal characteristics. His emotional detachment is evident from his casual attitude. Meursault's statement "That doesn't mean anything" is significant as it connotes the triviality of the entire issue for him. Something as significant as the death of his mother does not faze him. This lack of feeling (of love) eclipsed the general sentiments of the population of the time, and is further highlighted when he asks his boss for leave, both, through his boss' annoyance and his statement – "I had an idea he looked annoyed, and I said, without thinking: "Sorry, sir, but it's not my fault, you know.""

Possibly, the most important exchange in the respect of love occurs between Marie and Meursault when she comes to meet him one evening:-

"Marie came that evening and asked me if I'd marry her. I said I didn't mind; if she was keen on it, we'd get married.

Then she asked me again if I loved her. I replied, much as before, that her question meant nothing or next to nothing—but I supposed I didn't.

"If that's how you feel," she said, "why marry me?"

I explained that it had no importance really, but, if it would give her pleasure, we could get married right away. I pointed out that, anyhow, the suggestion came from her; as for me, I'd merely said, "Yes."

Then she remarked that marriage was a serious matter.

To which I answered: "No."

She kept silent after that, staring at me in a curious way. Then she asked:

"Suppose another girl had asked you to marry her—I mean, a girl you liked in the same way as you like me—would you have said 'Yes' to her, too?"

"Naturally."

Then she said she wondered if she really loved me or not. I, of course, couldn't enlighten her as to that. And, after another silence, she murmured something about my being "a queer fellow." "And I daresay that's why I love you," she added. "But maybe that's why one day I'll come to hate you."

To which I had nothing to say, so I said nothing.

She thought for a bit, then started smiling and, taking my arm, repeated that she was in earnest; she really wanted to marry me.

"All right," I answered. "We'll get married whenever you like.""

This conversation shows the difference in the conceptions of Marie and Meursault and brings to the fore Camus' absurdist theory, where even 'love' is futile. Meursault is willing to marry for the sake of marriage. On being told that marriage is a serious issue he simply replies with a stoic – "No". Meursault is more concerned with the physical aspects of society and love. There are numerous instances when he compliments Marie on her appearance, but not once does he express any sort of emotion towards the relationship they possess. His descriptions of the physical world are ornate and vivid, with the heat of the sun causing him more pain than the death of his mother. Even in prison, he muses about the loss of his physical relationship with Marie, while she bemoans the loss of his company.

Camus' philosophy shows the estrangement of man from society, Meursault is not just a stranger to the society, but also to himself and

to any sort of emotion – including love, even when it stares him in the face.

In the post-Modern era, we find a complete degeneration in the concept of idealistic love --- from seeing its different interpretations in the Modern Age, it has now dwindled down to near-indifference. And yet, the importance of love in life cannot go unacknowledged. The fact that it can challenge, liberate, damage and inspire all of us makes love, perhaps, the most enthralling aspect of writing in literature old and new. This period during which love was stomped down by numbness, was the time that needed love the most. This is evidenced by perhaps the most well-known lines of poetry about love written in the last century --- Larkin’s “What will survive of us is love” from ‘An Arundel Tomb’ and Auden’s “we must love one another or die” from ‘September 1, 1939’. Interestingly, both these lines were later publicly scorned by their respective creators. This is perhaps indicative of the lack of understanding that marred the idea of love during this period. The condition of life was such that it only permitted a distortion of the idea of love. And this led up to the natural consequence of the whole society asking what Samuel Beckett put into words in his play *Words and Music* : “Do we mean love, when we say love?”

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“सूखते चिनार” : एक दृष्टि

डा० कविता मेहरोत्रा

कश्मीर हमारे देश का एक सम्वेदनशील मुद्दा है। जिसे हम धरा का स्वर्ग कहते हैं, आज वही नरक बना हुआ है। प्रकृति का वह सुन्दर पालना आज शवगृह बना हुआ है। एक के बाद एक होते आतंकी आक्रमण हमें अन्दर से तार-तार तो कर ही रहे हैं, हमारे मनोबल को भी कहीं न कहीं तोड़ रहे हैं। यह एक बहुत बड़ी विडम्बना है कि आज सैनिकों की जान देश की आन्तरिक सुरक्षा के लिए अधिक जा रही है। अभी हम पठानकोट हमले को भूल भी नहीं पाए थे कि उरी हमारे सामने उपस्थित हो गया जहाँ सुबह-सबेरे सेना के कैम्प में आक्रमण कर १८ सैनिकों को जिन्दा जला दिया गया। इस घटना के बाद से सारा देश शोक और आवेश से भरा हुआ है। मधु कांकरिया का उपन्यास-‘सूखते चिनार’ कश्मीर में सुलगते आतंकवाद की पृष्ठभूमि पर लिखा गया बेजोड़ उपन्यास है जिसमें लेखिका ने इस आतंकवाद की त्रासदी को बरवूबी दर्शाया है। वह इसके कारणों की भी पड़ताल करती है और उसके परिणामों की भी। एक सैनिक की दृष्टि से वह सम्पूर्ण कथा चलती है जो उसके मनोभावों को ही नहीं दर्शाती वरन् हमारे मर्म पर भी चोट करती चलती है। कथा का नायक संदीप कोलकाता के एक साधारण मारवाड़ी परिवार से सम्बन्ध रखता है। वह स्वप्न और ऊर्जा से भरपूर है और जीवन में कुछ नया करना चाहता है। भारतीय सेना का एक विज्ञापन उसे बड़ा आकृष्ट करता है - “यह विज्ञापन जिसे टाइम्स ऑफ इण्डिया के मुखपृष्ठ पर एक चमकती सुबह अपने दमकते हौसलों के साथ पढ़ा था उन्होंने Nation needs you राष्ट्र को आपकी आवश्यकता है। आर्मी उनके लिए एक आदर्श हीरो बन गई थी। जिसे उनकी जरूरत थी। ...अठारह वर्ष की वह भावुक स्वप्निल उम्र और टाइम्स ऑफ इण्डिया का वह जादुई विज्ञापन। उन्हें लगा जिस चीज की तलाश थी उन्हें, वह चीज मिल गई है। एक रहस्यमयी दुनिया बुला रही थी उन्हें आओ आओ मेरे पास आओ। ...नहीं अब उसे इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज में दाखिला नहीं लेना है। उसे फौजी बनना है।वह चाहता था कोई होली क्रान्ति, कोई मिशन, कोई स्वप्न, कोई उद्देश्य जीने के लिए जिन्दगी को सजाने के

लिए। उसे पूरा विश्वास था कि जीवन के अधूरेपन से, इस अपूर्णताबोध से उसे छुटकारा मिल सकता है तो सिर्फ फौजी बनकर।¹ माँ बाप का विरोध भी सन्दीप को सेना में जाने से रोक नहीं पाता। किसी के कहने पर कि सेना में दुबले-पतले और चुस्त युवकों की आवश्यकता होती है। वह सारा सारा दिन धूप में खड़ा रहता ओर चूल्हे के पास अपने शरीर की सूखाता है। इसके बाद आरम्भ होती है सेना की कठोर ट्रेनिंग जो उसके सारे कोमल तन्तुओं को तोड़ डालती है—“ऐसा गढ़ती है आर्मी आदमी को किसी कुशल कुम्भकार की तरह कि फिर जीवन भर के लिए आदमी वह नहीं रह पाता है, जो वह था—इस दुनिया में घुसने से पूर्व। सब कुछ बदल जाता है उसका—देह, मन, आत्मा। आर्मी का मूलमन्त्र है - ‘स्व को विसर्जित कर समूह में ढालना।’² सन्दीप की पोस्टिंग कश्मीर के गुण्ड इलाके में होती है। कश्मीर उसे अभिभूत कर देता है परन्तु वहाँ फैला आतंकवाद उसे दुखी कर देता है और वह सोचता है - “सोचो जरा सोचो कि कश्यप के नाम पर व कश्मीर जो सुदीर्घ समय तक भाईचारे, समन्वय और सहअस्तित्व का इतिहास रहा, कहाँ गए उसके उत्तराधिकारी ? जहाँ हवाओं में करुणा बहती थी किसने घुसाई बारुद की गन्ध”³। बड़े बड़े लोगों की छोटी-छोटी भूल किस तरह इस सुन्दर घाटी को पूरी तरह आतंकवादी वारदातों से भर देती है। युवकों को बरगलाने में इस्लाम की भूमिका का चित्रण भी लेखिका बखूबी करती हैं - “यह वह कश्मीर है जो भूख और युद्ध दोनों का ही मारा है। इस कारण यहाँ लोग वर्तमान में कम और अधकचरे इतिहास निथक और कुरान में ज्यादा रहते हैं। इनकी दुनिया में न टी० वी है न रेडियो है, न संगीत है ओर न ही क्रिकेट है - क्योंकि इस प्रकार का आमोद प्रमोद इस्लाम के खिलाफ है। अब तुम्ही सोचो जो गाना नहीं सुनेगा, नाचेगा नहीं, थिरकेगा नहीं वह तो अपराधी ही बनेगा और तो और इनके लिए देश ओर राष्ट्र का भी कोई कन्सेप्ट नहीं है, वहाँ सभी या तो इस्लामिक है या गैर इस्लामिक, यहाँ बच्चे जब से होश सम्मालते हैं उन्हें घर में, मदरसे में एक ही पाठ पढ़ाया जाता है - इस्लाम की राह पर चलो, सच्चे जेहादी बनो। तो ऐसे सभी गाँव आतंकवाद के लिए बहुत ही उर्वर इलाके हैं क्योंकि यहाँ जिहादी होना न सिर्फ परिवार के लिए समृद्ध और खुशहाल होना है, वरन् हीनता के मारे गरीब और बेरोजगार युवकों के लिए रोबदार होना, प्रतिष्ठित होना और अपनी ही नजरों में ऊपर उठ जाना भी होता है। जाहिर है, ऐसे युवक बहुत जल्दी ही शिकार हो जाते हैं पैसों के,

सस्ती लोकप्रियता के और जब तक वे समझ पाते हैं कि जिस इस्लाम खतरे में है का डर दिखाकर उन्हें आतंकवाद के जाल में फँसाया गया था, वह धोखा था, वे आतंकवाद के अजगर में बुरी तरह जकड़े जा चुके होते हैं।”⁴

केवल आतंकवाद ही नहीं सामान्य जीवन में व्यक्ति किस प्रकार सिस्टम का शिकार हो कर टूटता बिखरता है। यह भी अन्य पात्रों के माध्यम से इस उपन्यास में हम देख पाते हैं फिर चाहे वह बात सेना की हो या फिर मल्टीनेशनल कम्पनी में काम करने वाले युवकों की या इंजीनियरिंग के क्षेत्र की। व्यवस्था उसे हर ओर रौंदती है। यदि एक ओर कठोर सैनिक जीवन है जहाँ हर पल मौत का खतरा है तो दूसरी ओर सामान्य नागरिक जीवन भी उससे अलग कहाँ है। एक सैनिक अगर जीवन की अनिश्चितता को झेलता है तो दूसरी ओर हमारी कुशाग्रबुद्धि युवा पौध जो इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज की ओर जाती है ओर रैगिंग का शिकार होती है ओर कई बार इस कारण जान से भी हाथ धो बैठती है। सन्दीप का मित्र इस ओर संकेत करता है “तो हीरो! तू यह मत सोच कि तू आर्मी में है इसलिए ज्यादा जकड़ा हुआ है ओर मैं नागरिक जीवन में हूँ इसलिए खुशहाल हूँ। मुझे तो लगता है कि हर स्तर पर चुनौतियाँ हैं, तनाव है। सम्पूर्ण सुख चैन कहीं नहीं है। जब तक जिन्दगी है, लहरें तो उठेंगी ही। बस यह समझ ले कि जिन्दगी का दूसरा नाम ही है, मुठभेड़, हर कदम पर पर मुठभेड़।”⁵ तीसरा खतरा मल्टीनेशनल कम्पनियों में कार्यरत युवकों का है। जहाँ युवा समय से पहले ही वृद्ध हो रहा है। एम. एन. सी कम्पनियाँ जो अपने कर्मचारियों को मोटी तनखवाहें तो देती है लेकिन उसके साथ-साथ वे किस प्रकार उनका सकुन ओर स्वास्थ्य भी छीन लेती हैं। इसको सन्दीप के भाई सिद्धान्त ओर पत्नी के माध्यम से दर्शाया गया है- “उसने देखा था सिद्धान्त को रात-रात पढ़ाई करते। परीक्षा की तैयारी में घानी के बैल की तरह जुटते। फिर सफल होते। आगे बढ़ते। देश की क्रीमीलेयर बनते। ओर फिर दुनिया की सबसे प्रतिष्ठित बहुराष्ट्रीय कम्पनी के सेल्स टार्गेट को पूरा करने के लिए दिन रात मरते खपते। ..सप्ताह के पाचों दिन कम्पनी खाते में। इसी चिन्तन में कि कम्पनी का मुनाफा कैसे बढ़ाये। कुछ न कर पाने पर प्रमोशन न होने का खौफ। क्रीमीलेयर की कमाई राजा की तरह ओर जीवन गधे की तरह। न खाने की सुध न सोने की। दिन भर कान में मोबाइल। ओखों के आगे लेपटॉप ओर दिमाग में कम्पनी।

यदि आ रहा है पिछली बार जब मिलने गए थे भाई से तो आधे घण्टे के लिए भी पास नहीं बैठ पया था भाई। उन दिनों पीठ और कमर में जबरदस्त दर्द था सिद्धार्थ के, शायद दिन भर झुककर लैपटॉप पर काम करने के चलते। पर इतना भी समय नहीं था भाई के पास कि डॉक्टर के दिए सारे परीक्षण करवा पाए। बस पेनकिलर ओर इन्जेक्शन खाता ओर निकल जाता काम पर।”⁶

इस आतंक के साए में एक स्त्री की दशा का वर्णन भी करना भी लेखिका नहीं भूलती। रुबीना जिससे संदीप प्रेम करते है, के माध्यम से हम यह जान पाते है कि स्त्री हर जगह पीड़ा में है। सन्दीप को रुबीना के भाई को भारकर दुःख है, ग्लानि है और वह उसकी भरपाई भी करना चाहता है। वह रुबीना को सहारा देना चाहता है। जेहादियों की ओर से जो तर्क दिया जाता है उसे भी रुबीना के माध्यम से लेखिका कहलवाती हैं। धर्म के नाम पर जिहाद करवाने वाले, इस्लाम के नाम पर दंगा भड़काने वाले नेताओं का असली चरित्र क्या है। यह रुबीना हमें बताती है - “मजहब के सारे ताजिए हम गरीबों की देह के ऊपर ही टिके हुए है। मुझे मेरी अम्मी ने कभी तस्वीर तक नहीं खिंचवाने दी कि यह इस्लाम के खिलाफ है। .. मैंने देखा कि तस्वीर खिंचवाने के खिलाफ फतवे जारी करने वाले मुल्ले मौलवी बड़े चाव से राजनेताओं के साथ न केवल तस्वीर खिंचवा रहे है वरन् उन्हें अखबारों में भी छपवा रहे हैं। इन मुल्लाओं ओर मौलवी से बढ़कर पाखण्डी कोई नहीं हैं। ये तो रक्तदान ओर सर्जरी को भी इस्लाम के खिलाफ ठहरा चुके हैं। बैंक के सूद और जीवन बीमा के खिलाफ भी फतवा पहले ही निकल चुका है। लेकिन सारे जेहादियों ओर नेताओं का बैंक में खाता है।”⁷ फौजी से घृणा करने वाली रुबीना सन्दीप को शादी करने के लिए मना कर देती है। अन्ततः किस प्रकार आतंकवादियो का शिकार बनती है - “ मैं पढ़ने में ध्यान लगाने लगी कि तभी किसी ने पीछे से मेरे मुँह में रुमाल टूस दिया। मुझे चार बलिष्ठ हाथों ने पकड़ा ओर घसीटते हुए नीचे तहखाने में ले गए ओर वहां बारी बारी से।”⁸मैंने तुम्हें ठुकराया क्योंकि मुझे लगता था कि हमारी तबाही के लिए हिन्दुस्तानी सरकार और फौज जिम्मेदार है, पर मेरे साथ जो हुआ वह किसी फौज या हिन्दुस्तानी ने नहीं किया - वरन् हमारे अपनों ने किया।”⁸ यही नहीं फौज के सामन्ती चरित्र का वर्णन भी उपन्यास में यत्र तत्र मिलता है - ‘आर्मी के नेता को किन्हीं शब्दोंसे चिढ़ है तो ये हैं क्यों क्या और कैसे’⁹

एक महत्वपूर्ण बात भी हमें लेखिका बताना नहीं भूलती है वह है आदिवासियों के साथ हुआ अन्याय। उनके नारकीय जीवन की झलक भी हमें बालदेव नामक पात्र के माध्यम से मिलती है। बालदेव जिसने सेना में आने से पूर्व न तो बत्ती देखी थी। उसके लिए दाल और सबजी भी विलासिता थी। उपने गाँव में वह सिर्फ साग के उबले पत्तों के साथ भात खाया करता था। उसने कोई मन्दिर भी नहीं देखा था। मिठाई तक नहीं चखी थी। दही तक नहीं खाया था। देश में स्वाधीनता संग्राम की लौ भी सबसे पहले इन्हीं इलाकों में जली थी। “गाँधी से पूर्व भी इन आदिवासियों के इलाके में सिन्धु, काँहा जतरा और बिसरा जैसी लोग देश की स्वाधीनता के लिए अपनी शहादत दे चुके थे पर इतिहास ने उनके साथ न्याय नहीं किया। देश उन्हें याद नहीं करता।”¹⁰

अन्ततः हम पाते हैं कि इस उपन्यास में लेखिका ने उन सभी कारणों को हमारे सामने उपस्थित किया है जो हमारे जीवन को विषाक्त बना देते हैं। व्यवस्था किस प्रकार व्यक्ति को बौना बना रही है। ये उपन्यास हमें यह साफ दिखाता है। उपन्यास मर्मस्पर्शी तो है ही रोचक भी है। अपने लक्ष्य में मधु कांकरिया सम्पूर्णतः सफल रही हैं।

1.	सूखते चिनार	पृष्ठ -	8
2.	वही	पृष्ठ -	17
3.	”	पृष्ठ -	115
4.	”	पृष्ठ -	45
5.	”	पृष्ठ -	23
6.	”	पृष्ठ -	131
7.	”	पृष्ठ -	135
8.	”	पृष्ठ -	133
9.	”	पृष्ठ -	71
10.	”	पृष्ठ -	88

The Aura and Enigma of Nur Jahan

Paromita Chakrabarty

The present paper attempts to study the representation of the life of enigmatic Nur Jahan, the great Mughal empress, who dared to question the limits and borders on women in the 17th century when Indian women were banished from public and political activities. When woman are portrayed from the societal norms which are defined by the patriarchy the representation becomes imperfect. Women's' achievements in history has often been silenced by patriarchal hegemony or erased. Nur Jahan defied the norms when she refused to be satiated only by leading the life of an empress in luxuries and in interior works, rather redefined her role in administrative affairs. Eraly wrote "But there was one fatal flow in her. She was a woman... And in the prejudice of the age women had no public role, and ambition was the prerogative of men".

Nur Jahan has always been represented as crafty and her involvement in administrative affairs as manipulative. She formed a 'junta' or a clique with people she relied and played a significant or dominant role along with Jahangir in the administration. Her influence has always been represented in a pessimistic way. She ruled the empire in the name of the king but was not given an adequate and revered position. Nowhere has she found a place of dignity along the Mughal rulers when it was actually she who regulated the Mughal court. Her political significance has been trivialized only because she was a woman.

Nur Jahan's influence in Jahangir's life is portrayed in the writings of many Europeans who often came as ambassadors or travelers. Men like William Hawkins, an early English trader at Mughal court found Nur Jahan as the central figure to be appeased in order to win favour with the emperor. Dutch traders like Francisco Pelsaert, Pieter van

den Broecke opined that subdued by drinks Jahangir became malleable in the power of his wife and her associates. However Manucci, a traveler from Venice had noted that Nur Jahan was successful in getting Jahangir to agree to drink less. Even in his memoirs *Tuzuk* –i- Jahangiri he had discussed the habitual care Nur Jahan gave and endeavoured to reduce his cups of wine, persuading him to accept the advice and medication of the court physicians and even made medical decisions on her own based on his responses. It does show that Nur Jahan was never short of her obligations as a caring wife. The *Iqbalnama* passage bears a statement by Jahangir that he “bestowed the sovereignty on Nur Jahan Begam”. Thus it is conspicuous that the strength of Nur Jahan’s character permitted to earn the trust and conviction of Jahangir who entrusted upon her the charge of administration. She was primarily responsible for the proliferation of buildings, gardens, paintings, construction and arte that graced Mughal life with new standards of elegance. She constructed rest houses for travelers, palaces, gardens and tombs. In reality these gave her an opportunity to participate in the political process for building activity was deeply political act. She also ruled the vast *zenana* or harem. In the realm of arts she expanded the thematic repertoire of miniature painting and turned the attention of the painters toward women as sensual subjects. She redirected the use of surface ornament in architecture from the elements of Islam and turned toward the representational figures of her Persian past and Hindu present. She had introduced white marble for certain commemorative structures, a feature that later her step son Shah Jahan imitated when he erected Taj Mahal. She was even adept in shooting rifles and had killed tigers which Jahangir had confessed in *Tuzuk*. Her courage in battle was unique which was witnessed when she got physically involved in countering the rebellion of Mahabat Khan, even Dutch trader Van der Broecke says that “she wanted to show her woman’s courage” to Mahabat Khan. He basically highlighted the ways which she wished to expand the repertoire of activities available to women.

While the chronicles and the contemporary traveler's account portray a picture of an important ruler in the complete grip of his spouse, the *tazkiras* as he delegated political and administrative responsibilities in Nur Jahan's favour. *Tazkira* is a biographical anthology or almost poem. Bhakkari in his *tazkira Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin* informs that even after Nur Jahan's bitter encounter with Mahabat Khan Jahangir had been very polite to him. This is the depiction of Jahangir having his own mind though he delegated the administrative duties to Nur Jahan. Nevertheless, Nur Jahan even tackled Shah Jahan's revolt against her father at Balochpura to which Bhakkari applauds her by the statement – "The Begum made name in statesmanship and all manliness".

Bhakkari's *tazkira* written in the 17th century recognizes Nur Jahan as an independent lady who despite her gender was not dependent on her father and spouse. He eulogizes her by using the terms like 'queen of the world' and 'lady of the time'. He credits her for donating huge sums of money as charity to help the paupers and especially the women. She collected duties on goods from merchants, traded with Europeans bringing luxury items and even controlled promotions and demotions issued from the royal government. The coins, *farmans* or imperial orders were associated with Nur Jahan portrays that the power she wielded in Mughal court politics. Tirmizi says that Nur Jahan's orders were wide ranging and bear resemblance to *farmans* of the emperor. Jahangir had delegated many of his powers to Nur Jahan mainly after the death of her father Itmad-ud-Daulah in 1622.

Nur Jahan being guided by *junta* or a clique is something that few historians represent her. It is undeniable that her family had immense influence. The author of the *tazkira* Ma'asir ul Umara Shah Nawaz says that on account of the marriage between Nur Jahan and Jahangir, her family members were assigned with high ranks. Whereas Bhakkari's work gives the fact that the elevation of Nur Jahan's family was only because of their loyal and dedicated service to the Mughal court. Nur Jahan's family gained power and position only

post marriage with Jahangir. Irfan Habib believes that Nur Jahan's family formed the Persian nobility. Habib says that the nobility was divided into 2 factions – the Khurasanis or Persians and the Rajputs and the Chaghtais. Thus Sanjay Subhramanyam says that the Iranian elites were valued for their 'administrative cum commercial savoir faire'. Moreover Khurram (later Shah Jahan) was recognized as heir apparent of Jahangir. Arjumand Banu Begum or Mumtaz Mahal who was Nur Jahan's niece was given in marriage to Khurram in 1612 which according to Beni Prasad was a political one. This symbolized the alliance of Nur Jahan with the heir apparent Prince Khurram and they formed a 'family clique' or *junta* that rallied around Nur Jahan.

Several Mughal historians doubt the existence of the *junta* and view it as a later day construct to tarnish Nur Jahan's image. Nurul Hasan points out that theory of *junta* is based on European sources, i.e. the works of travelers like Thomas Roe, Peter Mundy and Bernier. Nurul Hasan holds the opinion that Nur Jahan's family members had attained exalted administrative posts due to their loyalty and dedication to service at Mughal court much before Nur Jahan's marriage to Jahangir.

Nur Jahan was certainly ambitious. She had even approached Khusrau, an able successor of Jahangir who had also been very popular among the subjects and even endeavoured by his grandfather Akbar, for the hand of her daughter Ladli from her previous marriage to Ali Quli Beg Sher Afghan. Khusrau had rejected Nur Jahan's overtures which may have made her a pivotal engineer in the oppressive court machinations against him in the latter part of his life as revenge or to clear the path of her future son –in-law to ensure the presence of her family at the centre of power. Later she had given the matrimony of her daughter to Shahryar, a weak successor of Jahangir. Nur Jahan was determined to break the power and prestige of Mahabat Khan as she became insecure that he might throttle her dream of putting Shahryar on throne by supporting the kingship claims of Prince Parvez, the eldest son of Jahangir. Findly says that to support Shahryar's claims to the Mughal throne Nur Jahan deprived

Shah Jahan of his fiefs in Hindusthan, alienated from his supporters and made use of various tactics to push him to the path of rebellion. Thus the rebellion saw murder, destruction and devastation. Subsequently Shah Jahan emerged as the winner.

The conspiracy theory or the love affair between Nur Jahan and Jahangir before her matrimony and Jahangir devising a plan to slay Sher Afghan to secure Nur Jahan appeared at a time when Shah Jahan was determined to create an ill image of Nur Jahan because of her predominance at court and Shah Jahan had set his eyes to obtain the coveted throne. Later it became an entertaining bazaar gossip, because this information was unavailable in contemporary sources. When the European travelers came mainly later during Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb's reign they came across these gossips and wrote them down in their travelogues.

Nur Jahan had left an indelible mark because of her deeds and enigmatic personality. Nevertheless she was ambitious, scheming, and had her sights on being empress of India. Unlike Jahangir's other meek and impassive wives, Nur Jahan refused to be a silent observer under her husband and rather played an active and intellectual role. She has deconstructed the stereotyped role of a queen in Mughal India. History has shown how Mughal successors have embroiled themselves in succession conflicts to acquire the coveted throne with the lust for power. If a woman like Nur Jahan endowed with strength, stamina and wisdom held high aspirations and even executed the administrative works with adroitness requires to be lauded. Her beauty, charisma and elegance only enhanced her aura. Her deft ability had truly made her a true heir to Akbar enhancing the authority, glamour and influence of the empire.

Historians mainly write focusing from the perspectives of political achievements and military exploits of the emperors. Very few women in history have been talked about such as Razia Sultan and Nur Jahan and that too in a negative sense because they pursued their ambitions and treaded that path which was deemed 'unwomanly'.

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Representation of ‘Disability’ on Screen; through the Lens of Bollywood

Manali Saha

“If disabled people and their knowledge were fully integrated into society, everyone's relation to her/his real body would be liberated.”

- Susan Wendell

The common worldview believes that the able-bodied are the norm in society, and the people who have disabilities must either strive to become that norm or should keep their distance from able-bodied people. The ‘able-ist’ worldview holds that disability is an error, a mistake, or a failing, rather than a simple consequence of human diversity. So, the term ‘disability’ doesn’t only stand for physical or psychological impairment. This rightfully can be used to refer to the disabling barriers of prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion of the impaired person. It is actually a socially constructed form based upon physiological reality, which acts as the attribute of the socio-cultural and other forms of oppressions leading the way toward discrimination and absolute elimination from the ‘pathologized’ course of the society. The process of pathological normalization of body gives assurance to decrease the attributes of non-compliance and hence affirms the possibilities of social conformity. So, being no more a medical construct, disability is rather treated as the conditioning of the people created by the society and ruling ideology in which they are unable to conform to the major needs and the desires propagated by the media and the other ruling institutions. Factually in our society, prejudice is associated with the recognition

of difference and an integral part of it is the concept of normality. And this idea of normality is inherently tied up with ideas about what is right, what is desirable and what belongs to it.

In Indian socio-cultural context, the traditional concept of ‘Disability and Karma’ enunciates disability as a perception of punishment for misdeeds in the past lives or crimes committed by the parents, which to some extent still continues to be a common belief amongst not only the less educated, but amongst well-educated urban dwellers also. The construction and also modification of such common belief have been performed by the media with the dramatic proliferation in societal sub-systems, coupled with its symbolic power to shape reality. Depiction of disability in media embodying human roles and values has also undergone a paradigmatic change. In a bid to reflect the reality and evoke enough sympathy, mass-mediated texts, especially popular cinema somehow reinforce the traditional and polarized views of ‘normalcy’ and ‘thriving non-normalcy’ within the heterogeneous condition of physiological and psychological impairment, but almost in a homogenous manner.

PORTRAYAL OF DISABILITY IN BOLLYWOOD POPULAR MOVIES

Dr. Atanu Mohapatra notes, “...portrayal of disability in films swings primarily between two extremes – pity, fun, caricaturing, sympathy, and awesome heroism are at one end of the spectrum while discrimination, coping-up, emotional swings and aspirations of the human soul are at the other end.” The depiction of disability through the Bollywood movies mainly encompasses this very view. While several film-makers have used disability as a comic interlude or to give a dramatic twist to their script with scant regard for the rights of a large group of people with impairment, there have been some film-

makers who have been able to build a tale around the insensitivity of society towards the disabled. Observation can reveal multifaceted portrayal styles of disability within the filmic narrative of Bollywood.

Disability as punishment

This concept is actually based upon the previously mentioned traditional ideation of 'Disability and Karma'. While disability has been widely regarded as a punishment in India for quite some time, this has been the most popular representation of disability in our films as well. One of the earliest films to portray disability as punishment was the 1936 Bombay Talkies film, *Jeevan Naiya*. The film, written by Niranjana Pal was driven by an idea of social justice in film, and used his screen writing as a means of highlighting problems with traditional orthodox beliefs. In the movie, the lead character abandons his wife because of her background from a family of dancers. Subsequently, the husband is blinded in an accident and nursed back to health and happiness by the woman, who unknown to him is revealed to be the same devoted wife he abandoned due to social taboo. Gulzar's *Koshish* (1972) is yet another example where the evil brother (played by Asrani), who torments his deaf sister and brother-in-law, becomes crippled himself, which he takes as punishment for his acts. In *Dhanwaan* (1981) the rich and arrogant atheist (played by Rajesh Khanna) is blinded and unable to buy a new pair of eyes for himself and eventually finds a benevolent donor only when he repents and turns to god.

There have been much more dominant representations as well, where disability has been represented as equivalent, if not worse, than death. For instance, in *Mehboob Ki Mehendi* (1971), when the protagonist comes to kill his nemesis Iftikar, he finds him on a wheelchair, and decides then that he is not worth stabbing since he is already disabled and allowing him to live would be a worse

punishment than death. Being a crucial adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet, the more recent film *Haider* (2014) also echoes similar sentiment, with the protagonist (played by Shahid Kapoor) deciding against killing his uncle despite his strong resolve to avenge his father's murder, partly because of his mother's words and partly because he finds his uncle gravely injured with his legs amputated.

Perhaps the most enduring portrayal of disability as a punishment is that of 'Thakur', the protagonist from possibly the most-watched cult film in India, *Sholay* (1975). In this film, Thakur, the police officer (played by Sanjeev Kumar) has his arms amputated by the bandit Gabbar (played by Amjad Khan). Being unable to avenge himself, Thakur employs two mercenaries to destroy the bandit's gang, but sets up a climactic duel between himself and Gabbar. With sheer melodrama he takes over Gabbar finally even without his arms, and concludes it not by killing Gabbar, but by crushing his arms with spikes. The enduring physical and psychological struggle of impairment, imposed as a curse in these cases, was promulgated by the mainstream Bollywood narratives as the most 'fruitful' punishment even worse than death.

Disability as a comic interlude

Disability has often been used as comic relief in action movies or light entertainment films through acts of almost offensive caricature. In movies such as *Tom, Dick and Harry* (2006), *Pyare Mohan* (2006) etc, the lead characters or one of them have been people with different physical impairment (generally problems with speech, vision or hearing). Their limitations and interaction with each other has been used as a source of entertainment for the audience. *Golmaal* (Tushar Kapoor with speech disability and Paresh Rawal and his wife as blind) and its sequels (There's also an controversy with *Golmaal 3* regarding the stammer scenes), *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* (Kader Khan as a person with different disability everyday), *Judaai* (Upasna Singh

with speech disorder), *Chup Chup Ke* (Where both the hero and heroine were with speech impairment; while the heroine was really mute, the hero pretended to be for avoiding some problems, which was used as comic attraction throughout the movie) are some of other typical mainstream Bollywood movies where limitations have been exploited for comic effect. Since disability is not the primary theme for these movies, these, unfortunately, have often reinforced the existing social stereotypes.

Disability as an object of pity and dependence

Arguably, the persistent representation of people with impairment as unable to live independently has been a very important setback to the independent living movement for the ‘differently able community’ worldwide. In Bollywood films also, the idea of dependence on charity is quite typical. For instance, the 1964 classic *Dosti* features two disabled protagonists, Mohan, who is blind and Ramu, who uses crutches to walk. In the film, Ramu is seen very distressed and eventually also been insulted while asking for a job, by getting the answer, “What work can be done by someone like you?” referring to his disability. Mohan, the blind youth likewise enters the film asking people to help him cross the street to no response. For most of the remainder of the film, the two youths are shown as being in situations where their disability makes them deeply dependent for their basic existence.

Khamoshi (1996) is yet another striking example where a deaf and mute couple (played by Nana Patekar and Seema Biswas) have been shown as completely dependent, both personally as well as economically, on their daughter (played by Manisha Koirala), who is ‘normal’. In fact, they become distraught with their daughter’s affair and her decision of marriage and even think to impede it in a fear of being utterly helpless on their own.

The National Film Award hailed movie *Koshish* (1972), directed by Gulzar, is often seen as a landmark in the portrayal of disability in Indian cinema. The movie opens with sign language alphabets in its credits, and at several points, it takes almost an educational stance to its audience by incorporating how a deaf person may communicate and participate economically, among others. Though the film sensitively depicts very authentic mundane struggle of a deaf and mute couple and their ever-lasting high spirit, this too couldn't overcome the cliché representation of impairment through the lens of both social pity and dependency. At the film's climax, protagonist Hari Charan's (played by Sanjeev Kumar) boss at work invites him home for dinner and asks him to bring along his son. The scene unravels in the boss's eventual offering of his daughter's hand in marriage to Hari's son. Hari (who is deaf and mute) is shocked at first, and signs that there is a huge class schism between the two, at which the boss confesses with tears that his daughter is deaf-mute too and so he is looking for a 'patient man' for her. As he says this, his face reclines in shame, his body language changes, and the camera focuses on the girl's ears and mouth- ostensibly defective. At this point, Hari immediately puts aside the class issue and agrees to the marriage, but the son (who is 'normal') refuses emphatically. The ending is particularly disturbing for its combination of class with disability, implying that for a disabled girl, a small class adjustment is reasonable. The apparent portrayal of boss's gestural change while confessing his daughter's physical impairment and also the refusal of marriage proposal by Hari's son can be considered almost insulting. Furthermore, while the boss's search for a 'patient man' for his daughter's successful conjugal life reinforces the idea of dependence (for a deaf-mute) on a 'normal' person, Hari's immediate consent to the marriage after knowing about the girl's impairment reflects the usual sense of pity on a disabled person (even being himself a deaf-mute too!).

Disability as extraordinary heroism

There are some films that have projected persons with disabilities as heroes and even almost super-heroes! For instance, in the 1998 Bollywood thriller *Dushman*, the protagonist (played by Sanjay Dutt), a blind veteran, fights the villain (played by Ashutosh Rana), when he tries to rape the heroine (played by Kajol), using his ‘sixth sense’ to determine villain’s position and movement. Similarly, the three lead characters (played by Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal and Arjun Rampal) successfully rob a bank despite being blind again using their ‘sixth sense’ in *Aankhen* (2002). In attempts to represent physical impairment in a positive light, these kinds of movies actually distort the true identity of these people, helping little to improve understanding of and appreciation for the disabled. According to Rustom Irani, an independent film-maker, guest columnist and more than 60% disabled wheelchair user, “There are a couple of disability tropes that need to disappear from Bollywood... Please don't enhance the other senses and skills of disabled characters to superhuman levels because they lack a particular physical ability.”

Disability as social maladjustment

The characters of ‘*Shakuni*’ and ‘*Manthara*’ from the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana respectively are important markers of the idea of disability as a form of social maladjustment and a pathway to evil. In particular, the ‘Shakuni stereotype’ has been employed often for wicked supporting characters in many movies, like the scheming crippled brother-in-law (played by Prem Chopra) in *Ram Tera Desh* (1984), the crippled evil brother among twins in *Gora Aur Kala* (1972) etc. In *Gora Aur Kala*, the lead actor plays twin brothers; one of them with some amount of physical impairment, who eventually goes evil, carries jealousy for another one, and finally got conquered by that ‘suave’, ‘kind’, ‘desirable’, ‘ideal’ brother of the contrasting pair. Morris truly utters, “...*Unfortunately, the more*

disability is used as a metaphor for evil or just to induce a sense of unease, the more the cultural stereotype is confirmed.”

The sensible representation: ‘Sparsh’

Apart from the stereotyped stigmatic depiction, there are some more authentic and thoughtful representation of disabled individuals in Bollywood generating awareness about their true abilities and also limitations. Sai Paranjpe’s *Sparsh* (1980) is probably the most prominent one of these kinds. The film is about the life of Anirudh (played by Nasseruddin Shah), a blind school principal. His expectations, strengths and limitations all are well-represented in the movie, which portrays Anirudh as a very independent man, capable of not only managing an entire school, but also his own personal life-cooking, cleaning etc. The movie conveys that it is not the submission of the impaired person by seeking pity or charity, but an imposition over them by the societal system which constantly questions and compares their abilities. It also explores the tricky aspect of disability and relationship, with the ‘normal’ factors like ‘love’, ‘concern’ etc. At the same time, the movie also highlights several bitter realities, most importantly the lack of accessible textbooks in Braille, and the focus on vocational education for the blinds as alternative of mainstream academics.

THE RECENT SCENARIO

A new wave of Hindi films has started portraying disability much more sensibly and sensitively on the screen. The intent is to use the platform as a mean to generate awareness and sensitivity among the common people. Also, there seems to be a paradigm shift in how a director looks at disability, by depicting individual and interpersonal acceptance and adherence instead of cliché melodramatic social negation and rejection. It is noticeable that, the earlier films of

Bollywood while representing disability, mainly preferred to portray characters of deaf and mute, blind, accidentally impaired and impaired by action of revenge. On contrary, there have been a number of mainstream films in recent years about a range of conditions, many of which rarely get serious discussion in the public sphere; such as Progeria, Dyslexia, Asperger Syndrome, Tetraplegia, Autism, Cerebral Palsy etc. It is gratifying to see that these kinds of films are indeed moving closer to an inclusive view of disability as integrated part of society. Though some of these movies have been accused of stereotyping, the fact that the concepts they discuss have never even made it to the screen make them worth appreciating, especially for taking effort to facilitate critical importance of public discourse of disability.

The films like *Iqbal* (2005) and *Black* (2005) mainly jive with the rhetoric of heroic triumph of the impaired protagonists against all misfortunes and social obstacles. Nagesh Kukoonoor's *Iqbal* is about the hard of hearing and mute son of a farmer (played by Shreyas Talpade), who has a passion for the game of cricket and eventually goes on to make it to the Indian Cricket team overcoming all barriers. Inspired by the film 'The Miracle Worker', which was based on Helen Keller's life and struggle, the cathartic tale of a visually challenged and hearing impaired girl (played by Rani Mukhrjee) in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Black*, overcomes the adversity of being disabled to become one of the 20th century's leading humanitarians.

Black also portrays the lack of social touch and numerous formal rules, which bind up the disability in elite family where the struggle is mostly inward and confined to the person with disability. But in films such as *Koi Mil Gaya* (2003) and *Main Aisa Hi Hoon* (2005), while portraying the disability in the context of middle class family, the victim or the person with disability faces the hindrance and fate of social prejudices and the legalities of inclusiveness in the bargain of

competition in the industrial world. Here, *Main Aisa Hi Hoon* (inspired by critically acclaimed Hollywood film 'I am Sam') can be considered as more truthful portrayal of disability, where an autistic single father (played by Ajay Devgan) challenges existing social and legal system in order to claim the custody of his only daughter. Compared to this, *Koi Mil Gaya* deals with an imaginary friendship of a mentally challenged young boy (played by Hrithik Roshan) and an alien, though portraying some amount of social struggle of the protagonist. The film *Guzaarish* (2010) also portrays the societal and legal struggle of the protagonist Ethan (again played by Hrithik Roshan), a tetraplegic or quadriplegic patient, who petitions the court for 'Euthanasia' and decides to gather public support when the law fails him. This film actually deals more with the existing debate regarding Euthanasia than social struggle of an impaired individual. *My Name is Khan* (2010) is also another film of this kind, where the sensitive issue of Islamist and Terrorism is given the prime focus through the journey of protagonist Rizvan Khan (played by Shah Rukh Khan) with asperger syndrome, rather than portraying the mundane struggle of acceptance for such individual.

The highly acclaimed film *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) authentically portrays the mundane problems and struggle for social adherence of a 10 years old dyslexic boy (played by Darsheel Safary). This particular film leads to a greater appreciation for the limitations faced by people with intellectual disabilities, and resulted in several educational institution and authorities across the country taking action to include the students with slow learning abilities in the mainstream. Another movie, which has successfully created a mass awareness about a rare genetic disorder, is *Paa* (2009), which gives a very authentic depiction of progeria suffered 12 year old Auro and his physical and psychological struggle against existing societal forms of acceptance. The character of Auro is played by then 66 years old

Amitabh Bachchan, being masked by an extraordinary makeup portraying disordered physical appearance of a progeria patient.

Anurag Basu's *Barfi!* (2012) narrates the sweet and simple romantic tale of a deaf-mute boy Barfi (played by Ranbir Kapoor), an autistic girl Jhilmil (played by Priyanka Chopra) and a 'normal' girl Shruti (played by Ileana D'Cruz). Notably, the film tries to depict the construct of love and sexuality within an autistic individual through some short but crucial behavioral gestures of the character Jhilmil. The discovery and triumph of this individual choice of sexuality within the framing of disability, has probably never been portrayed so prominently like the film *Margarita, With a Straw* (2014), directed by Shonali Bose. The film depicts the journey of an independent, rebellious teen Laila (played by Kalki Koechlin), suffering from cerebral palsy. The story unfolds Laila's self-discovery of being bisexual, her struggle against all societal inadequacy of adherence and acceptance and finally embarking a journey on her own taking control of her own life without any need or dependency of being loved by anyone else.

IN CONCLUSION

In this journey from archetypical portrayal of disability to creating authentic representation of impairment and its struggle, though a very positive shift of building mass awareness can be noticed, some problems remain as well. Though creating special inclusive measures, the abled-dominated society still declines to recognize the impaired people as fully integrated and contributing members. This is like the both face of the same patriarchal society, which first ostracizes then glorifies an impaired individual in construct of 'normalcy' (Wendell, 1989). Aren't the popularized mediated codes of representing disability congregating them within a particular

socio-cultural box of ‘entities thriving for normalcy’? While representing a disabled character in film, imitating the metonymical and gestural pattern of a disabled person and hailing it by judging the quotient of similarity can surely help to garner enough social sympathy or may be apathy for some comprehensive measures. But, in a paralletic view, such filmic practice of distinguishing ‘abled’ as ‘conforming entity’ and the ‘disabled’ as ‘finally triumphant as a conforming entity’, is further differentiating the disabled as ‘others’ by the carried codes and signs under the canopy of liberty and progressiveness propagated by modern media and society.

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Representation of Women in Advertisements of Men's Products: A Study of Indian Television Commercials

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“Advertising is a very powerful form of social communication in modern society. It offers the most sustained and most concentrated set of images anywhere in the media system”(Jhally, 1989, p. 1). Advertisements today have far surpassed its general objective of selling products with the use of texts and images. They are now crafted to appeal to their target audience in several ways. The number of television commercials has increased in manifold ways in last few decades and they have assumed a significant position in influencing people's aspirations. In their pursuit of selling product the images that advertisers create often possess strong socio-cultural dimensions. In fact these images have strong connotation pertaining to different constructs like class, religion, ethnicity, gender and sexuality among many others. When we talk about images, the images of female bodies in advertisements become an important area of study. Women and their body parts are used to sell almost all kinds of products. They are even present in advertising of the products that are meant for men. Female models are often found in advertising products like men's razors, men's cream, men's wear etc and the manner in which they are portrayed remains a topic of critical analysis. The present work will study the ‘politics of representation’ of female models in television advertisements which are meant for men.

This is a study of both the visual and verbal language of Indian television commercials that are meant for men's products. It is about how these advertisements communicate the advertiser's message and ultimately represent the connection with the culture itself. The study is carried on with the following definition of the term 'culture': "The social production and reproduction of sense, meaning and consciousness."(O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 68). In this sense any cultural text represents a 'way of life'. So for the purpose of the study data have been obtained through observation of Indian television commercials over the years and from other secondary sources.

To examine the identity of Indian womanhood feminist scholars often use the theoretical framework of masculine domination which is very much pertinent while talking about the relationship between advertising and Indian culture. To elaborate the idea of domination we are focusing here mainly on the notion of "hegemony". Antonio Gramsci introduced the word 'hegemony' in his 'Prison Notebooks'. There are various interpretations by different academicians and practitioners of it. It is understood that he used the term to denote the predominance of one social class over others (e.g. bourgeois hegemony). This represents not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated by it accept it as 'common sense' and 'natural'. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population and Media is often employed to adhere to a social system that appears natural. Advertising being a cultural institution sells a great deal more than just products. It sells values; it sells images; it sells concepts of love and sexuality, of romance, of success and perhaps most important, of normalcy. "To a great extent, advertising tells us who we are and who we should be"(Kilbourne, 1999, p. 74). Advertising is considered to hold a great deal of power in shaping how people view others and themselves, and thus, in shaping society itself (Kilbourne, 1999).

According to Hall (1997) the term ‘representation’ can be interpreted from three different approaches: Reflective approach, Intentional approach and Constructionist approach. (i) In Reflective approach meaning lies in the object, person, idea, or event in the real world and that representation reflects these meanings as in a mirror. This was used by the Greeks as mimesis where representations through drawing and painting mirror or imitate nature. (ii) The intentional approach reverses the first approach and asserts that the writer, artist or speaker “imposes his or her unique meanings on the world through language” (Hall, 1997, p. 25). Words mean what the author intends they should mean. (iii) The third, the constructionist approach, recognizes the public, social character of language. “It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language” ((Hall, 1997, p. 25). This theory draws a clear distinction between the material world where things exist and the symbolic world of modes of representations. It is in the symbolic practices that meaning is constructed. Thing doesn’t have any meaning in itself; we construct it, using our concepts and signs. Hence it is called the constructivist or constructionist approach which recognizes the existence of the material world but emphasizes on the representational system through language and other forms. While discussing about the representation of meaning through language (also visual language) Hall (1997) stressed on its close connection with culture. Media, especially advertising symbolically reproduce the codes and conventions of the culture and the portrayal of women in them speaks of the existing power structure of the society and the position of women in that.

The otherwise diverse Indian cultural system becomes homogenous when it comes to the question of women. As a major social and economic institution advertising strives to maintain cultural hegemony like any other form of media. So, it continually dwells upon the dominant ideological structures to maintain and reinforce the existing power structures denying alternative and oppositional

views. Advertising perpetuates the patriarchal ideology by continually reinforcing the distinction between men and women by locating men in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. Women are mostly shown confined to a life of domesticity and family. These ideological constructs are presented to us as "commonsense" through visual and verbal symbols. Among the various medium of advertisements television advertising is more appealing as it involves sets, lighting, editing, voice-over and sound effects along with actors and texts. Keeping a continuation of Indian tradition a woman is often depicted as being engaged with the domestic chores. Women are shown to serve her husband, children and family happily negating her own desires and demands.

There are several previous literatures which show that in the early days of Indian advertising women were mainly portrayed in advertisements of beauty products and products of domestic uses. After the independence the ideology of 'nation building' became very much prominent in the advertising narratives. Women started appearing in advertisements of consumer durables but were often portrayed as "ideal housewives". According to Wright (2001) "Throughout the 1980's and early 1990's Indian womanhood was a crucial site for the construction of national subjects that centered on the importance of the Indian family. The linkages between women and family remain strong in advertising's address to Indian women" (p. 168). Women were featured predominantly in products for beauty and personal grooming, health products, food and cooking products, products for household cleaning and home appliances. They even appeared in advertisements of mosquito repellent, light bulbs, wall paints and so on. But Women were seldom found endorsing high-tech products such as mobile phones or computers. Thus these advertisements for a long time supported the stereotype that women are only interested in products related to cooking or the household and have no interest or ability in the machines or high-tech Products which are often considered as products of "masculine" domain.

But women are being increasingly portrayed in advertisements of men's products where they mostly act as sex objects whose main purpose is to seduce the buyers (men) in buying a product. While beer, bike and car symbolize "maleness" most of these ads show women in provocative poses. The inherent meaning of such images is to portray women as an object of sexual pleasure for men. Through such images male domination and female servitude are often promulgated and normalized. The earlier stereotype of an "ideal housewife" has been replaced by an "attractive object". The commercials which publicize the female anatomy to sell the products are mounting day by day. As Dasgupta et al. (2012) says "explicit sexual images are used with subtle sexual innuendoes, as the Wild Stone male fragrance commercials and those of male underwear where a man has lipstick marks all over his body, smiling smugly after being attacked by a female gang"(p. 134). The recurrent portrayal of women as sexual objects in advertisements of men's products affects both men's perceptions of women and women's perception of themselves. These advertisements symbolize a flattered form of discourse which concerns the modern society.

To discuss this we need to trace few anecdotes of Indian Television. Television was introduced in India to support the state as developmental machinery. So the state continued to control over television's content. During mid 90s as the Indian economy got liberalized the change from monopoly to competition made broadcasting market-driven. New indicators for measuring success such as advertising revenues became important comparing to public service Doordarshan in the earlier era. The contents of advertising also started getting redefined with sexuality being increasingly used in them. As a result of unregulated transmission from abroad a lot of "undesirable" (inconsistent with the national culture) became available to the Indian audiences and gave the impetus for increasing use of sex in the advertising. The Indian parliament passed the Cable

TV Network (Regulation) Act of 1995 to regulate the airwaves but it could do little to the already existing situation.

In general definition, Sex is a biological discrimination between male and female. But 'sex appeal' in advertising is used to sell a particular product or service. The use of sex in advertising can be highly overt or extremely subtle. It ranges from relatively explicit displays of sexual acts and seductive behavior to the most subtle hints. Sexuality in advertising has been proved as an extremely effective means in attracting consumer's attention and making them remember the message of the advertisement. Though law has been passed for prohibiting indecent representation of women in advertisements still the advertisers trick their way out of this stringent law and manage to commodify women in several men's product advertisements. If we follow television commercials we come across a handful number of ads where women are being used to sell products that are purely meant for men. Among these advertisements ads of Deodorant, Perfume and Soap pose the most unrealistic and obscene representation of women. The prime example of this is Axe advertisements which have topped the list in promoting sexiest ads over the years. In these advertisements female characters are intentionally portrayed as sex objects. Usually "Axe" body spray ads feature an adolescent guy who uses the "Axe" spray and within a fraction of second becomes a "women sticking magnet". For example: "Axe Dark Temptation" body spray ad used to show that several scantily dressed women are jumping, lusting and drooling and even biting over an adolescent boy who is using this fragrance. Female characters are depicted with an element of voyeurism in ads like Wild Stone Deodorant and Soap. Example can be given of "Wildstone" soap advertisement where the male protagonist is found to be playing football with few small kids, while their mothers' seductive look toward his bare body is captured in the camera and a song is played in the background to suggest some sexual innuendos. When the game is over the kids are given the soap

to clean themselves up but the male character's half bare body excites these women to such an extent that they start giving him a personal bath. Similar kind of visuals can be found in "Euro" brief's advertisement. This brand is followed by a unique tagline as "Accepted by Women Worldwide". In this particular ad a woman is seen filling up fuel tank of a car. Once she sees the owner of the car wearing "Euro" brief the woman starts expressing her lust and desire and when the man asks her how much he has to pay for the fuel, the woman replies "For you it's free". The obvious meaning is conveyed that the woman is willing to be paid in this kind rather than in cash. All these advertisements stand for sexual objectification of women.

Apart from such projections female characters are used decoratively in other ads like Gillette razor, Gillette shaving gel, Emami Fair & Handsome cream and so on. For instance the Gillette Guard razor ad where the target audience is supposed to be men we find an unnecessary presence of a woman who is seeking her husband's permission to buy a saree while he is busy in shaving. It presents woman as a dependent member of a family whose urge to buy stuff for herself depends on her husband's sanction; thus showing men in an authoritative position. Like the above mentioned ads there is a never ending list of these kinds of advertisements where the presence of a woman is purely decorative, without any functional relationship with the advertised product. Her sexuality is exploited not only to sell a variety of products but also to provide visual pleasure to the viewers. Women's presence in these advertisements is not justifiable by any means. The woman has no relation with the product, nor is she capable of inducing men to buy the merchandise that is advertised. In order to entertain the audience her character is solely put down. It should also be mentioned here that few ads of men's products have started avoiding this 'Sex sell' strategy to promote their brand. In fact they are trying to use the product's competitive advantage over other products to target the audiences rather than falling in the same line.

Over the years the prevalence of sexuality in advertising is escalating though most of the ads show that the sole purpose of a woman's life is to satisfy men (in the form of father, husband and son); thus following the codes of a patriarchal society that depicts women as "others". But sexualized representation of women in advertisements can be looked at as a different empowering "space" for women. Several scholars have commented that advertisements seem to convey the idea of an empowering modernity and pose a challenge to the stifling, repressive, sex-negative dominant culture. But the critics feel that this often legitimizes men's domination and control through objectification of women. The paper has also attempted to show that how women's representation in advertisements of men's products supports the rising sexism and simultaneous objectification of women bodies rather than allowing them a "space" to be subjective and agents of their own lives.

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Election and Media: (Mis) representing Democracy in India

Saikat Guha

Jean Baudrillard earned notoriety when he announced that the Gulf War did not take place. Those who opposed him on the ground of a deplorable insensibility which he has written with ignoring the dimension of human suffering missed the argument of Baudrillard that it is the manufactured reality which television caters to us, and not reality *per se*. The very idea of real is a postmodern problematic because in this image-dominated (televised) hyperreal stage it is impossible to deduce any idea of real by following a simplistic logic of representation mirroring reality. What the television and media in general present to us is a nebulous form of the real whose authenticity can no longer be established because such representations operate on the level of signification without an immediately available signified. Postmodern culture, especially media culture, is marked by a distortion of the real. The distortion does not arise from some technical constraints inherent in the medium; rather, this is deliberately architected to render the events obscure so as to serve without being seen to serving the interest of those who control its resources.

The increasing access of the common people to digital media, especially television, since the last quarter of the twentieth century has been a crucial event in the public sphere. Television news digitalize the representation of ostensibly “real” events to make them available to common people, but what they telecast are not innocent

incidents, either in selection or in deployment. Although John Fiske argues in his studies of television culture that there is no reason to believe that viewers of television are indiscriminating, homogenous, culturally duped mass, he acknowledges, at the same, the role of ideology in shaping the representation of social codes when they are transmitted into television's technical codes. Fiske seems optimistic to concede that people are viewers and makers of meaning of television programmes rather than passive consumers, but he is not mentioning TV news in this regard. Moreover, television channels telecast various programmes and the interests of viewers also immensely vary. And it is needless to say that the medium itself is not an objective one. Here comes the notion of "effectivity" of television:

Television and its programs do not have an "effect" on people. Viewers and television interact. [...] Television does not "cause" identifiable effects in individuals; it does, however, work ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world, to circulate some meanings rather than others, and to serve some social interests better than others. This ideological work may be more or less effective, according to many social factors, but it is always there, and we need to think of it in terms of its effectivity in society at large, not of its effects upon specific individuals or groups. "Effectivity" is a socio-ideological term, "effect" an individual behavioristic one. (Fiske 20)

The effectivity of popular media in shaping public life and opinion is paramount in recent times. This is evident from the introduction of the post of "media advisor" among the entourage of heavyweight political leaders. The role of the media advisor is to guide the leader through the dicey paths of publicity and to direct the attention of the public to the latter's political aspirations. The very notion that media shape public opinion is sequestered by the political parties to utilize

the media in controlling and regulating public to their favour. The machinery preempts the possibility of a dissent at least on the simulated stage by resorting to illusions of various types, ranging from the promises of a better democratic ambiance to employment, reduction of corruption to better services at government offices.

One such illusion which is announced and performed at regular interval is election in Indian which is the foundation of its “democracy”. Indian political leaders and media personnel infinitely iterate the truism that India is the biggest democracy in the world which accommodates diversity in tolerant co-existence. Democracy is usually defined as the threshold to socialism—the latter announces its onset at the parlance of democracy. Although absolute freedom, justice and equality are absurd concepts, it is in democracy that common people enjoy independence and opportunities with minimal restraints. But it would be a fallacy to make such a hasty judgement that democracy is beneficial in every respect. Democracy, too, especially in postcolonial countries like India, is dominated by the ideologies of those in power who need the mass to validate their authority but at the same time arranges to exclude them from access to power. On this strange one-way traffic is situated the pivot of democratic mechanism of India with election fortifying it. And in the contemporary era when the dark cloud of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, intolerance, regionalism, global recession, unemployment, corruption are rumbling over the country, the political leaders have found in the promise of a fair democracy a point to be buttressed time and again.

Election is the means of establishing mass-elected government in democracy which is supposed to consolidate the rule of people and look after their well-beings. In the words of Beng Huat Chua, “in political science theories of democracy, elections are rational procedures by which competing candidates for public offices present

themselves to the electorate as the persons best able to execute a set of proposals for future developments, invoking their past records of achievements as evidence of competence and social responsibility” (1). But modern democracy is largely fictional, Chua continues, because: firstly, election alone can not give solidarity to elected government; secondly, in recent times voters’ turnouts are declining, and hence, the representatives are selected by only a section of adult voters; thirdly, in the federations of states major political parties often rely on support from regional parties to form government, and thus, sacrifice “national” interests for the sake of parochial ones; fourthly, elections are not merely about information dissemination, but often unleash violence; sometimes voters are coerced to vote for a particular candidate which make the idea of “people’s choice” a farce (2).

The inexorable profligacy associated with election in India helps mask the hidden agenda of political parties. But election itself has become in the new millennium a simulated process operating in the images and videos thanks to the advanced media. With apologies to Baudrillard it can be said that election in India does not happen but for the media. The role of media in the new millennium has grown incredibly unforeseen in the history of its trajectory. With the growth of technologies and communication system media have assumed unprecedented role in not only dispersing events but also intervening in the power-play worked out in the name of election. The role of media in collecting, organizing and dispensing news from a wide spectrum of society is already asserted. But what can not be established is the impartiality of media. And the allied reality of what is only assumed to be real only densifies the complexity. Media’s neutrality is a “myth” (in a Barthesian sense accentuating the role of bourgeoisie to sanction mythhood to something) which has long been suspected, especially in recent times with the mushrooming of new

channels. The broadcasting of countless TV news-channels and circulation of newspapers which present occurrences dissimilar, and even antagonistic, to each other, make the events of election a televised reality duly shaped before being catered to the public. Indian media, one of the most complex systems in the world, perform theatrical role in collecting, editing and disseminating news from almost every sphere of Indian life, and politics in particular.

The changes in the Indian media during the 1990s, according to Daya Kishan Thussu, signalled a significant shift from “state-controlled monopoly to a multiplicity of private television channels,” and “the expansion and consolidation of the operations of the mainly Western-based transnational media corporations have transformed India’s media landscape and significantly affected broadcast journalism” (54). Politics seems to be the choicest area of broadcasting media which, however, make dexterous use of the unconstructive vogue of connecting every dispute or conflict invariably with politics. But politics has been a constant companion of Indian television, as Thussu points out, the aims of the introduction of television in India in the year 1959 (*Doordarshan* being the first channel) were to disseminate state policies and to impart nationalist feelings among people (56). The emergence and speedy growth of transnational media in India during the 1990s made the media world susceptible to commercialization. In the competition market, the news channels started combining news with entertainment (“infotainment”) in order to increase the consumption-rate of their circulated news. The immediate implication of this commercialization of broadcast media was the precedence of style over substance, representation over reality. Thus politics too came to be moulded by populist media paradigm:

During the election campaign news channels vied with each other to give air time to film stars campaigning for major

political parties – focusing on their personalities, antics and popular rhetoric. Many film stars contested the elections, giving journalists ample ammunition to spice up their reports with quotes and misquotes from the matinee idols in a country where films are an integral part of popular culture. (Thussu 63)

Hence, it is pointless to rely on any of the news channels while their political commitments become intelligibly outspoken. Even though the role of electronic media in speedy circulation of news is acknowledged, the “endorsement of popular journalism in a market-driven media environment [...] is increasingly threatening the quality of public debate in a developing polity” (Thussu 65).

Election in India is a flamboyant show rehearsed dramatically over media charade. Election is representation without an original. This does not necessarily mean that election procedures, state machinery’s involvement and election personnel’s labour have not significantly contributed to the making of the event called election. But, rather, the system in its entire transparency is not accessible to the public who are kept out of the way. Most a common person experiences election is in the form of media representation. This representation is a misrepresentation of democracy whose inconsistencies and perversions are conceded as true in the guise of an egalitarian carnival. This is not a carnival in Bakhtinian sense where authorities are thwarted, restrictions are imploded and preprogrammed roles are subverted. But this carnival is ideologically manoeuvred in televised simulation as a festival of the populace while its real motifs are in fact reverse. The misrepresentation commences in a sequence—firstly, by the political parties, and secondly, by media. Let me elaborate these to an extent.

The political parties arrange rallies and mass congregation to chart their achievements, to announce their future agenda, to threat and

scoff their opponents, and thus to persuade people to secure their support. These road-shows and conferences serve the means of convincing people of the reliability and efficiency of a political party which are in fact brainwashing. Political leaders in such programmes circulate a cluster of non-verifiable data which are used as tricks of deception to represent the artificially forged situation. The lectures and promises of political leaders are, to borrow from Shakespeare, full of sound and fury signifying nothing. Moreover, the dubious and often aimless but extravagant situation of political gatherings can further be discerned as celebrities from the screen or music world, or sportspersons, give their gorgeous appearance in such gatherings. It is assumed that the “heroes” of the screen would retain their acceptability as the protagonists in the battle of election where a nefarious party requires defeat by a good one. The parallelism between the victory of good over evil on TV screen or cinema hall and that of the “good” political party over “bad” political party is psychologically fictionalized to capture popular attention. Such stage-appearances of screen presenters very well deceive the gathered mass who are supplied with easy entertainment at the cost of their votes. A colourful but insubstantial carnival is thus enacted with the excuse of election.

The parties make people believe that it is their democratic right to cast vote and thus elect their choicest persons to speak for them in the legislative assembly or parliament. But what is never told is that their choice is curtailed before the commencement of election because the nominated persons are not selected by the mass, but the party high-commands. Here comes the debate on another sort of representation—that of selection of the candidates as representatives of the people. Anthony Birch points out three kinds of public dispute about representation to legislative assemblies in modern democracies: firstly, who should be represented, secondly, how

representatives should be chosen, and thirdly, how elected representatives should behave. While the first dispute, notes Birch, has been somewhat resolved by “a combination of campaigns by groups who were excluded from the franchise, prudence on the part of ruling groups, and propaganda by reformers and political theorists. It is now accepted that all adult citizens should be represented through the electoral system” (Birch 134). But the other two questions are still heavily disputed. However, Birch argues that “the world has never seen a representative assembly which is fully representative in a microcosmic sense, but party managers are well aware of the criticisms that may be levelled against their party if no serious attempt is made to at least reflect the main social divisions of the electorate in their choice of candidates” (137), nor do the representatives always work solely for the public interest rising beyond his personal interests and the interests of his/her affiliating party.

What these details highlight is that the celebration of election as democratic festival is in fact mass deception sketched out on a vast canvas. Common people are duped by the beguiled package called “democracy” while the real rights remain at the hands of the facilitated elite classes. Even after more than sixty years of Independence, a large section of people in India remain heavily deprived of the minimum requirements of life. Children in slums and railway platforms remain hungry and they are denied of education. Oppression on Dalit and minority communities, exploitation of the tribals, violation of women’s honour are everyday incidents. We do not need statistical data to prove all these, but daily situations which we observe or hear of are adequate empirical evidences. These incidents reflect the utter hollowness of Indian democracy which has failed to secure fundamental rights for the Dalits, tribals, women, lower class gentry, plebian classes, and minority communities.

The second agency of deception is media which further distance the nature of true democracy. By distorting the events of political messages, that is, falsely decoding the already false encoding, media once again misleadingly represent Indian democracy. The newspapers, TV news channels and online sites all have their individual political-institutional ideology with which they function. As such, they disfigure and pervert truth, and convey simulated messages to the public. Media make election a cinematic show in which political parties take part, wage war against each other and play with public issues. The political parties often retort to each other and forge spurious allegations out of a sense of unhealthy antagonism, and media only make the situation more complex. In contemporary times, only a few media of repute undertake the serious task of investigating a case while the majority of media borrow news from others, often unreliable sources, as Susan Moeller says:

There is no media anymore that can afford to be truly deliberative always. The public demands its news “now,” anytime, around the clock. [...] the new technology and the ubiquity of the Internet has on one hand augmented investigative reporters’ ability to rapidly locate facts and draw information from a broad range of sources, but that same pace too often turns hysterical, blurring solid reporting with rumor and rants into an indistinguishable and, at times, toxic slurry. (175)

The democratic structure of India confers on media the similar rights which are supposedly bestowed on common people. But media are in fact given more freedom to garner and communicate messages which paradoxically are at once the ultimate advantage and worst blunder of the democratic structure. Media have acquired a very influential, almost indispensable, part of Indian life in contemporary times at the

pretence of their self-declared commitment to convey genuine news to common people. In reality, their purpose is no longer to convey news but to ideologically contrive, control, and to an extent, deceive public opinion. Behind the guise of catering objective “truth,” media subtly infuse their interests or the interests of those for whom they work. “Due to mergers and the consequent demand that news operations see profit and not public service as their bottom line, broadcast and even print news outlets are increasingly part—and understood to be part—of the entertainment circus that the “media” business has become” (Moeller 174). Political news, especially those of election, occupy the primetime of this “entertainment circus” in all news-based digital media. The gulf between reality and falsified simulation in the representation of political events and occurrences on media, which misrepresents the already precarious nature of Indian democracy, can be discerned but can not be unobtrusively dislodged because the context against which to debate it has become misty by the simulated version of reality which denies the entry of the mass.

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Caste Representation as a Tool of Elimination: Identifying unbridled Caste-Fetishism of Indian Media through the comparative case studies of M M Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula

Abhik Bhattacharya

Representation, if assessed in Foucauldian perspective that calls for the production of knowledge in discursive space, that refers to the historical context for the development and understanding of the meaning; identifies abnormal man, dangerous man and several different anomalous category, (Bannet102) as propounded by Professor John Fiske; purportedly creating social boxes for ensuring oppression and discrimination (Fiske 53). Society in this manner, through relentless categorization, objectifies identities on the basis of caste, gender, race, normalcy, sensibility, conformity, uniformity and consumption, to inflict maximum discipline on them and to eradicate any 'monstrous' activities that can doubt the political, social or cultural serenity, expected out of normalized social agents. The socio-political categories thus availing and having maximum access to the power, gradually, outcast the 'others' and use them, both for maximizing the production value and for gaining their consent in favour of continuous suppression through reserving their numbers of participation in the mainstream course of actions.

Bearing incessant reiteration of their congenital, precisely cultural identity, they let themselves ritually marked with it; allowing the ceremonies of exclusion through either of the means of reservation or right-based agitation; favouring the judiciously-determined numbered berths, seemingly secured to cure imbecility, partially; for that any otherwise interpretation is obliterated and if not, then at least regulated. In such conditional obligation to identify any being out of its marked ceremonial identity, preferably representational category, happens to be the sternest task to perform, as the media along with the state machineries technically encapsulate and resurface the space to which it compulsively belongs, reaping out the immediate benefit, in terms of political or other gains.

This paper intends to point out at the representative caste system in India taking the comparison of both of the state sponsored assassination of Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula and the category of the consequential outrage in the media, to locate the intention of the power in discriminating even the subversive voices in the lines of caste. It locates the manufacturing of the mark ‘Dalit PhD Scholar’ with the name of Vemula and the subsequent preparation of his identity approval, through different forms of interrogation, investigation and continuous examination of the slain student leader, as if his caste identity validates his dissidence. It digs into the details of the case as emerged in the media and tries to explore the political necessity of representation through caste that mitigates the vehemence of dissent and substitutes the perennial disgruntlement with caste; for sustainability of its suppressive and propagative instruments.

August 30, 2015, some miscreants guised as students knocked the doors of a veteran literate- his wife, unsuspecting and clueless about the probable massacre allowed them to enter- the goons entered the room where Hindu rituals used to get shot at gun point- certainly the

bullets took a Volta face- the Kannada Erudite breathed his last within moments leaving behind his injunctions stymieing the growth of fundamentalist Hindu sycophants. M.M Kalburgi, the name which has been avowed several times in the recent context of emerging religio-political intolerance, had to put an end to his journey against social menaces, nevertheless, without revealing his caste identity that could have booked him with sympathy, homogenous caste-based solidarity and perhaps, in behest of its media-propagators, with ceremonial caste-consciousness, precisely false-empathy emboldening further negligence and elimination.

Had anybody asked which caste did he belong to? Had his 'VeershaivaLingayat' identity come to the light in midst of the threats he had been encountered with during his 'inciting' speeches against Hindu customs and ritualism? Kalburgi's notions in favour of 12th century 'Vachana' literature that critically opposed and confronted the caste-based society rather took the centre stage of discussions. His assassination further evoked the oppressive and thwarting despotic ideations of the Hindu rabid vowed to scythe down any non-conformist identity. Relentless support in favour of Dr. Ananthmurthy's criticism to the idol worshipping put him into the box of non-compliance which inevitably received the barbs of Hindu fanatics.

The consequential reactions from pan-India intelligentsia though condemned the Government for its reluctance and expressed their fear over the growing socio-political intolerance; the caste discrimination had never been referred to. Rather, any reference to his Lingayat identity would have mitigated the vehemence of the incident. Nevertheless, for time being, if the root cause of the gruesome lynching could be apprehended in terms of the caste-based oppression, the reference to Basava's ideology would definitely be upheld. Kalburgi was even the promulgator of such theosophical

reflex that confronted the basis of Hinduism unravelling several opportunities to the Political authorities to treat his lynching as an outcome of caste-discrimination. As the Lingayat community in no sense belonged to the traditional 'antyaja' (Antyaja literally means 'the last-born'; in the traditional Hindu Caste System it generally refers to the 'untouchable'- the lowest rung of the social ladder) the prominence of caste-based valuation of the assassination perhaps failed to find political berth in the competition of getting electoral benefit out of it.

January 17, 2016- he left the space vacant for the people who are yet to confront the ideological atrocities of rituals and taboos- he made it clear that no Government has the authority to enforce the choice of food- he got himself waded into the debates of the judicial killing of unidentified and mistaken identities- he craved to unravel the clandestine faces of riot-mongers- he tried to propagate Christopher Hitchens' message that 'God Is Not Great'- stunningly, he found himself tied within the realm of controversy of which he was the sturdiest disparager.

Rohith Vemula, the expelled PhD Scholar of University of Hyderabad in a sudden morning became a Dalit student devoid of his rights to be in the same plane with the higher caste associations. The media and the political parties across the ideological line took the bid to establish his Dalit identity surmounting rather overruling his contributions in the movement against the Hindu fundamentalists. The reasons for his expulsion as divulged with the time, in no means, were related to his caste entity rather his actions against the taboos of the Hinduism paved the way of the political fray between Ambedkar Students' Association and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of ruling BJP. His decision to oppose sudden hanging of Yakoob Memon along with his colleagues of ASA awarded him with the tag of anti-nationalist. It irked even the leadership of BJP and

subsequently the ABVP provoked ASA to get into direct physical confrontation.

As the organization arranged 'Beef Mela' and even organized the public screening of Nakul Shawney's controversial documentary '*Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai*' (The 136-minute long sprawling documentary revisits the communal riots that broke out in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh in August and September 2013, preceding the famous BJP victory of 2014), the attacks got sharpened. The mundane provocation from ABVP's leaders acted as an impetus behind the political skirmish among the two leading organizations of the University and smacked off the flows of political intolerance trickling from Amit Shah's deprecating propaganda. A committee had been formed to hold the defaulters culpable of ruining the educational environ of the varsity. However, the reports denied charging anyone for such offense and the situation was found to be far away from being tampered with the supra-political motive of the central leadership.

The Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya in this context appeared as the major motivator of further chaos and addressing the HRD Minister Smriti Irani wrote, "This could be visualised from the fact that when Yakub Memon was hanged, a dominant students union, that is Ambedkar Students Union had held protests against the execution. When Shushil Kumar, president, ABVP, protested against this, he was manhandled and as a result he was admitted in hospital. What is more tragic is that the university administration has become a mute spectator to such events."¹ Even endorsing the fact he termed the ASA leaders as 'Anti-social' and claimed the immediate action from the authority.

1 "Read Minister Bandaru Dattatreya's Letter To Smriti Irani On Hyderabad University". NDTV. 19 January, 2016. Web. 12 July 2016.
<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/read-minister-bandaru-dattatreyas-letter-to-smriti-irani-on-hyderabad-university-1267471>

Consequently, the University following the instructions of the central leadership deployed an investigating committee and announced the expulsion of five ASA members. Not only Rohith, even Prashant, the former President of the Students' Union was named among the expelled students. The ASA members started protesting outside the University and screeched for the freedom of speech and expression. They ardently claimed the immediate action from the authority to revoke the punishment and accused the ruling party's student organization for impeding their campus freedom. In such circumstances, no reference to their Dalit identity had ever been evoked- none had ever mentioned the fact that they were being reinforced to leave the campus and the hostel due to their caste. The situation took the fresh turn with Vemula committing suicide.

The PhD scholar and the ASA leader certainly turned out to be a Dalit scholar. The espouser of the thoughts of Hitchens, who throughout his life condemned any religious practice, posthumously had to bow down in front of the representative identity which he had not even shown during his admission to the varsity. The reports from the Police clarified the fact that Vemula had been selected on the basis of merit and no reservation even paved his way toward his academic excellence. However, even if it was shown, it should have never searched, approved or investigated, as his death, as per the letter he wrote, had rarely any reference to his caste-based identity, through which his media representation was enshrined and gradually cultivated.

Nevertheless, the media came to the fore to discover his caste identity, in a bid to attach the political relevance to the issue. Rahul Gandhi jumped into the well of controversy and visiting the University commented that the actions of the Government transpired their anti-Dalit stance. Bahujan Samajwadi Party, the self-proclaimed messiah of Dalit community sent their delegations and

claimed the immediate revocation of the expulsion notice against the rest of the four students.

The HRD minister Smriti Irani on whose instructions perhaps the University was being reinforced to take the despicable decision of expelling the students, added further boilers to the brewing situation that his Dalit entity should not be considered as the reason for his death. The visit of the chairperson of the National Commission for the Minorities even reinforced the similar narration of caste discrimination. The consequence was apprehensive- Police started working on to excavate his caste identity to frame charges against the accuser- the political parties started upholding his caste for ensuring the vote bank- the professors belonged to SC community in the University resigned from the administrative posts to maintain their relevance in such political symposium- some even were trying to find out the entity of Rohith's father who had left his mother long days ago- the student communities across the country went on screaming for equal rights and justice to Dalit community- the newer statistical data appeared to establish the dreadful condition of these people- moreover the country started brewing to book the persons accused of caste discrimination.

In these brewing political tensions, perhaps, the objectives of Vemula have been forgotten. He never tried to prove his Dalit identity and the organization he belonged to hardly expanded in the Varsity through accommodating only Dalit people. ASA though had commenced on its journey after the stirs regarding Mondal Commission and claimed equality for the students of Dalit community in mid 90s; their stance got changed throughout the last decade. In 2011-12, when ASA triumphed over the election with the support of SFI, they had won over the confidence of the common students not only of the Dalit community.

The transformation of Vemula from a PhD scholar to a Dalit student bears on the intention of the power-structure to put each and every agitator into some box for categorizing the levels of oppression. In the midst of intricate discussions over the caste-battling the original narrative of Rohith's fight had been lost.

The reference to Kalburgi's identity in the initiation of the paper at this juncture seems to be relevant enough as none had questioned his caste when he was brutally lynched. His notions and the philosophy had been discussed and the condemnation of the political intolerance gained momentum. Rohith in his suicide note alleged none for his death and his last letter reflected his scepticism toward the society. The cynical view of Rohith could have been found from his very statement that love is second handed. The departure of human enterprise from the nature made him felt that the people were not ought to suffer much, had there been no cultural obligation to life. His last verses, however, were standing in the verge of absolute loss.

Both of the cases as referred to, clearly indicate the differences of media representations and verify the fact that the absolute commodification of caste identity plays the major role behind exclusion of ground narrations leading the path toward production of meta-narratives and consequentially social myths. Second order signified of the signifier Vemula, abysmally reduces it to 'Dalit identity' that negates the significance of his philosophy and actions. The persisting conflicts between the castes, during such representations are being technically taken into consideration for ensuing further repercussions from the political classes, for deceiving the culpability of the state and obviously for producing easy-to-read substances that have the capacity to delegitimize any alternative uproar. Referring to Clifford Geertz's coinage 'experience-distant' concept(Geertz,57-58), the cultural perception of caste in Indian context though could be comprehensively

understood, the formation of posthumous caste imposition over the subject reflects the ‘experience-near’ attitude of media, that calls for an immediate reaction from the society, on which the stigmatizing intensity of sensitivity or caste-fetishism unavoidably depends. The term caste, thus, itself adds the sense of traditional socio-cultural oppression to the identity and furthers the growth of sympathetic ground which otherwise could have been encountered with the political verses of religion and could have discarded the casteist outrage, that it is expected to emanate.

The elimination of representative caste identity for the development of class struggle thus appears as the immediate way toward the radical emancipation of people against the political orthodoxy, desisting their participation. The conclusive note to this understanding requires the year-old comments of E.M.S. Namboodiripad to be resurfaced for igniting the immediate struggle against the narratives of caste-based recognition overruling their ideological identity and class consciousness-

“One has to realize that the building of India on modern democratic and secular lines requires an uncompromising struggle against the caste-based Hindu society and its culture. There is no question of secular democracy, not to speak of socialism, unless the very citadel of India’s ‘age old’ civilization and culture – the division of society into a hierarchy of castes – is broken. In other words, the struggle for radical democracy and socialism cannot be separated from the struggle against caste society.”²

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bullets took a Volta face- the Kannada Erudite breathed his last within moments leaving behind his injunctions stymieing the growth of fundamentalist Hindu sycophants. M.M Kalburgi, the name which has been avowed several times in the recent context of emerging religio-political intolerance, had to put an end to his journey against social menaces, nevertheless, without revealing his caste identity that could have booked him with sympathy, homogenous caste-based solidarity and perhaps, in behest of its media-propagators, with ceremonial caste-consciousness, precisely false-empathy emboldening further negligence and elimination.

Had anybody asked which caste did he belong to? Had his 'VeershaivaLingayat' identity come to the light in midst of the threats he had been encountered with during his 'inciting' speeches against Hindu customs and ritualism? Kalburgi's notions in favour of 12th century 'Vachana' literature that critically opposed and confronted the caste-based society rather took the centre stage of discussions. His assassination further evoked the oppressive and thwarting despotic ideations of the Hindu rabid vowed to scythe down any non-conformist identity. Relentless support in favour of Dr. Ananthmurthy's criticism to the idol worshipping put him into the box of non-compliance which inevitably received the barbs of Hindu fanatics.

The consequential reactions from pan-India intelligentsia though condemned the Government for its reluctance and expressed their fear over the growing socio-political intolerance; the caste discrimination had never been referred to. Rather, any reference to his Lingayat identity would have mitigated the vehemence of the incident. Nevertheless, for time being, if the root cause of the gruesome lynching could be apprehended in terms of the caste-based oppression, the reference to Basava's ideology would definitely be upheld. Kalburgi was even the promulgator of such theosophical

reflex that confronted the basis of Hinduism unravelling several opportunities to the Political authorities to treat his lynching as an outcome of caste-discrimination. As the Lingayat community in no sense belonged to the traditional ‘antyaja’ (Antyaja literally means ‘the last-born’; in the traditional Hindu Caste System it generally refers to the ‘untouchable’- the lowest rung of the social ladder) the prominence of caste-based valuation of the assassination perhaps failed to find political berth in the competition of getting electoral benefit out of it.

January 17, 2016- he left the space vacant for the people who are yet to confront the ideological atrocities of rituals and taboos- he made it clear that no Government has the authority to enforce the choice of food- he got himself waded into the debates of the judicial killing of unidentified and mistaken identities- he craved to unravel the clandestine faces of riot-mongers- he tried to propagate Christopher Hitchens’ message that ‘God Is Not Great’- stunningly, he found himself tied within the realm of controversy of which he was the sturdiest disparager.

Rohith Vemula, the expelled PhD Scholar of University of Hyderabad in a sudden morning became a Dalit student devoid of his rights to be in the same plane with the higher caste associations. The media and the political parties across the ideological line took the bid to establish his Dalit identity surmounting rather overruling his contributions in the movement against the Hindu fundamentalists. The reasons for his expulsion as divulged with the time, in no means, were related to his caste entity rather his actions against the taboos of the Hinduism paved the way of the political fray between Ambedkar Students’ Association and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of ruling BJP. His decision to oppose sudden hanging of Yakoob Memon along with his colleagues of ASA awarded him with the tag of anti-nationalist. It irked even the leadership of BJP and

subsequently the ABVP provoked ASA to get into direct physical confrontation.

As the organization arranged 'Beef Mela' and even organized the public screening of Nakul Shawney's controversial documentary '*Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai*' (The 136-minute long sprawling documentary revisits the communal riots that broke out in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh in August and September 2013, preceding the famous BJP victory of 2014), the attacks got sharpened. The mundane provocation from ABVP's leaders acted as an impetus behind the political skirmish among the two leading organizations of the University and smacked off the flows of political intolerance trickling from Amit Shah's deprecating propaganda. A committee had been formed to hold the defaulters culpable of ruining the educational environ of the varsity. However, the reports denied charging anyone for such offense and the situation was found to be far away from being tampered with the supra-political motive of the central leadership.

The Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya in this context appeared as the major motivator of further chaos and addressing the HRD Minister Smriti Irani wrote, "This could be visualised from the fact that when Yakub Memon was hanged, a dominant students union, that is Ambedkar Students Union had held protests against the execution. When Shushil Kumar, president, ABVP, protested against this, he was manhandled and as a result he was admitted in hospital. What is more tragic is that the university administration has become a mute spectator to such events."¹ Even endorsing the fact he termed the ASA leaders as 'Anti-social' and claimed the immediate action from the authority.

1 "Read Minister Bandaru Dattatreya's Letter To Smriti Irani On Hyderabad University". NDTV. 19 January, 2016. Web. 12 July 2016.
<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/read-minister-bandaru-dattatreyas-letter-to-smriti-irani-on-hyderabad-university-1267471>

Consequently, the University following the instructions of the central leadership deployed an investigating committee and announced the expulsion of five ASA members. Not only Rohith, even Prashant, the former President of the Students' Union was named among the expelled students. The ASA members started protesting outside the University and screeched for the freedom of speech and expression. They ardently claimed the immediate action from the authority to revoke the punishment and accused the ruling party's student organization for impeding their campus freedom. In such circumstances, no reference to their Dalit identity had ever been evoked- none had ever mentioned the fact that they were being reinforced to leave the campus and the hostel due to their caste. The situation took the fresh turn with Vemula committing suicide.

The PhD scholar and the ASA leader certainly turned out to be a Dalit scholar. The espouser of the thoughts of Hitchens, who throughout his life condemned any religious practice, posthumously had to bow down in front of the representative identity which he had not even shown during his admission to the varsity. The reports from the Police clarified the fact that Vemula had been selected on the basis of merit and no reservation even paved his way toward his academic excellence. However, even if it was shown, it should have never searched, approved or investigated, as his death, as per the letter he wrote, had rarely any reference to his caste-based identity, through which his media representation was enshrined and gradually cultivated.

Nevertheless, the media came to the fore to discover his caste identity, in a bid to attach the political relevance to the issue. Rahul Gandhi jumped into the well of controversy and visiting the University commented that the actions of the Government transpired their anti-Dalit stance. Bahujan Samajwadi Party, the self-proclaimed messiah of Dalit community sent their delegations and

claimed the immediate revocation of the expulsion notice against the rest of the four students.

The HRD minister Smriti Irani on whose instructions perhaps the University was being reinforced to take the despicable decision of expelling the students, added further boilers to the brewing situation that his Dalit entity should not be considered as the reason for his death. The visit of the chairperson of the National Commission for the Minorities even reinforced the similar narration of caste discrimination. The consequence was apprehensive- Police started working on to excavate his caste identity to frame charges against the accuser- the political parties started upholding his caste for ensuring the vote bank- the professors belonged to SC community in the University resigned from the administrative posts to maintain their relevance in such political symposium- some even were trying to find out the entity of Rohith's father who had left his mother long days ago- the student communities across the country went on screaming for equal rights and justice to Dalit community- the newer statistical data appeared to establish the dreadful condition of these people- moreover the country started brewing to book the persons accused of caste discrimination.

In these brewing political tensions, perhaps, the objectives of Vemula have been forgotten. He never tried to prove his Dalit identity and the organization he belonged to hardly expanded in the Varsity through accommodating only Dalit people. ASA though had commenced on its journey after the stirs regarding Mondal Commission and claimed equality for the students of Dalit community in mid 90s; their stance got changed throughout the last decade. In 2011-12, when ASA triumphed over the election with the support of SFI, they had won over the confidence of the common students not only of the Dalit community.

The transformation of Vemula from a PhD scholar to a Dalit student bears on the intention of the power-structure to put each and every agitator into some box for categorizing the levels of oppression. In the midst of intricate discussions over the caste-battling the original narrative of Rohith's fight had been lost.

The reference to Kalburgi's identity in the initiation of the paper at this juncture seems to be relevant enough as none had questioned his caste when he was brutally lynched. His notions and the philosophy had been discussed and the condemnation of the political intolerance gained momentum. Rohith in his suicide note alleged none for his death and his last letter reflected his scepticism toward the society. The cynical view of Rohith could have been found from his very statement that love is second handed. The departure of human enterprise from the nature made him felt that the people were not ought to suffer much, had there been no cultural obligation to life. His last verses, however, were standing in the verge of absolute loss.

Both of the cases as referred to, clearly indicate the differences of media representations and verify the fact that the absolute commodification of caste identity plays the major role behind exclusion of ground narrations leading the path toward production of meta-narratives and consequentially social myths. Second order signified of the signifier Vemula, abysmally reduces it to 'Dalit identity' that negates the significance of his philosophy and actions. The persisting conflicts between the castes, during such representations are being technically taken into consideration for ensuing further repercussions from the political classes, for deceiving the culpability of the state and obviously for producing easy-to-read substances that have the capacity to delegitimize any alternative uproar. Referring to Clifford Geertz's coinage 'experience-distant' concept(Geertz,57-58), the cultural perception of caste in Indian context though could be comprehensively

understood, the formation of posthumous caste imposition over the subject reflects the ‘experience-near’ attitude of media, that calls for an immediate reaction from the society, on which the stigmatizing intensity of sensitivity or caste-fetishism unavoidably depends. The term caste, thus, itself adds the sense of traditional socio-cultural oppression to the identity and furthers the growth of sympathetic ground which otherwise could have been encountered with the political verses of religion and could have discarded the casteist outrage, that it is expected to emanate.

The elimination of representative caste identity for the development of class struggle thus appears as the immediate way toward the radical emancipation of people against the political orthodoxy, desisting their participation. The conclusive note to this understanding requires the year-old comments of E.M.S. Namboodiripad to be resurfaced for igniting the immediate struggle against the narratives of caste-based recognition overruling their ideological identity and class consciousness-

“One has to realize that the building of India on modern democratic and secular lines requires an uncompromising struggle against the caste-based Hindu society and its culture. There is no question of secular democracy, not to speak of socialism, unless the very citadel of India’s ‘age old’ civilization and culture – the division of society into a hierarchy of castes – is broken. In other words, the struggle for radical democracy and socialism cannot be separated from the struggle against caste society.”²

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Cinema, Modernity, Politics of Resistance - Representation of a Possible Society

Soumya Suvra Das

Introduction

My art is a weapon in the struggle for my people's freedom and for the freedom of all people.

- Paul Robeson

Any form of art may be considered as political, as art, like politics, tries to question and the status-quo and transform society. In the recent years with the boom in the media sector, television and media and film industry in particular, has been involved into a cat fight over profit making than ever. In this regard, the concept of airtime, channel rights, worldwide distribution of films has become valuable as each and every second and slot is counted for money. The ferocious competition for audiences between the broadcasters and distributors means that the end credits must be shortened and at the same time various promotions and advertisements have to be shown to make the audience adhere to the television set or return back to the film theatre and treat cinema as a production franchisee. So the demand and manipulation of television air time has been of utmost significance and stakes have become higher as it is scarce in nature. So it stands that time has become scarce, but this scarcity is manufactured not by the audience, but the privatized corporate organizations.

Once there was a time when we could not cope with the scarcities of resources which were once imposed on us by nature. But with the

advent of modernity along with capital that made technology and progress possible to an extent, promised us that the scarcity that we have been suffering throughout our history is about to be resolved. So the modern media, under the strict control of the iron fists of capitalism, puts an abstract value to almost everything, in this case it is time, just like labour in general. Discussions, works and academic works of Marxist scholars reveal this clear yet hidden scenario of the workings of the media and film institutions. It exposes the inherent contradiction and relations of production that it has within its functioning. Media practices and structures, under the one-dimensional production of knowledge and consciousness under capitalism comes in direct microscopic scrutiny not only in terms of academic works, but also comes in the shape of cinematic representations, acting as a resistant force against the coercive, hegemonic and often neo-imperialistic culture. Cinema has been a medium which incorporates the elements which capitalism invests its existence upon: labour, technology and capital which brings about a certain product, the product being an aesthetic one. At the centre of this debate is a possible oxymoron - cinema reiterates the ethics of capitalism in terms of capital and labour on one hand and becoming a resonating part of mass culture, and on the other hand its ideological contradictions with capitalism through its ability to represent images and sound to create a synesthetic effect.

Cinematic Representation – A Problematic Approach

Representation in a modern world is a mysterious thing indeed. Timothy Mitchel argues,

If the presence of modernity occurs only as representation, this representing is not a phenomenon limited to the deliberate methods of making meaning on which accounts

of the modern and the postmodern tend to focus, such as the modern novel, news reporting, museum displays, mass media, or the organization of medical, statistical, and other forms of official knowledge.

Cinema has been both dismissed and eulogised by the world of academia as something dangerous, a form of low-art, hegemonic or an art-form that has unfathomable ability to move people and thereby positing a social change. Cinematic representation comes in five layers – moving image (an extension of still image), graphics, music, noise and dialogues, and hence is often considered to be the most influential medium of communication. Not only for the content it represents or the form in which it comes in terms of unravelling the narrative, the politics of representation of cinema lies in the very fact that it is synesthetic in nature – image, since Renaissance we have known the primacy of the image and its politics of representing the world in terms of realism, and sound that can have enchanting effect on our emotions. Cinema has already been argued as the best form of storytelling process since the evolution of Realism in the form of the novel. Cinematic representation, best envisaged by the Classical Hollywood Cinema, had already adopted this form of storytelling process – a process nurtured by voyeurism or the Peeping Tom effect. As Andre Bazin pointed out in *What Is Cinema*, cinema is the art that has led human society closest to preserving memory and human essence – the mummification of human existence that has transfigured itself through painting, photography and has reached the ultimate destination of capturing reality - through cinema. If Bazin considers this to be one of the best achievements of human society, it can also be argued to be one of the best traps that the industrial world under the iron claw of capitalism has created ever. Key questions arose when the art form of cinema was realised as not a mere representation of moving pictures, but as a tool that can mobilise

people, inculcate ideological stances, break the silence and passivity and emancipate a dream of social change.

These questions, arguments and counter-arguments were beginning to be foregrounded after the Russian Revolution in 1919 when the likes of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovchenko, Kuleshov and Vertov started experimenting in cinematic techniques and ideological ‘fists’ and for the first time in thirty years of cinema’s birth, it began to be taken as something serious and something that has more than entertainment at its disposal. We have to understand the fact that as music, literature, international politics, society and science cannot be limited to a functional aspect that is only to be dealt by the professionals in the respective fields, cinema in the same way was more than an art form and was discussed as a major part of our culture – more significantly as cinema is almost an oxymoron – a capital and labour intensive art more than any other that becomes the part of the culture industry (Hollywood, Hindi Popular Cinema as a couple of instances), and at the same time it can be a resistant art-form that comes as a critique of the bourgeoisie and even become an anecdote of social and political revolution (Latin American Cinema of the 1960s, Post-colonial African cinema, Soviet Constructivist and Montage, Third Cinema to name a few other than some Auteur films of Godard, Ghatak, Antonioni and others).

The key questions that flooded the scholarly articles and discussions were to explore the relationship between cinema and society –the effect of cinema on the audience when cinema was integrated as an important part of the capitalist culture industries¹, the nature of relation between film aesthetics and reproduction of the capitalist social order, revelation of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist

1 Mike Wayne ed., Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

society through cinema, or for that matter how cinema displaces, suppresses and marginalize class. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's seminal work of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1944 tells something that makes us think what cinema's nature really is. The essay discusses about cinema's integration into the capitalist industrial production and consumption and contemplates what film and the common masses share: the labour power of the masses are utilized by the industry for reaping financial profit, while film replays what has been done to the masses during their time of labour.² Adorno was one of the pioneering thinkers of the Frankfurt School, a Neo-Marxist Critical School of Thinking whose concern were to explore the changing nexus of the world in relation to art, ideology and the very politics of representation in its historical context. But Adorno had been the harshest critic of cinema from its outset and the ideological base on which I developed – modernity and capitalism.

The logic of the principle of expression implies the moment of its negation, a negative form of truth that changes love into an inflexible power of protest.³

Nicole Brenez delves deep into Adorno's thoughts about cinema and music. For Adorno, cinema became an emblematic representation of how an art form can become a commodified cultural product representing a means of confiscation, a mode of corruption, a simulacrum and a sort of a formal joke.⁴ Cinema, for its inception from the techniques of recording, has its primary goal as reproduction organized into an industry and hence, as Adorno puts it, becomes a powerful instrument of domination, propaganda and falsification.

2 Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 1944.

3 Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, MIT Press, 1981, Cambridge

4 Nicole Brenez, 'T.W.Adorno: Cinema in spite of Itself – but Cinema all the same', trans. Olivier Delers and Ross Chambers, *Cultural Studies Review*, Volume 13, Number 1, March 2007.

What Adorno spoke about is resonated in Toby Miller's essay 'Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel' where he mentions two dominating film industry models in the world – the first one is the *laissez-faire* (Bollywood, Hong Kong) and *primus inter pares* (Hollywood). The second is *dirigisme* (Western and Southern Europe). In this light, cinema is strictly a mode of economics – the first models generated from the ethics of neo-classical economics where state intervention is prohibited, based on market-model and putting primacy on ideology of pleasure before the nation and stress on export. On the other hand, the second type of model is based on intervention by the state which includes training, funding and distribution, based on mixed-economy model and putting primacy on the ideology of nation before pleasure and stress on import substitution.⁵ These are nothing but 'policing' culture and people in a more political and historical way. As Marx pointed out that it is not possible to create a moral power only on the basis of paragraphs of law, these cultural policies revolving cinema was and is a necessity. Scholar and thinker Jacques Donzelot remarks that these policies regarding a cultural phenomenon like cinema are methods for the development of the population quality and in process to strengthen a nation.⁶ Representation of culture is also seen as a material improvement of the urban life and the middle-class thought and to indoctrinate the working class to value the nation and avoid industrial strife and class-struggle.⁷ It reminds of us of what Mike Wayne's proposition that

The struggle for moral and intellectual leadership in the
sphere of culture is the struggle for hegemony. But it is a

5 Mike Wayne ed., *Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel*, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005

6 Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979),

7 David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998),

struggle and Gramsci's originality lies in his recognition that cultural domination is never simply a top-down process of imposition. Gramsci understood hegemony as a force field of contestation between different groups; a dialogue even, but crucially not a dialogue between equals because capital and the capitalist state have awesomely more resources at their disposal to shape the agenda and implement policies and practical changes.⁸

The policies reflected in the careful cultural reproduction of the most dominant film industry in the world - the Hollywood not only in terms of its business owing to which a lot of indigenous film industries struggle to survive, but also in terms of setting the trend in conventional film making process and its content. A number of Hollywood films have covertly and even blatantly have been representing the ideals of US foreign policy and the great American Dream. A number of films starting from the World War II themes have been strategically representing the US point of view not as their own, but as a universal one. The most prolific instance may be drawn from the film *Independence Day* where the US President is giving a speech saying that the American soldiers must strive to prove that 4th of July is not only the day of American independence but independence day of the entire world. Even if it is not taken seriously, it may be taken as a Freudian slip which is repeated time and again in various films. A little instance may be given from the film *Castaway* where an almost insignificant sequence of the film shows that a group of people are taking off a portrait of Lenin from a building while the camera keeps on tracking to show the protagonist deliver a courier parcel in a Russian town. But films like *Forrest Gump*, *Rambo Part II* and *III*, *Saving Private Ryan* and many more have a hegemonizing

⁸ Mike Wayne ed., *Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

effect on the audience. Representative figure of American individualism is reflected in Forrest Gump and various images from the film is advocated by American society, which can be testified from the scene that Gump is endowed of congress badge. Narratives become strategies to spread the ideas of dominance and portray other contesting ideologies and trends as antagonistic and morally corrupt – the portrayal of the figure in Forrest Gump in the get up of the conventional image of Che Guevara who is representing the student movement, a reminiscent of the anti-establish movement of the 70s generation is not only in bad taste but also the character is portrayed as morally and ethically corrupt. Saving Private Ryan creates a strange kind of American individualism promoting the “White Man’s Burden” of saving one of the fellow soldiers at the cost of an entire battalion. Although this White Man’s Burden is different from what Kipling had to say in the context of colonialism, but this film promotes an American humanism, a kind of humanism that involves war, sacrifice and freedom in the same cauldron, which Wayne terms as the leadership in the sphere of cultural struggle and hegemony.

Benjamin, Brecht and Cinematic Representation

It is true that the cultural logic of capitalism is a dominant one and has a hegemonic presence in the world through its representation in films and Adorno’s criticism of the art form can be argued to be legitimate in the present day global nexus of neo-liberalism. But Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin represents a different response when it comes to locating cinema in the milieu of cultural representations especially in relation to capitalist modernity. There is no contradiction between the views of Adorno on one hand and those of Benjamin and Brecht on the other that mass media is subordinated to capital and world market, but the later’s views saw hope in cinema as a form of resistance. In terms of ideological domination, all the scholars agree

that cinema is just a mere cultural and aesthetic representation of the capitalist modernity, but for Benjamin and technological and artistic potential of this art form can negate the very ideals on which it is created. Technology for the modern mechanical reproduction implied the participation of masses in the cultural life in their own terms. The reverential awe, which Benjamin calls aura, that ontological coded essence into the reception of the traditional art, is being replaced by those which are mechanically reproduced.⁹ These mechanically reproduced art forms are closer to people than the traditional ones; they are to be felt close enough in the everyday spaces and rhythms of the city along with its technological form. Both Benjamin and Brecht embraced this potential of cinema that sought to bring about an unprecedented and unforeseeable change in our perception (Benjamin developed his theory of optical unconscious and Brecht developed his defamiliarisation strategy or the alienation effect). In this regard Wayne describes a sequence from Aranofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* which he perceives as a grand representation of '... an Adornosque view of television and a Benjaminian/Brechtian view of film as a vehicle of critique.'¹⁰ Of both media and our capitalist society:

Sara, strung out on prescription appetite-suppressant drugs, settles down to watch her favourite quiz show, which she hopes one day to be on. She imagines herself in the show as a contestant, her electronic image (and ego ideal) a slimmer, more beautiful version of her real self. But then both her electronic self and the typically smarmy quiz-show host rematerialise in her own working-class apartment, and what seems intimate and comfortable

9 Walter Benjamin, *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1968.

10 Mike Wayne ed., *Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

suddenly becomes intrusive. Sara's ego ideal and the compere begin laughing at the decor while she struggles to explain and justify herself. The quiz-show audience in turn begin to laugh at her while suddenly her home is turned into a television studio set, with people removing her furniture, while cameras, lights and microphones are brought in. As chorus girls dance threateningly around her chair, Sara's electronic self-smooches with the compere. It is a brilliant fantasy sequence, a Benjamin-like optical beam illuminating the contempt in which mass culture holds its consumers, a very Brechtian-like revelation, through defamiliarisation, of the threat and social violence lurking beneath television's technology and seductive razzmatazz aesthetics, and a painful glimpse into the vortex of hidden self-loathing and aching lack of fulfilment which underpins the fantasies promoted by the culture industry.¹¹

The above sequence breaks the hegemonic presence of the media and its naturalized presence in our life with a jarring representation of a crude reality of modern times. The alienating effect that the audience is bound to experience here throws them into reconsideration of what is representation and what is real. The formal aspect of cinema reiterates what Herbert Marcuse in his *One Dimensional Man* had said about art, "The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who have established it) to define what is real ... The aesthetic transformation becomes a vehicle of recognition and indictment."¹²

11 *ibid*

12 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964

Representation, Resistance and Revolution

Out of all the modern art-forms, it was film which accommodated and represented the revolutionary visions as well as the revolutionary spirit of social movements. Cinema imbued the spirit of the revolutionary process and treated the hegemonic representations of the art form in an adverse way, in a way that would challenge the status-quo of the capitalist regimes and mainstream conformist ideologies of class and the way common people are made to perceive reality. This was possible not for the mere fact that the filmmakers believed in the process of revolution, but cinema as an art form had the formal freedom to throw itself into experimentation and debate. Two major revolutions that shaped a major part of world politics – the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and Cuban Revolution of 1959 – saw a rise in new cinematic representations. Not always echoing the views of the revolutionaries, these post-revolution films, although very different from each other, had a claim that cinema had a critical role in “...the promotion of a revolutionary political culture”.¹³ Film became a form of aesthetic resistance to the politically and socially detrimental conditions and became a vehicle of ideological dialogue with the common mass.

Michael Chanan describes cinema as more than entertainment and a means of propaganda – it was an aspiration of authentic art form of the twentieth century which bred a new magnet of contemporary artists.¹⁴ This was the period of time when cinema realised that the art of montage or editing can be taken to a different aesthetic, graphic and ideological level and the very essence of representation would undergo a qualitative change. Inspired from Kabuki theatre and Hieroglyphs, and realizing the philosophy of the Hegelian dialectics

13 Mike Wayne ed., *Cinemas in Revolution: 1920s Russia, 1960s Cuba, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

14 *ibid*

which was reshaped brilliantly by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels into dialectical materialism, Eisenstein, Vertov and other great Soviet pioneers of cinema proved that cinema is more than a spectacle or a story – it can be a statement that can breathe the aspiration, dreams and revolutionary ideas of the people and defy the imposed naturalization of class difference. By the end of the Cuban revolution in 1969, Julio Garcia Espinosa wrote a manifesto called ‘Towards an Imperfect Cinema’, dealt with the art form again, but was starkly different from the Russian formalists. Cuban cinema realised that it should be more than an ideological foregrounding of the filmmakers – rather, it should be a dialogue between certain materialist and philosophical ideas that the society and the individual has to offer, especially in the post-revolution days. Liberation of consciousness became a constant theme for a number of films, but no propagandist or nationalist zeal were ever reflected. The 60s Cuban cinema, like Tomas Alea’s *Memories of Underdevelopment* underpinned the state of a bourgeois pro-revolutionary middleclass man – class, sexuality, individual ideals and social hypocrisy transgressed barriers of political camps to touch the inner most abyss of human sensibilities. It was only in the post Cuban revolution days that the Latin American film makers and intellectuals devised and theorized the ideas of first cinema (mainstream industrially produced films like Hindi Popular Cinema and Hollywood), second cinema (auteur films, art cinema which were mostly independent or outside the mainstream film industry) and third cinema, which has a close relation to the Latin American revolutionary cinema, imperfect cinema and guerrilla cinema, a kind of film making that involves risk, political conviction and is taken as a grand concoction of aesthetics and politics.

Mavericks, Consciousness, Politics and Auteurs

To continue our discussion of guerrilla cinema or cinema of

revolution, it is imperative to refer to Jean Luc Godard, his writings on cinema and his films. In 1950, in an article called 'Towards a Political Cinema' published in *Gazette du Cinema*, Godard contemplated the prospect of revolutionary cinema through certain filmic strategies in terms of its representation. He drew upon Marx's phenomenal work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and art critic Harold Rosenberg's '*The Resurrected Romans*' (1948), to show the potential of cinematic gestures that often represent unconscious repetition and mimesis, through their insinuation to history and culture to gather significant meaning through their spontaneity and passion. In the article Godard compares the structure of a political film with concepts of signification and the linguistic sign. Godard's concern is based on the semiotic analysis of the image to the referent, where the meaning of the cinematic shot is differential rather than innate. What Godard tries to write in his article and even in his films is the question of sign – an attempt to dislocate it from its referent. This is where cinematic expression and questions of signification has a direct relation to historical materialism. Karl Marx observed a stark contrast between the proletariat revolution and bourgeois revolution in terms of their relation to the past – it has been observed that the bourgeois revolution would borrow signs from the past in terms of its imagery and language. This parodied revolutionary trend is distinct from what Marx called the social revolution of the nineteenth century. This revolution, this proletariat revolution does not feel necessary to repeat the past or to aestheticize politics to hide its political content. Social revolution, for Marx, unlike the bourgeois revolution is self-critical, reflective where the past is abandoned, no recourse to myth is performed. This spirit of social revolution, as Godard and others point out, is reflected where the image I independent from its referent implying a modernist disjuncture of the signifier and the signified,

creating a time and space of its own. Auteur cinema, a form of second cinema, as a part of avant-garde film movement has been representing the politics of signification as a political work. Godard often explored the arbitrariness of the sign as a process of cinematic representation which in terms come ‘political modernism’¹⁵. Concerned with contemporary world politics, Godard’s films are more significant their dislocation and disassembly of the bourgeois art and mode of expression that make them political.

While keeping in mind the difference between the linguistic sign and analogical representations, Godard’s film seems capable of dislocating the sign, it typically separates images from the sound track; the narration of a voiceover will be unrelated to the accompanying image the spectator sees: words – in the form of slogans, titles, posters and captions – criticize, interpret and transform images.¹⁶

Godard’s films are political. Jeremy Spencer talks about Godard’s *British Sounds* (1969) analysed the contemporary British capitalism, begins by reconsidering a line from the Manifesto of the Communist Party – ‘In a word, the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image.

Comrades! We must destroy that image! ... Sometimes the class struggle is also the struggle of one image against another image, of one sound against another sound... in a film, this struggle is between images and sounds’. Political films, like Godard’s, Ghatak’s, Latin American Cinema and many others consciously blur the line of distinction between realities with reflections – they put confusion within the filmic image. While bourgeois films try to showcase the reflection of reality, Godard’s concern is to excavate and find out the

15 Jeremy Spencer, *Politics and Aesthetics within Godard’s Cinema, Marxism and Film Activism: Screening Alternative Worlds*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2015

16 *ibid*

reality of that reflection. Resonating Adorno's points, Godard opined that cinema as the most 'economically and culturally enslaved art form, and imperialistic nature is somehow intricately exhibited in cinematic aesthetics. So, making film for Godard is an 'aesthetic struggle'.

Conclusion

Marxism and cinema has another factor common to each other – the courage to envisage as well as envision a future in terms of Utopia - an aspiration of a society where conscience and ideal human conditions will reign over capitalist interests and inequality bred from it. Cinema is illusion, and to a lot of people, so as the socialist dream. It should be noted that Marx himself did not rely on the concept of Utopia, as he thought that utopic thought might represent a divergence from the revolutionary materiality and would embark people on imaginary satisfactions.¹⁷ Marx's always stressed on the practical aspect of thought in order to resist the capitalist machinery. But later neo-Marxists like Marcuse and Jameson believed that the conditions of existence and the state of capitalism has changed. To them, it is rather the practical thinking of the capitalist system that gives it the strength to transfigure and transform its own opposition into its own image. As Jameson puts, much contrary to what Marx had to say, that it is the utopia that "...keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one."¹⁸ Walter Benjamin in his seminal work of *The Arcade Project* feels that however utopian the political significance of a film be, a time will come when films which are closer to them will win people's hearts. He acknowledges that fact that finding an art form that would encompass the best conscience in

17 Adam Roberts, Frederic Jameson, Routledge, London, New Work, 2000.

18 ibid

the world.¹⁹ In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon speaks on political education – the openness of the mind, its awakening, and nurturing of intelligence. Politically educating the mass does not mean that they will be made conscious through political speeches and information, but it is make a relentless effort to teach the masses passionately that “...everything depends on them.”²⁰ Political consciousness reverberates the power of the masses to resist to the atrocities hurled at them. Cinema becomes a vehicle and a medium of prevocational thoughts, a stream of audio-visual consciousness that empowers the mass to negate as well to navigate into the depths of modern life.

19 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcade Project*, Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1999.

20 Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963.

Caste Representation as a Tool of Elimination: Identifying unbridled Caste-Fetishism of Indian Media through the comparative case studies of M M Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula

Abhik Bhattacharya

Representation, if assessed in Foucauldian perspective that calls for the production of knowledge in discursive space, that refers to the historical context for the development and understanding of the meaning; identifies abnormal man, dangerous man and several different anomalous category, (Bannet102) as propounded by Professor John Fiske; purportedly creating social boxes for ensuring oppression and discrimination (Fiske 53). Society in this manner, through relentless categorization, objectifies identities on the basis of caste, gender, race, normalcy, sensibility, conformity, uniformity and consumption, to inflict maximum discipline on them and to eradicate any 'monstrous' activities that can doubt the political, social or cultural serenity, expected out of normalized social agents. The socio-political categories thus availing and having maximum access to the power, gradually, outcast the 'others' and use them, both for maximizing the production value and for gaining their consent in favour of continuous suppression through reserving their numbers of participation in the mainstream course of actions.

Bearing incessant reiteration of their congenital, precisely cultural identity, they let themselves ritually marked with it; allowing the ceremonies of exclusion through either of the means of reservation or right-based agitation; favouring the judiciously-determined numbered berths, seemingly secured to cure imbecility, partially; for that any otherwise interpretation is obliterated and if not, then at least regulated. In such conditional obligation to identify any being out of its marked ceremonial identity, preferably representational category, happens to be the sternest task to perform, as the media along with the state machineries technically encapsulate and resurface the space to which it compulsively belongs, reaping out the immediate benefit, in terms of political or other gains.

This paper intends to point out at the representative caste system in India taking the comparison of both of the state sponsored assassination of Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula and the category of the consequential outrage in the media, to locate the intention of the power in discriminating even the subversive voices in the lines of caste. It locates the manufacturing of the mark ‘Dalit PhD Scholar’ with the name of Vemula and the subsequent preparation of his identity approval, through different forms of interrogation, investigation and continuous examination of the slain student leader, as if his caste identity validates his dissidence. It digs into the details of the case as emerged in the media and tries to explore the political necessity of representation through caste that mitigates the vehemence of dissent and substitutes the perennial disgruntlement with caste; for sustainability of its suppressive and propagative instruments.

August 30, 2015, some miscreants guised as students knocked the doors of a veteran literate- his wife, unsuspecting and clueless about the probable massacre allowed them to enter- the goons entered the room where Hindu rituals used to get shot at gun point- certainly the

bullets took a Volta face- the Kannada Erudite breathed his last within moments leaving behind his injunctions stymieing the growth of fundamentalist Hindu sycophants. M.M Kalburgi, the name which has been avowed several times in the recent context of emerging religio-political intolerance, had to put an end to his journey against social menaces, nevertheless, without revealing his caste identity that could have booked him with sympathy, homogenous caste-based solidarity and perhaps, in behest of its media-propagators, with ceremonial caste-consciousness, precisely false-empathy emboldening further negligence and elimination.

Had anybody asked which caste did he belong to? Had his 'VeershaivaLingayat' identity come to the light in midst of the threats he had been encountered with during his 'inciting' speeches against Hindu customs and ritualism? Kalburgi's notions in favour of 12th century 'Vachana' literature that critically opposed and confronted the caste-based society rather took the centre stage of discussions. His assassination further evoked the oppressive and thwarting despotic ideations of the Hindu rabid vowed to scythe down any non-conformist identity. Relentless support in favour of Dr. Ananthmurthy's criticism to the idol worshipping put him into the box of non-compliance which inevitably received the barbs of Hindu fanatics.

The consequential reactions from pan-India intelligentsia though condemned the Government for its reluctance and expressed their fear over the growing socio-political intolerance; the caste discrimination had never been referred to. Rather, any reference to his Lingayat identity would have mitigated the vehemence of the incident. Nevertheless, for time being, if the root cause of the gruesome lynching could be apprehended in terms of the caste-based oppression, the reference to Basava's ideology would definitely be upheld. Kalburgi was even the promulgator of such theosophical

reflex that confronted the basis of Hinduism unravelling several opportunities to the Political authorities to treat his lynching as an outcome of caste-discrimination. As the Lingayat community in no sense belonged to the traditional ‘antyaja’ (Antyaja literally means ‘the last-born’; in the traditional Hindu Caste System it generally refers to the ‘untouchable’- the lowest rung of the social ladder) the prominence of caste-based valuation of the assassination perhaps failed to find political berth in the competition of getting electoral benefit out of it.

January 17, 2016- he left the space vacant for the people who are yet to confront the ideological atrocities of rituals and taboos- he made it clear that no Government has the authority to enforce the choice of food- he got himself waded into the debates of the judicial killing of unidentified and mistaken identities- he craved to unravel the clandestine faces of riot-mongers- he tried to propagate Christopher Hitchens’ message that ‘God Is Not Great’- stunningly, he found himself tied within the realm of controversy of which he was the sturdiest disparager.

Rohith Vemula, the expelled PhD Scholar of University of Hyderabad in a sudden morning became a Dalit student devoid of his rights to be in the same plane with the higher caste associations. The media and the political parties across the ideological line took the bid to establish his Dalit identity surmounting rather overruling his contributions in the movement against the Hindu fundamentalists. The reasons for his expulsion as divulged with the time, in no means, were related to his caste entity rather his actions against the taboos of the Hinduism paved the way of the political fray between Ambedkar Students’ Association and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of ruling BJP. His decision to oppose sudden hanging of Yakoob Memon along with his colleagues of ASA awarded him with the tag of anti-nationalist. It irked even the leadership of BJP and

subsequently the ABVP provoked ASA to get into direct physical confrontation.

As the organization arranged 'Beef Mela' and even organized the public screening of Nakul Shawney's controversial documentary '*Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai*' (The 136-minute long sprawling documentary revisits the communal riots that broke out in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh in August and September 2013, preceding the famous BJP victory of 2014), the attacks got sharpened. The mundane provocation from ABVP's leaders acted as an impetus behind the political skirmish among the two leading organizations of the University and smacked off the flows of political intolerance trickling from Amit Shah's deprecating propaganda. A committee had been formed to hold the defaulters culpable of ruining the educational environ of the varsity. However, the reports denied charging anyone for such offense and the situation was found to be far away from being tampered with the supra-political motive of the central leadership.

The Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya in this context appeared as the major motivator of further chaos and addressing the HRD Minister Smriti Irani wrote, "This could be visualised from the fact that when Yakub Memon was hanged, a dominant students union, that is Ambedkar Students Union had held protests against the execution. When Shushil Kumar, president, ABVP, protested against this, he was manhandled and as a result he was admitted in hospital. What is more tragic is that the university administration has become a mute spectator to such events."¹ Even endorsing the fact he termed the ASA leaders as 'Anti-social' and claimed the immediate action from the authority.

1 "Read Minister Bandaru Dattatreya's Letter To Smriti Irani On Hyderabad University". NDTV. 19 January, 2016. Web. 12 July 2016.
<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/read-minister-bandaru-dattatreyas-letter-to-smriti-irani-on-hyderabad-university-1267471>

Consequently, the University following the instructions of the central leadership deployed an investigating committee and announced the expulsion of five ASA members. Not only Rohith, even Prashant, the former President of the Students' Union was named among the expelled students. The ASA members started protesting outside the University and screeched for the freedom of speech and expression. They ardently claimed the immediate action from the authority to revoke the punishment and accused the ruling party's student organization for impeding their campus freedom. In such circumstances, no reference to their Dalit identity had ever been evoked- none had ever mentioned the fact that they were being reinforced to leave the campus and the hostel due to their caste. The situation took the fresh turn with Vemula committing suicide.

The PhD scholar and the ASA leader certainly turned out to be a Dalit scholar. The espouser of the thoughts of Hitchens, who throughout his life condemned any religious practice, posthumously had to bow down in front of the representative identity which he had not even shown during his admission to the varsity. The reports from the Police clarified the fact that Vemula had been selected on the basis of merit and no reservation even paved his way toward his academic excellence. However, even if it was shown, it should have never searched, approved or investigated, as his death, as per the letter he wrote, had rarely any reference to his caste-based identity, through which his media representation was enshrined and gradually cultivated.

Nevertheless, the media came to the fore to discover his caste identity, in a bid to attach the political relevance to the issue. Rahul Gandhi jumped into the well of controversy and visiting the University commented that the actions of the Government transpired their anti-Dalit stance. Bahujan Samajwadi Party, the self-proclaimed messiah of Dalit community sent their delegations and

claimed the immediate revocation of the expulsion notice against the rest of the four students.

The HRD minister Smriti Irani on whose instructions perhaps the University was being reinforced to take the despicable decision of expelling the students, added further boilers to the brewing situation that his Dalit entity should not be considered as the reason for his death. The visit of the chairperson of the National Commission for the Minorities even reinforced the similar narration of caste discrimination. The consequence was apprehensive- Police started working on to excavate his caste identity to frame charges against the accuser- the political parties started upholding his caste for ensuring the vote bank- the professors belonged to SC community in the University resigned from the administrative posts to maintain their relevance in such political symposium- some even were trying to find out the entity of Rohith's father who had left his mother long days ago- the student communities across the country went on screaming for equal rights and justice to Dalit community- the newer statistical data appeared to establish the dreadful condition of these people- moreover the country started brewing to book the persons accused of caste discrimination.

In these brewing political tensions, perhaps, the objectives of Vemula have been forgotten. He never tried to prove his Dalit identity and the organization he belonged to hardly expanded in the Varsity through accommodating only Dalit people. ASA though had commenced on its journey after the stirs regarding Mondal Commission and claimed equality for the students of Dalit community in mid 90s; their stance got changed throughout the last decade. In 2011-12, when ASA triumphed over the election with the support of SFI, they had won over the confidence of the common students not only of the Dalit community.

The transformation of Vemula from a PhD scholar to a Dalit student bears on the intention of the power-structure to put each and every agitator into some box for categorizing the levels of oppression. In the midst of intricate discussions over the caste-battling the original narrative of Rohith's fight had been lost.

The reference to Kalburgi's identity in the initiation of the paper at this juncture seems to be relevant enough as none had questioned his caste when he was brutally lynched. His notions and the philosophy had been discussed and the condemnation of the political intolerance gained momentum. Rohith in his suicide note alleged none for his death and his last letter reflected his scepticism toward the society. The cynical view of Rohith could have been found from his very statement that love is second handed. The departure of human enterprise from the nature made him felt that the people were not ought to suffer much, had there been no cultural obligation to life. His last verses, however, were standing in the verge of absolute loss.

Both of the cases as referred to, clearly indicate the differences of media representations and verify the fact that the absolute commodification of caste identity plays the major role behind exclusion of ground narrations leading the path toward production of meta-narratives and consequentially social myths. Second order signified of the signifier Vemula, abysmally reduces it to 'Dalit identity' that negates the significance of his philosophy and actions. The persisting conflicts between the castes, during such representations are being technically taken into consideration for ensuing further repercussions from the political classes, for deceiving the culpability of the state and obviously for producing easy-to-read substances that have the capacity to delegitimize any alternative uproar. Referring to Clifford Geertz's coinage 'experience-distant' concept(Geertz,57-58), the cultural perception of caste in Indian context though could be comprehensively

understood, the formation of posthumous caste imposition over the subject reflects the ‘experience-near’ attitude of media, that calls for an immediate reaction from the society, on which the stigmatizing intensity of sensitivity or caste-fetishism unavoidably depends. The term caste, thus, itself adds the sense of traditional socio-cultural oppression to the identity and furthers the growth of sympathetic ground which otherwise could have been encountered with the political verses of religion and could have discarded the casteist outrage, that it is expected to emanate.

The elimination of representative caste identity for the development of class struggle thus appears as the immediate way toward the radical emancipation of people against the political orthodoxy, desisting their participation. The conclusive note to this understanding requires the year-old comments of E.M.S. Namboodiripad to be resurfaced for igniting the immediate struggle against the narratives of caste-based recognition overruling their ideological identity and class consciousness-

“One has to realize that the building of India on modern democratic and secular lines requires an uncompromising struggle against the caste-based Hindu society and its culture. There is no question of secular democracy, not to speak of socialism, unless the very citadel of India’s ‘age old’ civilization and culture – the division of society into a hierarchy of castes – is broken. In other words, the struggle for radical democracy and socialism cannot be separated from the struggle against caste society.”²

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Cinema, Modernity, Politics of Resistance - Representation of a Possible Society

Soumya Suvra Das

Introduction

My art is a weapon in the struggle for my people's freedom and for the freedom of all people.

- Paul Robeson

Any form of art may be considered as political, as art, like politics, tries to question and the status-quo and transform society. In the recent years with the boom in the media sector, television and media and film industry in particular, has been involved into a cat fight over profit making than ever. In this regard, the concept of airtime, channel rights, worldwide distribution of films has become valuable as each and every second and slot is counted for money. The ferocious competition for audiences between the broadcasters and distributors means that the end credits must be shortened and at the same time various promotions and advertisements have to be shown to make the audience adhere to the television set or return back to the film theatre and treat cinema as a production franchisee. So the demand and manipulation of television air time has been of utmost significance and stakes have become higher as it is scarce in nature. So it stands that time has become scarce, but this scarcity is manufactured not by the audience, but the privatized corporate organizations.

Once there was a time when we could not cope with the scarcities of resources which were once imposed on us by nature. But with the

advent of modernity along with capital that made technology and progress possible to an extent, promised us that the scarcity that we have been suffering throughout our history is about to be resolved. So the modern media, under the strict control of the iron fists of capitalism, puts an abstract value to almost everything, in this case it is time, just like labour in general. Discussions, works and academic works of Marxist scholars reveal this clear yet hidden scenario of the workings of the media and film institutions. It exposes the inherent contradiction and relations of production that it has within its functioning. Media practices and structures, under the one-dimensional production of knowledge and consciousness under capitalism comes in direct microscopic scrutiny not only in terms of academic works, but also comes in the shape of cinematic representations, acting as a resistant force against the coercive, hegemonic and often neo-imperialistic culture. Cinema has been a medium which incorporates the elements which capitalism invests its existence upon: labour, technology and capital which brings about a certain product, the product being an aesthetic one. At the centre of this debate is a possible oxymoron - cinema reiterates the ethics of capitalism in terms of capital and labour on one hand and becoming a resonating part of mass culture, and on the other hand its ideological contradictions with capitalism through its ability to represent images and sound to create a synesthetic effect.

Cinematic Representation – A Problematic Approach

Representation in a modern world is a mysterious thing indeed. Timothy Mitchel argues,

If the presence of modernity occurs only as representation, this representing is not a phenomenon limited to the deliberate methods of making meaning on which accounts

of the modern and the postmodern tend to focus, such as the modern novel, news reporting, museum displays, mass media, or the organization of medical, statistical, and other forms of official knowledge.

Cinema has been both dismissed and eulogised by the world of academia as something dangerous, a form of low-art, hegemonic or an art-form that has unfathomable ability to move people and thereby positing a social change. Cinematic representation comes in five layers – moving image (an extension of still image), graphics, music, noise and dialogues, and hence is often considered to be the most influential medium of communication. Not only for the content it represents or the form in which it comes in terms of unravelling the narrative, the politics of representation of cinema lies in the very fact that it is synesthetic in nature – image, since Renaissance we have known the primacy of the image and its politics of representing the world in terms of realism, and sound that can have enchanting effect on our emotions. Cinema has already been argued as the best form of storytelling process since the evolution of Realism in the form of the novel. Cinematic representation, best envisaged by the Classical Hollywood Cinema, had already adopted this form of storytelling process – a process nurtured by voyeurism or the Peeping Tom effect. As Andre Bazin pointed out in *What Is Cinema*, cinema is the art that has led human society closest to preserving memory and human essence – the mummification of human existence that has transfigured itself through painting, photography and has reached the ultimate destination of capturing reality - through cinema. If Bazin considers this to be one of the best achievements of human society, it can also be argued to be one of the best traps that the industrial world under the iron claw of capitalism has created ever. Key questions arose when the art form of cinema was realised as not a mere representation of moving pictures, but as a tool that can mobilise

people, inculcate ideological stances, break the silence and passivity and emancipate a dream of social change.

These questions, arguments and counter-arguments were beginning to be foregrounded after the Russian Revolution in 1919 when the likes of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovchenko, Kuleshov and Vertov started experimenting in cinematic techniques and ideological ‘fists’ and for the first time in thirty years of cinema’s birth, it began to be taken as something serious and something that has more than entertainment at its disposal. We have to understand the fact that as music, literature, international politics, society and science cannot be limited to a functional aspect that is only to be dealt by the professionals in the respective fields, cinema in the same way was more than an art form and was discussed as a major part of our culture – more significantly as cinema is almost an oxymoron – a capital and labour intensive art more than any other that becomes the part of the culture industry (Hollywood, Hindi Popular Cinema as a couple of instances), and at the same time it can be a resistant art-form that comes as a critique of the bourgeoisie and even become an anecdote of social and political revolution (Latin American Cinema of the 1960s, Post-colonial African cinema, Soviet Constructivist and Montage, Third Cinema to name a few other than some Auteur films of Godard, Ghatak, Antonioni and others).

The key questions that flooded the scholarly articles and discussions were to explore the relationship between cinema and society –the effect of cinema on the audience when cinema was integrated as an important part of the capitalist culture industries¹, the nature of relation between film aesthetics and reproduction of the capitalist social order, revelation of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist

1 Mike Wayne ed., Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

society through cinema, or for that matter how cinema displaces, suppresses and marginalize class. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's seminal work of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1944 tells something that makes us think what cinema's nature really is. The essay discusses about cinema's integration into the capitalist industrial production and consumption and contemplates what film and the common masses share: the labour power of the masses are utilized by the industry for reaping financial profit, while film replays what has been done to the masses during their time of labour.² Adorno was one of the pioneering thinkers of the Frankfurt School, a Neo-Marxist Critical School of Thinking whose concern were to explore the changing nexus of the world in relation to art, ideology and the very politics of representation in its historical context. But Adorno had been the harshest critic of cinema from its outset and the ideological base on which I developed – modernity and capitalism.

The logic of the principle of expression implies the moment of its negation, a negative form of truth that changes love into an inflexible power of protest.³

Nicole Brenez delves deep into Adorno's thoughts about cinema and music. For Adorno, cinema became an emblematic representation of how an art form can become a commodified cultural product representing a means of confiscation, a mode of corruption, a simulacrum and a sort of a formal joke.⁴ Cinema, for its inception from the techniques of recording, has its primary goal as reproduction organized into an industry and hence, as Adorno puts it, becomes a powerful instrument of domination, propaganda and falsification.

2 Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 1944.

3 Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, MIT Press, 1981, Cambridge

4 Nicole Brenez, 'T.W.Adorno: Cinema in spite of Itself – but Cinema all the same', trans. Olivier Delers and Ross Chambers, *Cultural Studies Review*, Volume 13, Number 1, March 2007.

What Adorno spoke about is resonated in Toby Miller's essay 'Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel' where he mentions two dominating film industry models in the world – the first one is the *laissez-faire* (Bollywood, Hong Kong) and *primus inter pares* (Hollywood). The second is *dirigisme* (Western and Southern Europe). In this light, cinema is strictly a mode of economics – the first models generated from the ethics of neo-classical economics where state intervention is prohibited, based on market-model and putting primacy on ideology of pleasure before the nation and stress on export. On the other hand, the second type of model is based on intervention by the state which includes training, funding and distribution, based on mixed-economy model and putting primacy on the ideology of nation before pleasure and stress on import substitution.⁵ These are nothing but 'policing' culture and people in a more political and historical way. As Marx pointed out that it is not possible to create a moral power only on the basis of paragraphs of law, these cultural policies revolving cinema was and is a necessity. Scholar and thinker Jacques Donzelot remarks that these policies regarding a cultural phenomenon like cinema are methods for the development of the population quality and in process to strengthen a nation.⁶ Representation of culture is also seen as a material improvement of the urban life and the middle-class thought and to indoctrinate the working class to value the nation and avoid industrial strife and class-struggle.⁷ It reminds of us of what Mike Wayne's proposition that

The struggle for moral and intellectual leadership in the
sphere of culture is the struggle for hegemony. But it is a

5 Mike Wayne ed., *Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

6 Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979),

7 David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998),

struggle and Gramsci's originality lies in his recognition that cultural domination is never simply a top-down process of imposition. Gramsci understood hegemony as a force field of contestation between different groups; a dialogue even, but crucially not a dialogue between equals because capital and the capitalist state have awesomely more resources at their disposal to shape the agenda and implement policies and practical changes.⁸

The policies reflected in the careful cultural reproduction of the most dominant film industry in the world - the Hollywood not only in terms of its business owing to which a lot of indigenous film industries struggle to survive, but also in terms of setting the trend in conventional film making process and its content. A number of Hollywood films have covertly and even blatantly have been representing the ideals of US foreign policy and the great American Dream. A number of films starting from the World War II themes have been strategically representing the US point of view not as their own, but as a universal one. The most prolific instance may be drawn from the film *Independence Day* where the US President is giving a speech saying that the American soldiers must strive to prove that 4th of July is not only the day of American independence but independence day of the entire world. Even if it is not taken seriously, it may be taken as a Freudian slip which is repeated time and again in various films. A little instance may be given from the film *Castaway* where an almost insignificant sequence of the film shows that a group of people are taking off a portrait of Lenin from a building while the camera keeps on tracking to show the protagonist deliver a courier parcel in a Russian town. But films like *Forrest Gump*, *Rambo Part II* and *III*, *Saving Private Ryan* and many more have a hegemonizing

⁸ Mike Wayne ed., *Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

effect on the audience. Representative figure of American individualism is reflected in Forrest Gump and various images from the film is advocated by American society, which can be testified from the scene that Gump is endowed of congress badge. Narratives become strategies to spread the ideas of dominance and portray other contesting ideologies and trends as antagonistic and morally corrupt – the portrayal of the figure in Forrest Gump in the get up of the conventional image of Che Guevara who is representing the student movement, a reminiscent of the anti-establish movement of the 70s generation is not only in bad taste but also the character is portrayed as morally and ethically corrupt. Saving Private Ryan creates a strange kind of American individualism promoting the “White Man’s Burden” of saving one of the fellow soldiers at the cost of an entire battalion. Although this White Man’s Burden is different from what Kipling had to say in the context of colonialism, but this film promotes an American humanism, a kind of humanism that involves war, sacrifice and freedom in the same cauldron, which Wayne terms as the leadership in the sphere of cultural struggle and hegemony.

Benjamin, Brecht and Cinematic Representation

It is true that the cultural logic of capitalism is a dominant one and has a hegemonic presence in the world through its representation in films and Adorno’s criticism of the art form can be argued to be legitimate in the present day global nexus of neo-liberalism. But Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin represents a different response when it comes to locating cinema in the milieu of cultural representations especially in relation to capitalist modernity. There is no contradiction between the views of Adorno on one hand and those of Benjamin and Brecht on the other that mass media is subordinated to capital and world market, but the later’s views saw hope in cinema as a form of resistance. In terms of ideological domination, all the scholars agree

that cinema is just a mere cultural and aesthetic representation of the capitalist modernity, but for Benjamin and technological and artistic potential of this art form can negate the very ideals on which it is created. Technology for the modern mechanical reproduction implied the participation of masses in the cultural life in their own terms. The reverential awe, which Benjamin calls aura, that ontological coded essence into the reception of the traditional art, is being replaced by those which are mechanically reproduced.⁹ These mechanically reproduced art forms are closer to people than the traditional ones; they are to be felt close enough in the everyday spaces and rhythms of the city along with its technological form. Both Benjamin and Brecht embraced this potential of cinema that sought to bring about an unprecedented and unforeseeable change in our perception (Benjamin developed his theory of optical unconscious and Brecht developed his defamiliarisation strategy or the alienation effect). In this regard Wayne describes a sequence from Aranofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* which he perceives as a grand representation of '... an Adornosque view of television and a Benjaminian/Brechtian view of film as a vehicle of critique.'¹⁰ Of both media and our capitalist society:

Sara, strung out on prescription appetite-suppressant drugs, settles down to watch her favourite quiz show, which she hopes one day to be on. She imagines herself in the show as a contestant, her electronic image (and ego ideal) a slimmer, more beautiful version of her real self. But then both her electronic self and the typically smarmy quiz-show host rematerialise in her own working-class apartment, and what seems intimate and comfortable

9 Walter Benjamin, *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1968.

10 Mike Wayne ed., *Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

suddenly becomes intrusive. Sara's ego ideal and the compere begin laughing at the decor while she struggles to explain and justify herself. The quiz-show audience in turn begin to laugh at her while suddenly her home is turned into a television studio set, with people removing her furniture, while cameras, lights and microphones are brought in. As chorus girls dance threateningly around her chair, Sara's electronic self-smooches with the compere. It is a brilliant fantasy sequence, a Benjamin-like optical beam illuminating the contempt in which mass culture holds its consumers, a very Brechtian-like revelation, through defamiliarisation, of the threat and social violence lurking beneath television's technology and seductive razzmatazz aesthetics, and a painful glimpse into the vortex of hidden self-loathing and aching lack of fulfilment which underpins the fantasies promoted by the culture industry.¹¹

The above sequence breaks the hegemonic presence of the media and its naturalized presence in our life with a jarring representation of a crude reality of modern times. The alienating effect that the audience is bound to experience here throws them into reconsideration of what is representation and what is real. The formal aspect of cinema reiterates what Herbert Marcuse in his *One Dimensional Man* had said about art, "The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who have established it) to define what is real ... The aesthetic transformation becomes a vehicle of recognition and indictment."¹²

11 *ibid*

12 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964

Representation, Resistance and Revolution

Out of all the modern art-forms, it was film which accommodated and represented the revolutionary visions as well as the revolutionary spirit of social movements. Cinema imbued the spirit of the revolutionary process and treated the hegemonic representations of the art form in an adverse way, in a way that would challenge the status-quo of the capitalist regimes and mainstream conformist ideologies of class and the way common people are made to perceive reality. This was possible not for the mere fact that the filmmakers believed in the process of revolution, but cinema as an art form had the formal freedom to throw itself into experimentation and debate. Two major revolutions that shaped a major part of world politics – the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and Cuban Revolution of 1959 – saw a rise in new cinematic representations. Not always echoing the views of the revolutionaries, these post-revolution films, although very different from each other, had a claim that cinema had a critical role in “...the promotion of a revolutionary political culture”.¹³ Film became a form of aesthetic resistance to the politically and socially detrimental conditions and became a vehicle of ideological dialogue with the common mass.

Michael Chanan describes cinema as more than entertainment and a means of propaganda – it was an aspiration of authentic art form of the twentieth century which bred a new magnet of contemporary artists.¹⁴ This was the period of time when cinema realised that the art of montage or editing can be taken to a different aesthetic, graphic and ideological level and the very essence of representation would undergo a qualitative change. Inspired from Kabuki theatre and Hieroglyphs, and realizing the philosophy of the Hegelian dialectics

13 Mike Wayne ed., *Cinemas in Revolution: 1920s Russia, 1960s Cuba, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

14 *ibid*

which was reshaped brilliantly by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels into dialectical materialism, Eisenstein, Vertov and other great Soviet pioneers of cinema proved that cinema is more than a spectacle or a story – it can be a statement that can breathe the aspiration, dreams and revolutionary ideas of the people and defy the imposed naturalization of class difference. By the end of the Cuban revolution in 1969, Julio Garcia Espinosa wrote a manifesto called ‘Towards an Imperfect Cinema’, dealt with the art form again, but was starkly different from the Russian formalists. Cuban cinema realised that it should be more than an ideological foregrounding of the filmmakers – rather, it should be a dialogue between certain materialist and philosophical ideas that the society and the individual has to offer, especially in the post-revolution days. Liberation of consciousness became a constant theme for a number of films, but no propagandist or nationalist zeal were ever reflected. The 60s Cuban cinema, like Tomas Alea’s *Memories of Underdevelopment* underpinned the state of a bourgeois pro-revolutionary middleclass man – class, sexuality, individual ideals and social hypocrisy transgressed barriers of political camps to touch the inner most abyss of human sensibilities. It was only in the post Cuban revolution days that the Latin American film makers and intellectuals devised and theorized the ideas of first cinema (mainstream industrially produced films like Hindi Popular Cinema and Hollywood), second cinema (auteur films, art cinema which were mostly independent or outside the mainstream film industry) and third cinema, which has a close relation to the Latin American revolutionary cinema, imperfect cinema and guerrilla cinema, a kind of film making that involves risk, political conviction and is taken as a grand concoction of aesthetics and politics.

Mavericks, Consciousness, Politics and Auteurs

To continue our discussion of guerrilla cinema or cinema of

revolution, it is imperative to refer to Jean Luc Godard, his writings on cinema and his films. In 1950, in an article called 'Towards a Political Cinema' published in *Gazette du Cinema*, Godard contemplated the prospect of revolutionary cinema through certain filmic strategies in terms of its representation. He drew upon Marx's phenomenal work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and art critic Harold Rosenberg's '*The Resurrected Romans*' (1948), to show the potential of cinematic gestures that often represent unconscious repetition and mimesis, through their insinuation to history and culture to gather significant meaning through their spontaneity and passion. In the article Godard compares the structure of a political film with concepts of signification and the linguistic sign. Godard's concern is based on the semiotic analysis of the image to the referent, where the meaning of the cinematic shot is differential rather than innate. What Godard tries to write in his article and even in his films is the question of sign – an attempt to dislocate it from its referent. This is where cinematic expression and questions of signification has a direct relation to historical materialism. Karl Marx observed a stark contrast between the proletariat revolution and bourgeois revolution in terms of their relation to the past – it has been observed that the bourgeois revolution would borrow signs from the past in terms of its imagery and language. This parodied revolutionary trend is distinct from what Marx called the social revolution of the nineteenth century. This revolution, this proletariat revolution does not feel necessary to repeat the past or to aestheticize politics to hide its political content. Social revolution, for Marx, unlike the bourgeois revolution is self-critical, reflective where the past is abandoned, no recourse to myth is performed. This spirit of social revolution, as Godard and others point out, is reflected where the image I independent from its referent implying a modernist disjuncture of the signifier and the signified,

creating a time and space of its own. Auteur cinema, a form of second cinema, as a part of avant-garde film movement has been representing the politics of signification as a political work. Godard often explored the arbitrariness of the sign as a process of cinematic representation which in terms come ‘political modernism’¹⁵. Concerned with contemporary world politics, Godard’s films are more significant their dislocation and disassembly of the bourgeois art and mode of expression that make them political.

While keeping in mind the difference between the linguistic sign and analogical representations, Godard’s film seems capable of dislocating the sign, it typically separates images from the sound track; the narration of a voiceover will be unrelated to the accompanying image the spectator sees: words – in the form of slogans, titles, posters and captions – criticize, interpret and transform images.¹⁶

Godard’s films are political. Jeremy Spencer talks about Godard’s *British Sounds* (1969) analysed the contemporary British capitalism, begins by reconsidering a line from the Manifesto of the Communist Party – ‘In a word, the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image.

Comrades! We must destroy that image! ... Sometimes the class struggle is also the struggle of one image against another image, of one sound against another sound... in a film, this struggle is between images and sounds’. Political films, like Godard’s, Ghatak’s, Latin American Cinema and many others consciously blur the line of distinction between realities with reflections – they put confusion within the filmic image. While bourgeois films try to showcase the reflection of reality, Godard’s concern is to excavate and find out the

15 Jeremy Spencer, *Politics and Aesthetics within Godard’s Cinema, Marxism and Film Activism: Screening Alternative Worlds*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2015

16 *ibid*

reality of that reflection. Resonating Adorno's points, Godard opined that cinema as the most 'economically and culturally enslaved art form, and imperialistic nature is somehow intricately exhibited in cinematic aesthetics. So, making film for Godard is an 'aesthetic struggle'.

Conclusion

Marxism and cinema has another factor common to each other – the courage to envisage as well as envision a future in terms of Utopia - an aspiration of a society where conscience and ideal human conditions will reign over capitalist interests and inequality bred from it. Cinema is illusion, and to a lot of people, so as the socialist dream. It should be noted that Marx himself did not rely on the concept of Utopia, as he thought that utopic thought might represent a divergence from the revolutionary materiality and would embark people on imaginary satisfactions.¹⁷ Marx's always stressed on the practical aspect of thought in order to resist the capitalist machinery. But later neo-Marxists like Marcuse and Jameson believed that the conditions of existence and the state of capitalism has changed. To them, it is rather the practical thinking of the capitalist system that gives it the strength to transfigure and transform its own opposition into its own image. As Jameson puts, much contrary to what Marx had to say, that it is the utopia that "...keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one."¹⁸ Walter Benjamin in his seminal work of *The Arcade Project* feels that however utopian the political significance of a film be, a time will come when films which are closer to them will win people's hearts. He acknowledges that fact that finding an art form that would encompass the best conscience in

17 Adam Roberts, Frederic Jameson, Routledge, London, New Work, 2000.

18 ibid

the world.¹⁹ In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon speaks on political education – the openness of the mind, its awakening, and nurturing of intelligence. Politically educating the mass does not mean that they will be made conscious through political speeches and information, but it is make a relentless effort to teach the masses passionately that “...everything depends on them.”²⁰ Political consciousness reverberates the power of the masses to resist to the atrocities hurled at them. Cinema becomes a vehicle and a medium of prevocational thoughts, a stream of audio-visual consciousness that empowers the mass to negate as well to navigate into the depths of modern life.

19 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcade Project*, Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1999.

20 Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963.

On Political Representation of Women In India

Debanjana Chakravarti

Political representation is the basis of all modern democratic governments as the practice of direct democracy is a virtual impossibility in the context of the huge population of the various nation states. Having said this, it becomes imperative to explain the idea of political representation. According to Alifio Mastropaolo, “representation is a means to portray, to describe, to narrate and duplicate- to make present something that is and cannot be so. Hence the very word representation is problematic” (Mastropaolo in Badie et. al., 2011, p. 2274). Therefore it is all the more difficult to specify as to what political representation is. Political representation exists so that those governed can govern indirectly (ibid., p. 2273). It is also described as an institutionalized system of communication between the governing and the governed. Contrary to this idea, for Hans Kelsen and Joseph A Schumpeter, the idea of representation is nothing more than a ‘fiction’. Kelsen believes that the idea of representation merely plays a legitimising role as it convinces those governed that they are governing. Whereas, Schumpeter, accuses it to be damaging as electoral mechanisms are opportunistic rather than aimed at the collective good (ibid., p. 2274).

That the issue of political representation would be significant in India is quite understandable. In the context of political empowerment of women in the 90’s, also as women constitute almost half the population of India, the issue of representation of women in Indian politics becomes imperative. If we understand representation as an institutionalized relationship between the governing and the

governed, the idea of participation also becomes relevant in this context. Does representation enhance political participation? Is political participation confined to voting? Is it getting elected to the various legislative bodies? Does it mean occupying seats of authority and governance? Does it affect policy decisions which in turn would lead to the development of the community and thus empower women? Or is it all of these put together? This paper would attempt to relate all these questions to the issue of political representation of women in India.

The 'Pure Theory of Representation' rejects pluralism and denotes the population as a whole. According to this theory there is an 'impure' or pragmatic theory as well. This theory accepts the existence of particular interests. It also expects the convergence of the particular and the whole at a definite stage through various interactions, negotiations etc. (ibid., pp. 2276-2278). The latter theory is more acceptable in the sense that it at least tries to achieve what the former cannot. The political representation of the Indian women is a subject that can be theorised with the help of this Impure Theory of Representation. Thus, the interactions and negotiations that the 'Impure Theory of Representation' refers to, signify all forms of political participation. Politically it is no longer confined to the mere exercise of the right to franchise. It is much broader than that. According to Ambarish Mukhopadhyay, political participation is a process including all those actions and interactions that are directly or indirectly related with policy making or decision making for the society. Modern democracies are all representative democracies. These representative democracies require an institutional framework for it to run (Mukhopadhyay in Chakraborty, 2013). And without the participation of people in these institutional frameworks democracy remains a myth. In fact the extent of people's participation determines how representative a government is.

The framers of the constitution of India did not leave any stone unturned to guarantee an equal representative status for its women citizens in terms of the political rights. This equal representative status was earned by the Indian Women with their long and active participation in the political process of the nationalist struggle.

The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century helped the Indian women enter the public space and thus provided the impetus to the very significant role they played in the anti colonial nationalist struggle against the mighty British Empire. In the initial years they remained passive participants providing moral and material supports under the veils and subsequently as active comrades. Swarna Kumari Debi was one of the two delegates elected from Bengal in the Congress session in 1890. A large number of women participated in the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements of 1905. They demonstrated, faced lathi charges and picketed shops selling foreign goods. In 1917 Annie Besant demanded voting rights for the women. It was Gandhiji who involved them successfully in the mass movements of Non Cooperation in 1920's and Civil Disobedience in the 1930's. The All India Women's Conference was formed in 1926. Sarojini Naidu was the first elected woman President of the Indian National Congress. The women also served as revolutionary terrorists and participated in armed struggle against the colonial masters. In short we can say that the participation of women in the politics of the pre independence era was significant. Unfortunately as observed by Leela Kasturi and Veena Majumder in their article entitled "Women and Indian nationalism", important works on Indian Nationalism fail to give due cognisance to the contributions of the Indian women in the anti imperialist struggle against the mighty British empire and also do not analyse the significance attached by their participation in shaping the movement as a mass movement (Kasturi & Majumder, 2016). Therefore earning equal representative political status at the dawn of

the independent nation was no mean achievement for the Indian women. Today we have 11% women representation in the Lok Sabha and 10.7% representation in the Rajya Sabha. India ranks 108th out of 188 countries in terms of its women representation in the national parliament according to a study conducted by Inter Parliamentary Union. The IPU is an international organization of Parliaments that works for the establishment of representative democracies all over the world. The legislative representation of women at the national level is sparse keeping in mind the percentage of women population of the country. Those who come into prominence do so because of familial links. Women making into the ministerial ranks are abysmally low. It is only a few women that we have seen in the course of evolution of independent India who have been appointed as cabinet ministers. We should also note here that the women who are chosen as ministers are deliberately assigned such portfolios as women and child development etc. Parties fail to offer tickets to women as candidates for elections as they doubt their ability to win seats.

The number of women representatives has certainly increased at the grass root level in the post 73rd amendment phase. Today there are about 3 million women representatives in the Panchayats. However questions still remain regarding their decision making powers within the councils. A study in West Bengal and Rajasthan by the Institute of Management Studies (Calcutta) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that where women Panchayat members were active, there were robust programmes on water irrigation and infrastructure. The study conclusively states that in Panchayats where women were present there were more community beneficial projects than in the panchayats where they were absent. The initiative also states that in Panchayats with female presidents, the participation of women in the larger council rose to 3% in one year.

This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that women members could perhaps signify new hopes and possibilities not only for the women but the broader community as a whole as representatives.

The factors which impede women's participation and thus their representation in politics are varied and many. They are social, cultural, economic, geographic and political and others. Our patriarchal familial set ups keep women away from political commitments. The triple role of a mother, wife and a political representative becomes too much of a pressure to handle. They are unable or prevented from taking independent decisions affecting their lives. Lack of access to resources place the women at disadvantageous positions with regard to any form of competition with the men folk in the political arena. Even women who earn their own livelihood have no control over their earnings. The political parties in their turn prefer men over women and thus further seal the hopes of generating funds for the female contestants. Often patriarchal values prevent their exposure to public lives. The increasing criminalization of politics, use of violence and the fear of malice also keep women away. Often the geographical locations of the constituencies the representatives represent do not enable them to meet up to the demands of the electorate. The question of mobility acts as a deterrent factor. Besides, absence of such facilities as day care centres to take care of their children, compel women not to even think of a career in public life. Their varied roles keep them within the four walls of their houses and keep them away from politics which is indeed very demanding in nature. Prevalence of large scale illiteracy amongst women prevents them from keeping themselves informed. They are unaware of their rights and also are unable to master the art of governance as it requires adequate skills. The political parties while offering tickets to female candidates are mostly unwilling and at times when they are agreeable, it is because of male patronage. Not

having a significant number of them in the political institutions make it difficult for women to push their agendas. Women are comparatively less active and articulate. However if they are articulate they are deliberately marginalised by the powerful groups in those institutions by a policy of exclusion. Elected women representatives do not have an organised mass, women's collectives or NGO's and an informed and politically conscious women's constituency to support them. Women are normally denied positions of power. For those few who occupy them do so by being in charge of soft portfolios which are nothing but extensions of the typical stereotyped image of theirs. These portfolios do not attract enough resources to encourage women's development and thus relegate it to the background.

Studies on women's participation in Parliament show that, "women participate more actively in women's issues-health, welfare, atrocities against women, crimes like dowry and violation of human rights. In issues of defence, finance, politics etc. their participation is relatively limited" (ICRW & UN Women, 2012). Development dialogue, in a study carried out in four districts of West Bengal on 50 gram panchayat women members, asked women to describe their contribution to community development. Most of the women "claimed to have an active role in maintenance of roads, tube well construction and maintenance of school building, drainage system and water supply. Some of them had tried sincerely to work towards women's empowerment by taking initiatives in providing loans to rural women. Protesting against injustices like divorce, child marriage and molestations and helping villagers in general" (Sen, 2013). Such revelations in fact act as deterrents for the success of women candidates in the coming years when they seek mandate from the people. They seem to be representing particularistic interests emphasized by the Impure Theory of Representation. The remaining

40% were not involved and the reasons given were male resistance prevented their active participation, not allowing them to work in the Gram Panchayats. The various political parties have meagre representation of women within party decision making structures. Number of women representatives in public and other institutions as trade unions, cooperatives, mahila mandals, and other such registered bodies are also significantly low. Such exposures as these, can give women sufficient organisational experience, which in turn can boost up their confidence. It is also to be noted that the quality of roles they play in a few collectives are mostly in hospitality and office maintenance service.

To bring a greater number of women representatives into the realm of politics in India and to turn them into effective participants we need to provide them with education and training support in the art of governance. We need to sensitize the gender issue amongst the male population. Political parties need to exhibit greater sincerity in including women members within the party structures and equipping them with leadership qualities. It is absolutely imperative that spreading of literacy amongst women be undertaken at a large scale so as to equip them with independent abilities. The introduction of quota system amongst parties would also perhaps force them to give cognisance to women. In this regard we need to mention the example of Sweden where the quota system amongst the parties has done wonders in involving more women in the art of governance. We all know that the women's reservation bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha, thus bringing into light the very question of sincerity of the various political parties to the cause of women's empowerment. In 2009, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, India, signed an agreement with Unifem, now UN Women, South Asia Regional Office to initiate a three-year programme entitled 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia'. The

programme aims to empower elected women representatives in local governance to make public policy and resource allocation patterns responsive to women's human rights. The programme covers 5 countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan). In India, the programme is co-owned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. The programme has been designed with the spirit to capture the specific issues and challenges with regard to women's political empowerment that each country experiences. This is a demand driven programme that seeks to understand and address issues of women's participation in local governance from the grassroots perspective. Generation of a body of knowledge on women's political leadership and governance in India and South Asia is one of the key outcomes of the programme (SARSWP, 2013). A few years back a three week certificate programme on political leadership was organised by IIM Bangalore along with Centre for Policy Research New Delhi. This programme aimed at building professional leaders by training them and equipping them with sufficient awareness in the related subject (IIMB & CSR Initiative, www.iimb.ernet.in/node/)

The Indian political system largely proves the fact that the women's participation remains confined to that of extending their right to franchise. Beyond that they appear to be nonexistent keeping in mind their population strength. They are underrepresented and thus their participation is also quite low. As they are underrepresented their interests and demands also remain unfulfilled. With respect to India we can say that the act of representation do not even perform a legitimising role allowing its women citizens to be under the impression that they are governing. On the contrary it is Schumpeter who is proved right when he says that electoral mechanisms are opportunistic. In this case only catering to the patriarchal system of society and adversely affecting the idea of collective good of both

men and women alike.

Alifio Mastropaolo talks of the difficulties of representation. He repurposes the idea of direct democracy as a complement to promote greater participation of citizens in decision making. He proposes the idea of governance. Governance is a merger of representation and participation where the stake holders negotiate, and interact to get their interests served (Mastropaolo in Badie et. al., op. cit., p. 2285). Could this be a good alternative to include the women of India to be an equal constituent element of the Indian political system? But to do this again we need to tread along a difficult terrain of our indigenous socio cultural perspective.

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Caste Representation as a Tool of Elimination: Identifying unbridled Caste-Fetishism of Indian Media through the comparative case studies of M M Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula

Abhik Bhattacharya

Representation, if assessed in Foucauldian perspective that calls for the production of knowledge in discursive space, that refers to the historical context for the development and understanding of the meaning; identifies abnormal man, dangerous man and several different anomalous category, (Bannet102) as propounded by Professor John Fiske; purportedly creating social boxes for ensuring oppression and discrimination (Fiske 53). Society in this manner, through relentless categorization, objectifies identities on the basis of caste, gender, race, normalcy, sensibility, conformity, uniformity and consumption, to inflict maximum discipline on them and to eradicate any 'monstrous' activities that can doubt the political, social or cultural serenity, expected out of normalized social agents. The socio-political categories thus availing and having maximum access to the power, gradually, outcast the 'others' and use them, both for maximizing the production value and for gaining their consent in favour of continuous suppression through reserving their numbers of participation in the mainstream course of actions.

Bearing incessant reiteration of their congenital, precisely cultural identity, they let themselves ritually marked with it; allowing the ceremonies of exclusion through either of the means of reservation or right-based agitation; favouring the judiciously-determined numbered berths, seemingly secured to cure imbecility, partially; for that any otherwise interpretation is obliterated and if not, then at least regulated. In such conditional obligation to identify any being out of its marked ceremonial identity, preferably representational category, happens to be the sternest task to perform, as the media along with the state machineries technically encapsulate and resurface the space to which it compulsively belongs, reaping out the immediate benefit, in terms of political or other gains.

This paper intends to point out at the representative caste system in India taking the comparison of both of the state sponsored assassination of Kalburgi and Rohith Vemula and the category of the consequential outrage in the media, to locate the intention of the power in discriminating even the subversive voices in the lines of caste. It locates the manufacturing of the mark ‘Dalit PhD Scholar’ with the name of Vemula and the subsequent preparation of his identity approval, through different forms of interrogation, investigation and continuous examination of the slain student leader, as if his caste identity validates his dissidence. It digs into the details of the case as emerged in the media and tries to explore the political necessity of representation through caste that mitigates the vehemence of dissent and substitutes the perennial disgruntlement with caste; for sustainability of its suppressive and propagative instruments.

August 30, 2015, some miscreants guised as students knocked the doors of a veteran literate- his wife, unsuspecting and clueless about the probable massacre allowed them to enter- the goons entered the room where Hindu rituals used to get shot at gun point- certainly the

bullets took a Volta face- the Kannada Erudite breathed his last within moments leaving behind his injunctions stymieing the growth of fundamentalist Hindu sycophants. M.M Kalburgi, the name which has been avowed several times in the recent context of emerging religio-political intolerance, had to put an end to his journey against social menaces, nevertheless, without revealing his caste identity that could have booked him with sympathy, homogenous caste-based solidarity and perhaps, in behest of its media-propagators, with ceremonial caste-consciousness, precisely false-empathy emboldening further negligence and elimination.

Had anybody asked which caste did he belong to? Had his 'VeershaivaLingayat' identity come to the light in midst of the threats he had been encountered with during his 'inciting' speeches against Hindu customs and ritualism? Kalburgi's notions in favour of 12th century 'Vachana' literature that critically opposed and confronted the caste-based society rather took the centre stage of discussions. His assassination further evoked the oppressive and thwarting despotic ideations of the Hindu rabid vowed to scythe down any non-conformist identity. Relentless support in favour of Dr. Ananthmurthy's criticism to the idol worshipping put him into the box of non-compliance which inevitably received the barbs of Hindu fanatics.

The consequential reactions from pan-India intelligentsia though condemned the Government for its reluctance and expressed their fear over the growing socio-political intolerance; the caste discrimination had never been referred to. Rather, any reference to his Lingayat identity would have mitigated the vehemence of the incident. Nevertheless, for time being, if the root cause of the gruesome lynching could be apprehended in terms of the caste-based oppression, the reference to Basava's ideology would definitely be upheld. Kalburgi was even the promulgator of such theosophical

reflex that confronted the basis of Hinduism unravelling several opportunities to the Political authorities to treat his lynching as an outcome of caste-discrimination. As the Lingayat community in no sense belonged to the traditional ‘antyaja’ (Antyaja literally means ‘the last-born’; in the traditional Hindu Caste System it generally refers to the ‘untouchable’- the lowest rung of the social ladder) the prominence of caste-based valuation of the assassination perhaps failed to find political berth in the competition of getting electoral benefit out of it.

January 17, 2016- he left the space vacant for the people who are yet to confront the ideological atrocities of rituals and taboos- he made it clear that no Government has the authority to enforce the choice of food- he got himself waded into the debates of the judicial killing of unidentified and mistaken identities- he craved to unravel the clandestine faces of riot-mongers- he tried to propagate Christopher Hitchens’ message that ‘God Is Not Great’- stunningly, he found himself tied within the realm of controversy of which he was the sturdiest disparager.

Rohith Vemula, the expelled PhD Scholar of University of Hyderabad in a sudden morning became a Dalit student devoid of his rights to be in the same plane with the higher caste associations. The media and the political parties across the ideological line took the bid to establish his Dalit identity surmounting rather overruling his contributions in the movement against the Hindu fundamentalists. The reasons for his expulsion as divulged with the time, in no means, were related to his caste entity rather his actions against the taboos of the Hinduism paved the way of the political fray between Ambedkar Students’ Association and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of ruling BJP. His decision to oppose sudden hanging of Yakoob Memon along with his colleagues of ASA awarded him with the tag of anti-nationalist. It irked even the leadership of BJP and

subsequently the ABVP provoked ASA to get into direct physical confrontation.

As the organization arranged 'Beef Mela' and even organized the public screening of Nakul Shawney's controversial documentary '*Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai*' (The 136-minute long sprawling documentary revisits the communal riots that broke out in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh in August and September 2013, preceding the famous BJP victory of 2014), the attacks got sharpened. The mundane provocation from ABVP's leaders acted as an impetus behind the political skirmish among the two leading organizations of the University and smacked off the flows of political intolerance trickling from Amit Shah's deprecating propaganda. A committee had been formed to hold the defaulters culpable of ruining the educational environ of the varsity. However, the reports denied charging anyone for such offense and the situation was found to be far away from being tampered with the supra-political motive of the central leadership.

The Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya in this context appeared as the major motivator of further chaos and addressing the HRD Minister Smriti Irani wrote, "This could be visualised from the fact that when Yakub Memon was hanged, a dominant students union, that is Ambedkar Students Union had held protests against the execution. When Shushil Kumar, president, ABVP, protested against this, he was manhandled and as a result he was admitted in hospital. What is more tragic is that the university administration has become a mute spectator to such events."¹ Even endorsing the fact he termed the ASA leaders as 'Anti-social' and claimed the immediate action from the authority.

1 "Read Minister Bandaru Dattatreya's Letter To Smriti Irani On Hyderabad University". NDTV. 19 January, 2016. Web. 12 July 2016.
<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/read-minister-bandaru-dattatreyas-letter-to-smriti-irani-on-hyderabad-university-1267471>

Consequently, the University following the instructions of the central leadership deployed an investigating committee and announced the expulsion of five ASA members. Not only Rohith, even Prashant, the former President of the Students' Union was named among the expelled students. The ASA members started protesting outside the University and screeched for the freedom of speech and expression. They ardently claimed the immediate action from the authority to revoke the punishment and accused the ruling party's student organization for impeding their campus freedom. In such circumstances, no reference to their Dalit identity had ever been evoked- none had ever mentioned the fact that they were being reinforced to leave the campus and the hostel due to their caste. The situation took the fresh turn with Vemula committing suicide.

The PhD scholar and the ASA leader certainly turned out to be a Dalit scholar. The espouser of the thoughts of Hitchens, who throughout his life condemned any religious practice, posthumously had to bow down in front of the representative identity which he had not even shown during his admission to the varsity. The reports from the Police clarified the fact that Vemula had been selected on the basis of merit and no reservation even paved his way toward his academic excellence. However, even if it was shown, it should have never searched, approved or investigated, as his death, as per the letter he wrote, had rarely any reference to his caste-based identity, through which his media representation was enshrined and gradually cultivated.

Nevertheless, the media came to the fore to discover his caste identity, in a bid to attach the political relevance to the issue. Rahul Gandhi jumped into the well of controversy and visiting the University commented that the actions of the Government transpired their anti-Dalit stance. Bahujan Samajwadi Party, the self-proclaimed messiah of Dalit community sent their delegations and

claimed the immediate revocation of the expulsion notice against the rest of the four students.

The HRD minister Smriti Irani on whose instructions perhaps the University was being reinforced to take the despicable decision of expelling the students, added further boilers to the brewing situation that his Dalit entity should not be considered as the reason for his death. The visit of the chairperson of the National Commission for the Minorities even reinforced the similar narration of caste discrimination. The consequence was apprehensive- Police started working on to excavate his caste identity to frame charges against the accuser- the political parties started upholding his caste for ensuring the vote bank- the professors belonged to SC community in the University resigned from the administrative posts to maintain their relevance in such political symposium- some even were trying to find out the entity of Rohith's father who had left his mother long days ago- the student communities across the country went on screaming for equal rights and justice to Dalit community- the newer statistical data appeared to establish the dreadful condition of these people- moreover the country started brewing to book the persons accused of caste discrimination.

In these brewing political tensions, perhaps, the objectives of Vemula have been forgotten. He never tried to prove his Dalit identity and the organization he belonged to hardly expanded in the Varsity through accommodating only Dalit people. ASA though had commenced on its journey after the stirs regarding Mondal Commission and claimed equality for the students of Dalit community in mid 90s; their stance got changed throughout the last decade. In 2011-12, when ASA triumphed over the election with the support of SFI, they had won over the confidence of the common students not only of the Dalit community.

The transformation of Vemula from a PhD scholar to a Dalit student bears on the intention of the power-structure to put each and every agitator into some box for categorizing the levels of oppression. In the midst of intricate discussions over the caste-battling the original narrative of Rohith's fight had been lost.

The reference to Kalburgi's identity in the initiation of the paper at this juncture seems to be relevant enough as none had questioned his caste when he was brutally lynched. His notions and the philosophy had been discussed and the condemnation of the political intolerance gained momentum. Rohith in his suicide note alleged none for his death and his last letter reflected his scepticism toward the society. The cynical view of Rohith could have been found from his very statement that love is second handed. The departure of human enterprise from the nature made him felt that the people were not ought to suffer much, had there been no cultural obligation to life. His last verses, however, were standing in the verge of absolute loss.

Both of the cases as referred to, clearly indicate the differences of media representations and verify the fact that the absolute commodification of caste identity plays the major role behind exclusion of ground narrations leading the path toward production of meta-narratives and consequentially social myths. Second order signified of the signifier Vemula, abysmally reduces it to 'Dalit identity' that negates the significance of his philosophy and actions. The persisting conflicts between the castes, during such representations are being technically taken into consideration for ensuing further repercussions from the political classes, for deceiving the culpability of the state and obviously for producing easy-to-read substances that have the capacity to delegitimize any alternative uproar. Referring to Clifford Geertz's coinage 'experience-distant' concept(Geertz,57-58), the cultural perception of caste in Indian context though could be comprehensively

understood, the formation of posthumous caste imposition over the subject reflects the ‘experience-near’ attitude of media, that calls for an immediate reaction from the society, on which the stigmatizing intensity of sensitivity or caste-fetishism unavoidably depends. The term caste, thus, itself adds the sense of traditional socio-cultural oppression to the identity and furthers the growth of sympathetic ground which otherwise could have been encountered with the political verses of religion and could have discarded the casteist outrage, that it is expected to emanate.

The elimination of representative caste identity for the development of class struggle thus appears as the immediate way toward the radical emancipation of people against the political orthodoxy, desisting their participation. The conclusive note to this understanding requires the year-old comments of E.M.S. Namboodiripad to be resurfaced for igniting the immediate struggle against the narratives of caste-based recognition overruling their ideological identity and class consciousness-

“One has to realize that the building of India on modern democratic and secular lines requires an uncompromising struggle against the caste-based Hindu society and its culture. There is no question of secular democracy, not to speak of socialism, unless the very citadel of India’s ‘age old’ civilization and culture – the division of society into a hierarchy of castes – is broken. In other words, the struggle for radical democracy and socialism cannot be separated from the struggle against caste society.”²

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Cinema, Modernity, Politics of Resistance - Representation of a Possible Society

Soumya Suvra Das

Introduction

My art is a weapon in the struggle for my people's freedom and for the freedom of all people.

- Paul Robeson

Any form of art may be considered as political, as art, like politics, tries to question and the status-quo and transform society. In the recent years with the boom in the media sector, television and media and film industry in particular, has been involved into a cat fight over profit making than ever. In this regard, the concept of airtime, channel rights, worldwide distribution of films has become valuable as each and every second and slot is counted for money. The ferocious competition for audiences between the broadcasters and distributors means that the end credits must be shortened and at the same time various promotions and advertisements have to be shown to make the audience adhere to the television set or return back to the film theatre and treat cinema as a production franchisee. So the demand and manipulation of television air time has been of utmost significance and stakes have become higher as it is scarce in nature. So it stands that time has become scarce, but this scarcity is manufactured not by the audience, but the privatized corporate organizations.

Once there was a time when we could not cope with the scarcities of resources which were once imposed on us by nature. But with the

advent of modernity along with capital that made technology and progress possible to an extent, promised us that the scarcity that we have been suffering throughout our history is about to be resolved. So the modern media, under the strict control of the iron fists of capitalism, puts an abstract value to almost everything, in this case it is time, just like labour in general. Discussions, works and academic works of Marxist scholars reveal this clear yet hidden scenario of the workings of the media and film institutions. It exposes the inherent contradiction and relations of production that it has within its functioning. Media practices and structures, under the one-dimensional production of knowledge and consciousness under capitalism comes in direct microscopic scrutiny not only in terms of academic works, but also comes in the shape of cinematic representations, acting as a resistant force against the coercive, hegemonic and often neo-imperialistic culture. Cinema has been a medium which incorporates the elements which capitalism invests its existence upon: labour, technology and capital which brings about a certain product, the product being an aesthetic one. At the centre of this debate is a possible oxymoron - cinema reiterates the ethics of capitalism in terms of capital and labour on one hand and becoming a resonating part of mass culture, and on the other hand its ideological contradictions with capitalism through its ability to represent images and sound to create a synesthetic effect.

Cinematic Representation – A Problematic Approach

Representation in a modern world is a mysterious thing indeed. Timothy Mitchel argues,

If the presence of modernity occurs only as representation, this representing is not a phenomenon limited to the deliberate methods of making meaning on which accounts

of the modern and the postmodern tend to focus, such as the modern novel, news reporting, museum displays, mass media, or the organization of medical, statistical, and other forms of official knowledge.

Cinema has been both dismissed and eulogised by the world of academia as something dangerous, a form of low-art, hegemonic or an art-form that has unfathomable ability to move people and thereby positing a social change. Cinematic representation comes in five layers – moving image (an extension of still image), graphics, music, noise and dialogues, and hence is often considered to be the most influential medium of communication. Not only for the content it represents or the form in which it comes in terms of unravelling the narrative, the politics of representation of cinema lies in the very fact that it is synesthetic in nature – image, since Renaissance we have known the primacy of the image and its politics of representing the world in terms of realism, and sound that can have enchanting effect on our emotions. Cinema has already been argued as the best form of storytelling process since the evolution of Realism in the form of the novel. Cinematic representation, best envisaged by the Classical Hollywood Cinema, had already adopted this form of storytelling process – a process nurtured by voyeurism or the Peeping Tom effect. As Andre Bazin pointed out in *What Is Cinema*, cinema is the art that has led human society closest to preserving memory and human essence – the mummification of human existence that has transfigured itself through painting, photography and has reached the ultimate destination of capturing reality - through cinema. If Bazin considers this to be one of the best achievements of human society, it can also be argued to be one of the best traps that the industrial world under the iron claw of capitalism has created ever. Key questions arose when the art form of cinema was realised as not a mere representation of moving pictures, but as a tool that can mobilise

people, inculcate ideological stances, break the silence and passivity and emancipate a dream of social change.

These questions, arguments and counter-arguments were beginning to be foregrounded after the Russian Revolution in 1919 when the likes of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovchenko, Kuleshov and Vertov started experimenting in cinematic techniques and ideological ‘fists’ and for the first time in thirty years of cinema’s birth, it began to be taken as something serious and something that has more than entertainment at its disposal. We have to understand the fact that as music, literature, international politics, society and science cannot be limited to a functional aspect that is only to be dealt by the professionals in the respective fields, cinema in the same way was more than an art form and was discussed as a major part of our culture – more significantly as cinema is almost an oxymoron – a capital and labour intensive art more than any other that becomes the part of the culture industry (Hollywood, Hindi Popular Cinema as a couple of instances), and at the same time it can be a resistant art-form that comes as a critique of the bourgeoisie and even become an anecdote of social and political revolution (Latin American Cinema of the 1960s, Post-colonial African cinema, Soviet Constructivist and Montage, Third Cinema to name a few other than some Auteur films of Godard, Ghatak, Antonioni and others).

The key questions that flooded the scholarly articles and discussions were to explore the relationship between cinema and society –the effect of cinema on the audience when cinema was integrated as an important part of the capitalist culture industries¹, the nature of relation between film aesthetics and reproduction of the capitalist social order, revelation of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist

¹ Mike Wayne ed., Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

society through cinema, or for that matter how cinema displaces, suppresses and marginalize class. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's seminal work of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1944 tells something that makes us think what cinema's nature really is. The essay discusses about cinema's integration into the capitalist industrial production and consumption and contemplates what film and the common masses share: the labour power of the masses are utilized by the industry for reaping financial profit, while film replays what has been done to the masses during their time of labour.² Adorno was one of the pioneering thinkers of the Frankfurt School, a Neo-Marxist Critical School of Thinking whose concern were to explore the changing nexus of the world in relation to art, ideology and the very politics of representation in its historical context. But Adorno had been the harshest critic of cinema from its outset and the ideological base on which I developed – modernity and capitalism.

The logic of the principle of expression implies the moment of its negation, a negative form of truth that changes love into an inflexible power of protest.³

Nicole Brenez delves deep into Adorno's thoughts about cinema and music. For Adorno, cinema became an emblematic representation of how an art form can become a commodified cultural product representing a means of confiscation, a mode of corruption, a simulacrum and a sort of a formal joke.⁴ Cinema, for its inception from the techniques of recording, has its primary goal as reproduction organized into an industry and hence, as Adorno puts it, becomes a powerful instrument of domination, propaganda and falsification.

2 Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 1944.

3 Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, MIT Press, 1981, Cambridge

4 Nicole Brenez, 'T.W.Adorno: Cinema in spite of Itself – but Cinema all the same', trans. Olivier Delers and Ross Chambers, *Cultural Studies Review*, Volume 13, Number 1, March 2007.

What Adorno spoke about is resonated in Toby Miller's essay 'Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel' where he mentions two dominating film industry models in the world – the first one is the *laissez-faire* (Bollywood, Hong Kong) and *primus inter pares* (Hollywood). The second is *dirigisme* (Western and Southern Europe). In this light, cinema is strictly a mode of economics – the first models generated from the ethics of neo-classical economics where state intervention is prohibited, based on market-model and putting primacy on ideology of pleasure before the nation and stress on export. On the other hand, the second type of model is based on intervention by the state which includes training, funding and distribution, based on mixed-economy model and putting primacy on the ideology of nation before pleasure and stress on import substitution.⁵ These are nothing but 'policing' culture and people in a more political and historical way. As Marx pointed out that it is not possible to create a moral power only on the basis of paragraphs of law, these cultural policies revolving cinema was and is a necessity. Scholar and thinker Jacques Donzelot remarks that these policies regarding a cultural phenomenon like cinema are methods for the development of the population quality and in process to strengthen a nation.⁶ Representation of culture is also seen as a material improvement of the urban life and the middle-class thought and to indoctrinate the working class to value the nation and avoid industrial strife and class-struggle.⁷ It reminds of us of what Mike Wayne's proposition that

The struggle for moral and intellectual leadership in the
sphere of culture is the struggle for hegemony. But it is a

5 Mike Wayne ed., *Hollywood, Cultural Policy Citadel, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

6 Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979),

7 David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998),

struggle and Gramsci's originality lies in his recognition that cultural domination is never simply a top-down process of imposition. Gramsci understood hegemony as a force field of contestation between different groups; a dialogue even, but crucially not a dialogue between equals because capital and the capitalist state have awesomely more resources at their disposal to shape the agenda and implement policies and practical changes.⁸

The policies reflected in the careful cultural reproduction of the most dominant film industry in the world - the Hollywood not only in terms of its business owing to which a lot of indigenous film industries struggle to survive, but also in terms of setting the trend in conventional film making process and its content. A number of Hollywood films have covertly and even blatantly have been representing the ideals of US foreign policy and the great American Dream. A number of films starting from the World War II themes have been strategically representing the US point of view not as their own, but as a universal one. The most prolific instance may be drawn from the film *Independence Day* where the US President is giving a speech saying that the American soldiers must strive to prove that 4th of July is not only the day of American independence but independence day of the entire world. Even if it is not taken seriously, it may be taken as a Freudian slip which is repeated time and again in various films. A little instance may be given from the film *Castaway* where an almost insignificant sequence of the film shows that a group of people are taking off a portrait of Lenin from a building while the camera keeps on tracking to show the protagonist deliver a courier parcel in a Russian town. But films like *Forrest Gump*, *Rambo Part II* and *III*, *Saving Private Ryan* and many more have a hegemonizing

⁸ Mike Wayne ed., *Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

effect on the audience. Representative figure of American individualism is reflected in Forrest Gump and various images from the film is advocated by American society, which can be testified from the scene that Gump is endowed of congress badge. Narratives become strategies to spread the ideas of dominance and portray other contesting ideologies and trends as antagonistic and morally corrupt – the portrayal of the figure in Forrest Gump in the get up of the conventional image of Che Guevara who is representing the student movement, a reminiscent of the anti-establish movement of the 70s generation is not only in bad taste but also the character is portrayed as morally and ethically corrupt. Saving Private Ryan creates a strange kind of American individualism promoting the “White Man’s Burden” of saving one of the fellow soldiers at the cost of an entire battalion. Although this White Man’s Burden is different from what Kipling had to say in the context of colonialism, but this film promotes an American humanism, a kind of humanism that involves war, sacrifice and freedom in the same cauldron, which Wayne terms as the leadership in the sphere of cultural struggle and hegemony.

Benjamin, Brecht and Cinematic Representation

It is true that the cultural logic of capitalism is a dominant one and has a hegemonic presence in the world through its representation in films and Adorno’s criticism of the art form can be argued to be legitimate in the present day global nexus of neo-liberalism. But Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin represents a different response when it comes to locating cinema in the milieu of cultural representations especially in relation to capitalist modernity. There is no contradiction between the views of Adorno on one hand and those of Benjamin and Brecht on the other that mass media is subordinated to capital and world market, but the later’s views saw hope in cinema as a form of resistance. In terms of ideological domination, all the scholars agree

that cinema is just a mere cultural and aesthetic representation of the capitalist modernity, but for Benjamin and technological and artistic potential of this art form can negate the very ideals on which it is created. Technology for the modern mechanical reproduction implied the participation of masses in the cultural life in their own terms. The reverential awe, which Benjamin calls aura, that ontological coded essence into the reception of the traditional art, is being replaced by those which are mechanically reproduced.⁹ These mechanically reproduced art forms are closer to people than the traditional ones; they are to be felt close enough in the everyday spaces and rhythms of the city along with its technological form. Both Benjamin and Brecht embraced this potential of cinema that sought to bring about an unprecedented and unforeseeable change in our perception (Benjamin developed his theory of optical unconscious and Brecht developed his defamiliarisation strategy or the alienation effect). In this regard Wayne describes a sequence from Aranofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* which he perceives as a grand representation of '... an Adornosque view of television and a Benjaminian/Brechtian view of film as a vehicle of critique.'¹⁰ Of both media and our capitalist society:

Sara, strung out on prescription appetite-suppressant drugs, settles down to watch her favourite quiz show, which she hopes one day to be on. She imagines herself in the show as a contestant, her electronic image (and ego ideal) a slimmer, more beautiful version of her real self. But then both her electronic self and the typically smarmy quiz-show host rematerialise in her own working-class apartment, and what seems intimate and comfortable

9 Walter Benjamin, *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1968.

10 Mike Wayne ed., *Marxism, Film and Film Studies, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

suddenly becomes intrusive. Sara's ego ideal and the compere begin laughing at the decor while she struggles to explain and justify herself. The quiz-show audience in turn begin to laugh at her while suddenly her home is turned into a television studio set, with people removing her furniture, while cameras, lights and microphones are brought in. As chorus girls dance threateningly around her chair, Sara's electronic self-smooches with the compere. It is a brilliant fantasy sequence, a Benjamin-like optical beam illuminating the contempt in which mass culture holds its consumers, a very Brechtian-like revelation, through defamiliarisation, of the threat and social violence lurking beneath television's technology and seductive razzmatazz aesthetics, and a painful glimpse into the vortex of hidden self-loathing and aching lack of fulfilment which underpins the fantasies promoted by the culture industry.¹¹

The above sequence breaks the hegemonic presence of the media and its naturalized presence in our life with a jarring representation of a crude reality of modern times. The alienating effect that the audience is bound to experience here throws them into reconsideration of what is representation and what is real. The formal aspect of cinema reiterates what Herbert Marcuse in his *One Dimensional Man* had said about art, "The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who have established it) to define what is real ... The aesthetic transformation becomes a vehicle of recognition and indictment."¹²

11 *ibid*

12 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964

Representation, Resistance and Revolution

Out of all the modern art-forms, it was film which accommodated and represented the revolutionary visions as well as the revolutionary spirit of social movements. Cinema imbued the spirit of the revolutionary process and treated the hegemonic representations of the art form in an adverse way, in a way that would challenge the status-quo of the capitalist regimes and mainstream conformist ideologies of class and the way common people are made to perceive reality. This was possible not for the mere fact that the filmmakers believed in the process of revolution, but cinema as an art form had the formal freedom to throw itself into experimentation and debate. Two major revolutions that shaped a major part of world politics – the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and Cuban Revolution of 1959 – saw a rise in new cinematic representations. Not always echoing the views of the revolutionaries, these post-revolution films, although very different from each other, had a claim that cinema had a critical role in “...the promotion of a revolutionary political culture”.¹³ Film became a form of aesthetic resistance to the politically and socially detrimental conditions and became a vehicle of ideological dialogue with the common mass.

Michael Chanan describes cinema as more than entertainment and a means of propaganda – it was an aspiration of authentic art form of the twentieth century which bred a new magnet of contemporary artists.¹⁴ This was the period of time when cinema realised that the art of montage or editing can be taken to a different aesthetic, graphic and ideological level and the very essence of representation would undergo a qualitative change. Inspired from Kabuki theatre and Hieroglyphs, and realizing the philosophy of the Hegelian dialectics

13 Mike Wayne ed., *Cinemas in Revolution: 1920s Russia, 1960s Cuba, Understanding Film Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, London, 2005

14 *ibid*

which was reshaped brilliantly by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels into dialectical materialism, Eisenstein, Vertov and other great Soviet pioneers of cinema proved that cinema is more than a spectacle or a story – it can be a statement that can breathe the aspiration, dreams and revolutionary ideas of the people and defy the imposed naturalization of class difference. By the end of the Cuban revolution in 1969, Julio Garcia Espinosa wrote a manifesto called ‘Towards an Imperfect Cinema’, dealt with the art form again, but was starkly different from the Russian formalists. Cuban cinema realised that it should be more than an ideological foregrounding of the filmmakers – rather, it should be a dialogue between certain materialist and philosophical ideas that the society and the individual has to offer, especially in the post-revolution days. Liberation of consciousness became a constant theme for a number of films, but no propagandist or nationalist zeal were ever reflected. The 60s Cuban cinema, like Tomas Alea’s *Memories of Underdevelopment* underpinned the state of a bourgeois pro-revolutionary middleclass man – class, sexuality, individual ideals and social hypocrisy transgressed barriers of political camps to touch the inner most abyss of human sensibilities. It was only in the post Cuban revolution days that the Latin American film makers and intellectuals devised and theorized the ideas of first cinema (mainstream industrially produced films like Hindi Popular Cinema and Hollywood), second cinema (auteur films, art cinema which were mostly independent or outside the mainstream film industry) and third cinema, which has a close relation to the Latin American revolutionary cinema, imperfect cinema and guerrilla cinema, a kind of film making that involves risk, political conviction and is taken as a grand concoction of aesthetics and politics.

Mavericks, Consciousness, Politics and Auteurs

To continue our discussion of guerrilla cinema or cinema of

revolution, it is imperative to refer to Jean Luc Godard, his writings on cinema and his films. In 1950, in an article called 'Towards a Political Cinema' published in *Gazette du Cinema*, Godard contemplated the prospect of revolutionary cinema through certain filmic strategies in terms of its representation. He drew upon Marx's phenomenal work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) and art critic Harold Rosenberg's '*The Resurrected Romans*' (1948), to show the potential of cinematic gestures that often represent unconscious repetition and mimesis, through their insinuation to history and culture to gather significant meaning through their spontaneity and passion. In the article Godard compares the structure of a political film with concepts of signification and the linguistic sign. Godard's concern is based on the semiotic analysis of the image to the referent, where the meaning of the cinematic shot is differential rather than innate. What Godard tries to write in his article and even in his films is the question of sign – an attempt to dislocate it from its referent. This is where cinematic expression and questions of signification has a direct relation to historical materialism. Karl Marx observed a stark contrast between the proletariat revolution and bourgeois revolution in terms of their relation to the past – it has been observed that the bourgeois revolution would borrow signs from the past in terms of its imagery and language. This parodied revolutionary trend is distinct from what Marx called the social revolution of the nineteenth century. This revolution, this proletariat revolution does not feel necessary to repeat the past or to aestheticize politics to hide its political content. Social revolution, for Marx, unlike the bourgeois revolution is self-critical, reflective where the past is abandoned, no recourse to myth is performed. This spirit of social revolution, as Godard and others point out, is reflected where the image I independent from its referent implying a modernist disjuncture of the signifier and the signified,

creating a time and space of its own. Auteur cinema, a form of second cinema, as a part of avant-garde film movement has been representing the politics of signification as a political work. Godard often explored the arbitrariness of the sign as a process of cinematic representation which in terms come ‘political modernism’¹⁵. Concerned with contemporary world politics, Godard’s films are more significant their dislocation and disassembly of the bourgeois art and mode of expression that make them political.

While keeping in mind the difference between the linguistic sign and analogical representations, Godard’s film seems capable of dislocating the sign, it typically separates images from the sound track; the narration of a voiceover will be unrelated to the accompanying image the spectator sees: words – in the form of slogans, titles, posters and captions – criticize, interpret and transform images.¹⁶

Godard’s films are political. Jeremy Spencer talks about Godard’s *British Sounds* (1969) analysed the contemporary British capitalism, begins by reconsidering a line from the Manifesto of the Communist Party – ‘In a word, the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image.

Comrades! We must destroy that image! ... Sometimes the class struggle is also the struggle of one image against another image, of one sound against another sound... in a film, this struggle is between images and sounds’. Political films, like Godard’s, Ghatak’s, Latin American Cinema and many others consciously blur the line of distinction between realities with reflections – they put confusion within the filmic image. While bourgeois films try to showcase the reflection of reality, Godard’s concern is to excavate and find out the

15 Jeremy Spencer, *Politics and Aesthetics within Godard’s Cinema, Marxism and Film Activism: Screening Alternative Worlds*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2015

16 *ibid*

reality of that reflection. Resonating Adorno's points, Godard opined that cinema as the most 'economically and culturally enslaved art form, and imperialistic nature is somehow intricately exhibited in cinematic aesthetics. So, making film for Godard is an 'aesthetic struggle'.

Conclusion

Marxism and cinema has another factor common to each other – the courage to envisage as well as envision a future in terms of Utopia - an aspiration of a society where conscience and ideal human conditions will reign over capitalist interests and inequality bred from it. Cinema is illusion, and to a lot of people, so as the socialist dream. It should be noted that Marx himself did not rely on the concept of Utopia, as he thought that utopic thought might represent a divergence from the revolutionary materiality and would embark people on imaginary satisfactions.¹⁷ Marx's always stressed on the practical aspect of thought in order to resist the capitalist machinery. But later neo-Marxists like Marcuse and Jameson believed that the conditions of existence and the state of capitalism has changed. To them, it is rather the practical thinking of the capitalist system that gives it the strength to transfigure and transform its own opposition into its own image. As Jameson puts, much contrary to what Marx had to say, that it is the utopia that "...keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one."¹⁸ Walter Benjamin in his seminal work of *The Arcade Project* feels that however utopian the political significance of a film be, a time will come when films which are closer to them will win people's hearts. He acknowledges that fact that finding an art form that would encompass the best conscience in

17 Adam Roberts, Frederic Jameson, Routledge, London, New Work, 2000.

18 *ibid*

the world.¹⁹ In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon speaks on political education – the openness of the mind, its awakening, and nurturing of intelligence. Politically educating the mass does not mean that they will be made conscious through political speeches and information, but it is make a relentless effort to teach the masses passionately that “...everything depends on them.”²⁰ Political consciousness reverberates the power of the masses to resist to the atrocities hurled at them. Cinema becomes a vehicle and a medium of prevocational thoughts, a stream of audio-visual consciousness that empowers the mass to negate as well to navigate into the depths of modern life.

19 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcade Project*, Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1999.

20 Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963.

On Political Representation of Women In India

Debanjana Chakravarti

Political representation is the basis of all modern democratic governments as the practice of direct democracy is a virtual impossibility in the context of the huge population of the various nation states. Having said this, it becomes imperative to explain the idea of political representation. According to Alifio Mastropaolo, “representation is a means to portray, to describe, to narrate and duplicate- to make present something that is and cannot be so. Hence the very word representation is problematic” (Mastropaolo in Badie et. al., 2011, p. 2274). Therefore it is all the more difficult to specify as to what political representation is. Political representation exists so that those governed can govern indirectly (ibid., p. 2273). It is also described as an institutionalized system of communication between the governing and the governed. Contrary to this idea, for Hans Kelsen and Joseph A Schumpeter, the idea of representation is nothing more than a ‘fiction’. Kelsen believes that the idea of representation merely plays a legitimising role as it convinces those governed that they are governing. Whereas, Schumpeter, accuses it to be damaging as electoral mechanisms are opportunistic rather than aimed at the collective good (ibid., p. 2274).

That the issue of political representation would be significant in India is quite understandable. In the context of political empowerment of women in the 90’s, also as women constitute almost half the population of India, the issue of representation of women in Indian politics becomes imperative. If we understand representation as an institutionalized relationship between the governing and the

governed, the idea of participation also becomes relevant in this context. Does representation enhance political participation? Is political participation confined to voting? Is it getting elected to the various legislative bodies? Does it mean occupying seats of authority and governance? Does it affect policy decisions which in turn would lead to the development of the community and thus empower women? Or is it all of these put together? This paper would attempt to relate all these questions to the issue of political representation of women in India.

The 'Pure Theory of Representation' rejects pluralism and denotes the population as a whole. According to this theory there is an 'impure' or pragmatic theory as well. This theory accepts the existence of particular interests. It also expects the convergence of the particular and the whole at a definite stage through various interactions, negotiations etc. (ibid., pp. 2276-2278). The latter theory is more acceptable in the sense that it at least tries to achieve what the former cannot. The political representation of the Indian women is a subject that can be theorised with the help of this Impure Theory of Representation. Thus, the interactions and negotiations that the 'Impure Theory of Representation' refers to, signify all forms of political participation. Politically it is no longer confined to the mere exercise of the right to franchise. It is much broader than that. According to Ambarish Mukhopadhyay, political participation is a process including all those actions and interactions that are directly or indirectly related with policy making or decision making for the society. Modern democracies are all representative democracies. These representative democracies require an institutional framework for it to run (Mukhopadhyay in Chakraborty, 2013). And without the participation of people in these institutional frameworks democracy remains a myth. In fact the extent of people's participation determines how representative a government is.

The framers of the constitution of India did not leave any stone unturned to guarantee an equal representative status for its women citizens in terms of the political rights. This equal representative status was earned by the Indian Women with their long and active participation in the political process of the nationalist struggle.

The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century helped the Indian women enter the public space and thus provided the impetus to the very significant role they played in the anti colonial nationalist struggle against the mighty British Empire. In the initial years they remained passive participants providing moral and material supports under the veils and subsequently as active comrades. Swarna Kumari Debi was one of the two delegates elected from Bengal in the Congress session in 1890. A large number of women participated in the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements of 1905. They demonstrated, faced lathi charges and picketed shops selling foreign goods. In 1917 Annie Besant demanded voting rights for the women. It was Gandhiji who involved them successfully in the mass movements of Non Cooperation in 1920's and Civil Disobedience in the 1930's. The All India Women's Conference was formed in 1926. Sarojini Naidu was the first elected woman President of the Indian National Congress. The women also served as revolutionary terrorists and participated in armed struggle against the colonial masters. In short we can say that the participation of women in the politics of the pre independence era was significant. Unfortunately as observed by Leela Kasturi and Veena Majumder in their article entitled "Women and Indian nationalism", important works on Indian Nationalism fail to give due cognisance to the contributions of the Indian women in the anti imperialist struggle against the mighty British empire and also do not analyse the significance attached by their participation in shaping the movement as a mass movement (Kasturi & Majumder, 2016). Therefore earning equal representative political status at the dawn of

the independent nation was no mean achievement for the Indian women. Today we have 11% women representation in the Lok Sabha and 10.7% representation in the Rajya Sabha. India ranks 108th out of 188 countries in terms of its women representation in the national parliament according to a study conducted by Inter Parliamentary Union. The IPU is an international organization of Parliaments that works for the establishment of representative democracies all over the world. The legislative representation of women at the national level is sparse keeping in mind the percentage of women population of the country. Those who come into prominence do so because of familial links. Women making into the ministerial ranks are abysmally low. It is only a few women that we have seen in the course of evolution of independent India who have been appointed as cabinet ministers. We should also note here that the women who are chosen as ministers are deliberately assigned such portfolios as women and child development etc. Parties fail to offer tickets to women as candidates for elections as they doubt their ability to win seats.

The number of women representatives has certainly increased at the grass root level in the post 73rd amendment phase. Today there are about 3 million women representatives in the Panchayats. However questions still remain regarding their decision making powers within the councils. A study in West Bengal and Rajasthan by the Institute of Management Studies (Calcutta) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that where women Panchayat members were active, there were robust programmes on water irrigation and infrastructure. The study conclusively states that in Panchayats where women were present there were more community beneficial projects than in the panchayats where they were absent. The initiative also states that in Panchayats with female presidents, the participation of women in the larger council rose to 3% in one year.

This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that women members could perhaps signify new hopes and possibilities not only for the women but the broader community as a whole as representatives.

The factors which impede women's participation and thus their representation in politics are varied and many. They are social, cultural, economic, geographic and political and others. Our patriarchal familial set ups keep women away from political commitments. The triple role of a mother, wife and a political representative becomes too much of a pressure to handle. They are unable or prevented from taking independent decisions affecting their lives. Lack of access to resources place the women at disadvantageous positions with regard to any form of competition with the men folk in the political arena. Even women who earn their own livelihood have no control over their earnings. The political parties in their turn prefer men over women and thus further seal the hopes of generating funds for the female contestants. Often patriarchal values prevent their exposure to public lives. The increasing criminalization of politics, use of violence and the fear of malice also keep women away. Often the geographical locations of the constituencies the representatives represent do not enable them to meet up to the demands of the electorate. The question of mobility acts as a deterrent factor. Besides, absence of such facilities as day care centres to take care of their children, compel women not to even think of a career in public life. Their varied roles keep them within the four walls of their houses and keep them away from politics which is indeed very demanding in nature. Prevalence of large scale illiteracy amongst women prevents them from keeping themselves informed. They are unaware of their rights and also are unable to master the art of governance as it requires adequate skills. The political parties while offering tickets to female candidates are mostly unwilling and at times when they are agreeable, it is because of male patronage. Not

having a significant number of them in the political institutions make it difficult for women to push their agendas. Women are comparatively less active and articulate. However if they are articulate they are deliberately marginalised by the powerful groups in those institutions by a policy of exclusion. Elected women representatives do not have an organised mass, women's collectives or NGO's and an informed and politically conscious women's constituency to support them. Women are normally denied positions of power. For those few who occupy them do so by being in charge of soft portfolios which are nothing but extensions of the typical stereotyped image of theirs. These portfolios do not attract enough resources to encourage women's development and thus relegate it to the background.

Studies on women's participation in Parliament show that, "women participate more actively in women's issues-health, welfare, atrocities against women, crimes like dowry and violation of human rights. In issues of defence, finance, politics etc. their participation is relatively limited" (ICRW & UN Women, 2012). Development dialogue, in a study carried out in four districts of West Bengal on 50 gram panchayat women members, asked women to describe their contribution to community development. Most of the women "claimed to have an active role in maintenance of roads, tube well construction and maintenance of school building, drainage system and water supply. Some of them had tried sincerely to work towards women's empowerment by taking initiatives in providing loans to rural women. Protesting against injustices like divorce, child marriage and molestations and helping villagers in general" (Sen, 2013). Such revelations in fact act as deterrents for the success of women candidates in the coming years when they seek mandate from the people. They seem to be representing particularistic interests emphasized by the Impure Theory of Representation. The remaining

40% were not involved and the reasons given were male resistance prevented their active participation, not allowing them to work in the Gram Panchayats. The various political parties have meagre representation of women within party decision making structures. Number of women representatives in public and other institutions as trade unions, cooperatives, mahila mandals, and other such registered bodies are also significantly low. Such exposures as these, can give women sufficient organisational experience, which in turn can boost up their confidence. It is also to be noted that the quality of roles they play in a few collectives are mostly in hospitality and office maintenance service.

To bring a greater number of women representatives into the realm of politics in India and to turn them into effective participants we need to provide them with education and training support in the art of governance. We need to sensitize the gender issue amongst the male population. Political parties need to exhibit greater sincerity in including women members within the party structures and equipping them with leadership qualities. It is absolutely imperative that spreading of literacy amongst women be undertaken at a large scale so as to equip them with independent abilities. The introduction of quota system amongst parties would also perhaps force them to give cognisance to women. In this regard we need to mention the example of Sweden where the quota system amongst the parties has done wonders in involving more women in the art of governance. We all know that the women's reservation bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha, thus bringing into light the very question of sincerity of the various political parties to the cause of women's empowerment. In 2009, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, India, signed an agreement with Unifem, now UN Women, South Asia Regional Office to initiate a three-year programme entitled 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia'. The

programme aims to empower elected women representatives in local governance to make public policy and resource allocation patterns responsive to women's human rights. The programme covers 5 countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan). In India, the programme is co-owned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. The programme has been designed with the spirit to capture the specific issues and challenges with regard to women's political empowerment that each country experiences. This is a demand driven programme that seeks to understand and address issues of women's participation in local governance from the grassroots perspective. Generation of a body of knowledge on women's political leadership and governance in India and South Asia is one of the key outcomes of the programme (SARSWP, 2013). A few years back a three week certificate programme on political leadership was organised by IIM Bangalore along with Centre for Policy Research New Delhi. This programme aimed at building professional leaders by training them and equipping them with sufficient awareness in the related subject (IIMB & CSR Initiative, www.iimb.ernet.in/node/)

The Indian political system largely proves the fact that the women's participation remains confined to that of extending their right to franchise. Beyond that they appear to be nonexistent keeping in mind their population strength. They are underrepresented and thus their participation is also quite low. As they are underrepresented their interests and demands also remain unfulfilled. With respect to India we can say that the act of representation do not even perform a legitimising role allowing its women citizens to be under the impression that they are governing. On the contrary it is Schumpeter who is proved right when he says that electoral mechanisms are opportunistic. In this case only catering to the patriarchal system of society and adversely affecting the idea of collective good of both

men and women alike.

Alifio Mastropaolo talks of the difficulties of representation. He repurposes the idea of direct democracy as a complement to promote greater participation of citizens in decision making. He proposes the idea of governance. Governance is a merger of representation and participation where the stake holders negotiate, and interact to get their interests served (Mastropaolo in Badie et. al., op. cit., p. 2285). Could this be a good alternative to include the women of India to be an equal constituent element of the Indian political system? But to do this again we need to tread along a difficult terrain of our indigenous socio cultural perspective.

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The Representation of Women in Postfeminist Discourse and its Link to Empowerment

Neeparanya Guha

‘Postfeminism’, which developed in the late twentieth century, is a concept which is celebrated by some and disliked by others (Genz and Brabon 2009: 1). It is a term used to refer to the cultural climate as well as young women since 1982 (Showden 2009: 168). In the 1980s, the media started labeling teenage girls and women in their twenties as the ‘postfeminist’ generation (Aronson 2033: 904). Postfeminism emerged in a number of academic, political and cultural contexts, from feminist analysis to media and popular journalism, neo-liberal discourse and postmodern theories (Genz and Brabon 2009: 1). The term postfeminism is sometimes used synonymously with terms and phrases such as backlash, new feminism, Girl Power, do-me feminism and third wave feminism (*ibid*). Postfeminist discourse views women as autonomous, empowered agents but such claims have been challenged by various scholars. According to Kumar and Varghese, empowerment implies the transition from a state of enforced powerlessness to that of power (Kumar and Varghese, 2005: 55). This chapter explores the representation of women within the postfeminism context and its link to empowerment.

Similar to the definition of feminism, which is categorized into different forms, it is not easy to provide a specific definition of postfeminism. Based on content analysis, Hall and Rodriguez in their analysis of postfeminism, identified that there has been a drastic reduction in the support for women’s movement because some women : are becoming increasingly antifeminist; believe the

movement to be irrelevant; have adopted a “no, but ...” version of feminism (2003: 878). The “no, but...” version of feminism is described by Ouellette as women being “reluctant to define themselves with the feminist label, but they approve of and indeed demand equal pay, economic independence, sexual freedom, and reproductive choice” (Cited in Hall and Rodriguez 2003: 879).

Further, postfeminists can be understood as a group of libertarian or individualistic feminists who strive towards the removal of state control from the personal sphere (Showden 2009: 169). Prominent postfeminists include Camille Paglia, Cathy Young and Rene Denfeld. On the cultural level, they act towards reviving traditional femininity and denounce the “victim feminism” of second wave feminism. According to the postfeminists, feminism has overemphasized on the victimization of women. They are of the opinion that women as a unit possess significant social power. The concept of “victim feminism” and “power feminism” was developed by Naomi Wolf in her book *Fire with Fire* (*ibid* 169- 172). According to her, victim feminism “Urges women to identify with powerlessness even at the expense of taking responsibility for the power they do possess” (Wolf 1993: 148). Power feminism is depicted as a pro-sex, individualistic version of feminism which asserts that women have the capacity for self-definition which they need to exploit (Genz and Brabon 2009:64). Second wave feminism’s emphasis on women’s victimization as a unifying political feature is viewed as outdated and disempowering. The postfeminists argue that it should be replaced with the empowering power feminism (*ibid*). The question remains, does women living a postfeminist life actually empowered?

In the early 1990s, the creation of postfeminism as a social category is highlighted by three stories published in the *Time: Onward Woman!*, *The Road to Equality* and *The War against Feminism* (Hall and Rodriguez 2003: 879). The cover story of *The War against*

Feminism stated that “in popular culture, in politics- and among ordinary women- a backlash has hit the women’s movement.” (Cited in Hall and Rodriguez 2003: 879). Postfeminism is equated with a media-driven and anti-feminist backlash which involves the disapproval of feminist goals (Genz and Brabon 2009: 51). The concept of backlash had been dealt extensively by Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. Backlash is seen to be propagated by the media which regards feminism responsible for a number of female troubles and illnesses, from depression to infertility and depicts feminism as “women’s worst enemy” Critics argued that the media-driven anti-feminist backlash strived to reverse the achievements of the feminist movement (*ibid* 51-53). According to Faludi, the backlash is a “preemptive strike” for stopping women in reaching full equality (Faludi 1991: XX). The backlash argument consists of the assertion that every time feminism accelerated, a whole set of repressive social, political, ideological and economic forces worked together to constrain it (Coppock et al. 1995: 6). According to Faludi, ‘Just when record number of younger women were supporting feminist goals in the mid-1980s...and a majority of all women were calling themselves feminists, the media declared that “post-feminism” was the new story- complete with a younger generation who supposedly reviled the women’s movement’ (Cited in Genz and Brabon 2009: 55). She believes that “post-feminism is the backlash. Any movement or philosophy which defines itself as post whatever came before is bound to be reactive. In most cases it is also reactionary” (Cited in *ibid* 16).

When it comes to the definition of postfeminism, Rosalind Gill also observes that there is little consensus regarding its definition, ranging from it representing an epistemological de-linking with second wave feminism to a shift to third wave feminism and depicting backlash (Gill 2007: 147). According to her, postfeminism can be

comprehended as a distinct sensibility consisting of certain themes which are interrelated. These are: “femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sex difference” (*ibid*).

- Femininity as a bodily property – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by its excessive preoccupation with the female body. Femininity is understood as a bodily property instead of a psychological, structural or social one. The media equates a woman’s primary source of identity to the possession of a ‘sexy body’ while avoiding the caring and nurturing characteristics of women as the key to femininity. The body of women is portrayed not only as their source of power but also as something which requires constant surveillance, discipline and monitoring for fitting into shallow judgments of attractiveness (*ibid* 149).
- From objectification to subjectification – Women are not directly objectified but presented as active sexual subjects who opt to portray themselves in an apparent objectified way as it matches their liberated interests. Gill describes it to be a deeper or higher type of exploitation as power is not forced upon from outside but acts in construction of female subjectivity. Women are called to create a certain kind of self attached with agency only on the condition that they construct themselves as a subject close to male fantasy. For Gill, this implies that “sexual objectification can be (re)presented not as something done to women by some men, but as the freely chosen wish of active, confident, assertive female subjects” (*ibid* 151-153). Recently, there have been widespread debates regarding celebrity Kim Kardashian West’s naked selfie which is posted on a social networking site. Journalist Piers Morgan’s reaction to it is the statement that “Feminism is now

dead” (Harper’s BAZAAR 2016). In her interview with magazine Harper’s BAZAAR, American actress and political activist Jane Fonda said, “One of the problems that feminism is trying to address is the objectification of women as sex objects, so I think posting a nude picture of yourself doesn't exactly help that. I think it plays into the objectification of women” (*ibid*).

- Discipline and self-surveillance – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by the stress upon self-monitoring, self-surveillance and self-discipline (Gill 2007: 155). Gill describes that from sending a text message to choosing a drink, not a single part of a woman’s life is detached from the need to work on oneself and self-survey. Not only the body, but also the self is required to be under constant surveillance (*ibid* 155- 156).
- Individualism and empowerment – Postfeminist discourses consist of the notion that the practices of women are chosen freely by them, presenting them as empowered, autonomous agents, free from power imbalances and inequalities. Notions such as ‘pleasing oneself’ and ‘being oneself’ are important features of postfeminist sensibility’ It avoids important questions such as how the ideals of beauty internalized by women are socially-constructed (*ibid* 153-154).
- Makeover paradigm – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by a makeover paradigm which requires women to believe that their life is either flawed or lacking in some form and that it is open to transformation and reinvention by listening to relationship, lifestyle or design experts and by adopting appropriate and modified consumption patterns (*ibid* 156).

1 Hookup – Sexual experience with a friend, an acquaintance or a stranger. (Grello et al. 2006:255; Paul et al. 2000:76; Lovejoy 2012:1) It is a sexual relationship devoid of romance, in which the partners do not refer to each other as girlfriend or boyfriend. (Grello et al. 2006:255)

Resurgence of notions about sex difference – Postfeminist media culture is characterized by the resurgence of notions of natural sex difference, which is visible in all forms of media from advertisement to newspapers, popular fiction and talk shows. Gill argues that such discourses act to “(re-) eroticize power relations between men and women”. Not only it portrays such difference as sexy but also it can be utilized in strengthening existing inequalities by describing them as inevitable and pleasurable. (*ibid* 158-159). Bulter in her study of hookup culture in colleges equates the above mentioned characteristics of postfeminism to the characteristics of hookup culture which act together in hiding existing and even new types of inequalities (2013 XII).

Postfeminism is often used synonymously with ‘new feminism’ which provides a celebratory and optimistic image of an assertive and confident lot of women who report of success and achievement in both the private and public sector (Genz and Brabon 2009: 64).

However, it has also been asserted that postfeminism cannot be called “new feminism’ as it involves the threat of backlash and not something pioneering and revolutionary while new feminism refers to a form of feminism which is distinct from and beyond the older version of feminism (*ibid* 65). New Feminism can be equated with other versions of individual agency found in the late twentieth-century which in Giddens words encourage subjects to involve in “reflexive project of the self” and “forge their identities beyond/outside established social categories” (Cited in *ibid* 66, *ibid* 66). Critics are of the opinion that new feminism lacks political seriousness and while emphasizing on celebrating female power, it might work to reject female vulnerability and victimization (*ibid* 68).

Postfeminism is also equated with the concept of ‘Girl Power’ which was promoted by a group of female singers named Spice Girls in the 1990s (Genz and Brabon 2009: 76). It involves a combination of female individualism and independence with an open display of

sexuality/femininity (*ibid* 77). To become ‘Girlie’ is to assert that traditional systems of heterosexual power relations are pleasurable rather than degrading and women should celebrate feminine sexuality (Showden 2009: 176). Girlies are of the opinion that they can compete alongside men and gain equality without giving up feminine attributes and that their assertiveness and empowerment are linked to feminine identities (Genz and Brabon 2009: 77). In Girlie discourse, agency and emancipation are often linked to the ability to purchase and to consumer culture and women’s agentive powers are linked to consumption of goods and services associated with sexuality/femininity. Although Girlies believe that they are free to create their identities and appearances, critics argue that their choices are narrow as “the Girlie look is similar to...patriarchal ideals of feminine beauty”. According to Gill, ‘sexual objectification can be presented not as something done to women by some men, but as the freely chosen wish of active...female subjects’ It is argued that the popularity of Girl Power can be attributed to its absence of threat to the existing social structure and its commoditizing and individualizing effects that undermine feminist politics (*ibid* 79- 80).

‘Do-me feminism’ is also often used synonymously with postfeminism. It views sexual freedom as essential for female emancipation and independence (Genz and Brabon 2009: 91). It initially appeared in men’s magazine in the 1990s. The do-me feminists make use of their sexuality and physical appearance in order to attain professional and personal goals and to obtain control over their lives. They want to disassociate themselves from anti-sex feminist positions by celebrating sexuality and feminine adornment. “The increasing sexualization of female representations in popular culture” has been criticized by Ariel Levy by using terms such as ‘raunch culture’ and ‘female chauvinistic pigs’. Raunch culture refers to a highly sexualized culture which propagates discourses about sexuality and representations of sex across a wide range of mass media (*ibid* 91-101). It involves reemploying of old gender

norms (Burkett and Hamilton 2012: 816). Levy describes female chauvinistic pigs as “women who make sex objects of other women” and of themselves (Levy 2005:4). Helford criticized the notion of feminine/sexual empowerment as being a “new arrangement of an old song” that acts in mobilizing women’s femininity and sexuality in the service of the status quo and patriarchal agenda (Cited in Genz and Brabon 2009:97). According to Janet Lee, this empowered sexy/feminine woman can be comprehended as a media persona which is created for being together with patriarchy (*ibid*). Many feminist scholars hold the view that contemporary sexual relations continue to be defined by ideals which are male-privileging and are limited by hidden pressures in such a way that make young women’s sexual freedom very difficult to enact (Burkett and Hamilton 2012: 816). According to Burkett and Hamilton, despite the depictions of assertive and sexually free women, statistics in Australia revealed that women in the age group 16-25 are most prone to sexual violence. It has also been found that coerced and unwanted sexual activities are quite commonly faced by women and are often normalized within heterosexual relations (*ibid*).

‘Third-wave feminism’, a phrase coined by Rebecca Walker is discernibly informed by postfeminism, especially in its power feminism optimism and girlie aesthetic (Showden 2009: 178-179). However, the third-wave feminists believe postfeminism to be a patriarchal/conservative discourse while third-wave feminism is defined as an emerging political movement which has strong affiliations to the theory and activism of second-wave feminism (Genz and Brabon 2009: 156). At the same time, third-wave feminism and postfeminism share the similarity of challenging the anti-feminine stance of second-wave feminism (*ibid* 161).

Postfeminist discourse celebrates femininity/sexuality and represents women as autonomous and empowered in a postfeminist era. Even though women’s progress in the current era cannot be

denied, such an understanding should be taken with a grain of salt. Scholars argue that patriarchal forces operate implicitly to preserve gender inequality, sometimes employing newer forms of mechanisms to ensure its persistence and to promote women's disempowerment. Postfeminism has been understood by many as such a mechanism. According to Elizabeth Douvan, "the privilege associated with male gender will not disappear any time soon" (Cited in Benkert 1996: 214). In both the developed and the developing countries, the influence of the patriarchal forces remains quite discernable. In most cases, women within a postfeminist culture cannot be equated to empowered individuals because of the continuing influence of patriarchal forces and ideals over their lives. In the beginning of the chapter, empowerment was linked to the transition from a state of enforced powerlessness to that of power. In most situations, women continue to remain powerless both within and outside a postfeminist context, with patriarchal forces monitoring their lives and hence cannot be understood as fully empowered individuals. This chapter explored the postfeminist discourse and the representation on women within the postfeminist context along with the discussion of terms and phrases used synonymously with postfeminism.

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The Tale Behind the Fairy Tales – A Study on The Disparity in Gender Representations

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“Fairy Tale signifies belief in the supernatural, not the suspension of belief. We all believe in the extra-ordinary of Once Upon a Time. We need to believe. We breathe through our tales”. - Vincenzo di Kastiaux (as cited in "The Meaning of Fairy Tale within the Evolution of Culture.")

The familiar and traditional fairy tale often seems a storehouse of values and behavior that are culturally acceptable. “In this sense, it forms an imaginary world which reflects the same process of defining differences and distinguishing categories by which we construct and apprehend the world around us. These fairy-tale distinctions may extend from good and evil to rich and poor, to earthly and sublime, to male and female. They form motifs and patterns which surface and resurface, weaving their way in and out of tales, traveling from fireside stories to the gossip of women at the loom, to the songs of workers in the field, to the notebook of the collector. This process of delineating differences becomes as familiar as the process of storytelling itself, and its to pos as recognizable. The tale, moreover, often falls within the guidelines of established social morals and mores. It becomes, if not a pedagogical tool to instill cultural values, and often a means of enforcing the status quo, then certainly the narrative voicing of a society's most pervasive patterns of belief, behavior, and conviction” (Brockleback, 2000). Fairy tales give a way to transcend the inevitable expectations and enables one to

circumvent the conventional knowledge of the society. They marvellously challenge habitual patterns of thoughts and seek to redefine notions of reality.

When it comes to children, they are thoroughly socialized and conditioned by films, television and stories they hear or read (Lieberman, 1972). Fairy tales have been the most fascinating part of a child's growing up years and children have consumed far more than just the outline of the stories. They learn values, behavioural and associational patterns and consequences of actions. These stories also reveal a picture of roles, behaviour, and psychology and fate according to sex and all this they gather from the princes, princesses, wood cutters, witches, and fairies of their favourite tales. The ending is also very important as the children are always curious to know how things fare in the end (ibid).

Now if we examine these tales we could observe a similar trend in all where the treatment of women have followed a certain pattern which could be an influence to create sexual role concept in the young developing minds and also suggesting shortcomings on a person's endeavours depending on the sex.

The question that arises is that whether these traits have been designated as feminine have roots in biology or in the process of forced acculturation? (Lieberman, 1972). To consider the potential that gender has a cultural character it is required to inspect the primary mechanisms of acculturation. Women all around the world have definitely formed their psycho-sexual self concepts, ideas on what they could achieve and what they could not, and what kind of behaviour is applauded and what kind is frowned upon, from their favourite fairy tales. These stories have always been a treasure chest of imaginations, aspirations and fantasies (ibid).

There are certain patterns that are visible in mostly all tales especially the prominence given to the concept of beauty which also forms the

primary device in many of the stories. When there is mention of several female characters, it is always the prettiest one who gets chosen for the reward. They might be punished or mistreated at first but ultimately it is always a happy ending.

Children were fed with the idea that beauty was perpetually the girl's most and probably the only valuable asset. Apart from being beautiful the girl also was docile, humble, timid and serene. Hot headedness and ill temperament were signs of ugliness. Most popular examples occur in "Cinderella", Beauty and the Beast", "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" where the singular beautiful daughter noted for gentleness, docious manners, and mellow temperament gets the prize. Heroines in Grimm tales or Disney movies are always pretty, doe eyed, obedient, pleasing temperament, passive and quiet with no defects. These stories encourage intense competition underlined with jealousy and divisiveness among girls and teach that there can be only one winner because there is only one prize (Lieberman, 1972).

A child learns to identify with the concept of beauty from a very tender age which may instil in them ideas that ugly girls are vicious, crafty and conniving and if the child identifies with the plain girls then she may learn to be envious and insecure of pretty girls, beauty being fate endowed; something that cannot be procured (Lieberman, 1972). This imbibed fear is a major source of perturbation, trepidation, deficiency and inferiority among women. Girls may be inclined to believe that there is a connection between a charming face and an attractive character and unpleasant face and an appalling character. The heroines are always chosen for their beauty and their existence is passive; waiting to be selected for the reward which is always in the form of a handsome prince rescuing them from their cruel lives. Marriage forever seems to be the focal point of all stories and the courtship the most significant and exciting part of a girl's life. When fairy tales are concluded with marriage and the vague

statement that “they lived happily ever after”, children develop a yearning to be courted, since marriage is the end of the story (ibid).

The feminist fairy tale debates in the 1970s led to the conclusion that fairy tales did have an impact on the lives and dreams of women as well as profoundly induced romance and fantasy in their daily lives.

As Jack Zipes puts in, “These classical fairy tales reinforced the patriarchal symbolic order - one based on ossified concepts of gender behavior”. Feminist theorists as well as cultural critics have given much stress on the contorted and falsified portrayal of women presented by these tales. They have been deeply saddened by the inimical gender expectations they promote and have been quite contributory in bringing to attention the cultural ramifications of these tales which performs the task of infusing roles and behavior patterns. As Brocklebank quotes Marcia K. Lieberman, “According to the standards of gender behavior delineated within canonical tales such as "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Snow White," passivity, victimization, feminine charm, and physical beauty are the necessary precursors to marriage and fortune”. For, as Ruth B. Bottigheimer remarks, the discursive pattern of such tales “produce functionally silent heroines”.

In the 1970s when there was a raging feminist fairy tale debate going on, everyone confirmed that these tales did have an impact on women’s lives, hopes and aspirations, extending amorous ideas and influencing their fantasies and sub conscious minds. “Even Alison Lurie, who sparked the debates with her 1970 article "Fairy Tale Liberation," assumed a fairly direct relationship between women's lives and the tales they read or were fed” (Harries,2000). Feminist literary critics complained that in the most celebrated fairy tales like "Cinderella" and "Snow White" and "Sleeping Beauty," the heroines were portrayed as passive, unresisting, unassertive waiting for their prince to arrive and save them. “As the earliest feminist critics of fairy tales all agreed, women in the best-known tales were either beautiful,

slumbering young girls or powerful, usually wicked and grotesque older women. Though there might be a muted tradition of tales in which women were admirable, active, clever, and self-assertive participants, the dominant tradition prescribed harmful roles for women that little girls could not help but imitate. Rather than design a life for themselves, the women "in thrall" to fairy-tale patterns wait for male rescue, or at least for something to happen. They half-consciously submit to being male property, handed from father to suitor or husband without complaint or volition" (Harries, 2000).

Early feminist critics were mainly perturbed with the female representation and its effects of these representations on gender identity and behaviour of children. Throughout the 1970s, these ideas were found in writings by American feminists who did the job of identifying such delusional socio-cultural myths and deceptive mechanisms that favoured oppression upon women. "In 1974, for example, Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating* echoed Lieberman's thesis by asserting that fairy tales shape our cultural values and understanding of gender roles by invariably depicting women as wicked, beautiful, and passive, while portraying men, in absolute contrast, as good, active, and heroic. Similarly, Susan Brownmiller, in the course of her 1975 book, *Against Our Will : Men, Women and Rape*, offered the tale of "Little Red Riding Hood" as a parable of rape and argued that fairy tales - particularly classic tales like "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Snow White" - train women to be rape victims. And in 1978, Mary Daly began the first chapter of *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* by pointing to the fairy tale as a carrier of the toxic patriarchal myths that are used to deceive women" (Hasse, 2000).

By the end of the 70s, these issues regarding the relationship of fairy tales to societal values and construction of gender identity gave way to more complex approaches. In the year 1979, Karen E. Rowe, an American literary critic asserted the importance of women forming

attitudes towards themselves, men, marriage and society. She remarked that even adult women were affected by the romantic paradigms of these tales and extracted the utopian ideals from the fables to fit into their “real” lives.

There were also feminist-oriented Grimm scholars who identified how the Grimms had constructed tales as to reflect the socio-cultural values of the prevailing times. Jack David Zipes, an American professor, in his essay "Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm? Socialization and Politi [ci] zation through Fairy Tales", compared different versions of Grimm's tales to expose how the Grimm brothers had revised stories to advocate patriarchal bourgeois values as part of the socialization process. This analysis was imbibed into Zipes's *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 1983. He probed that the fairy tale discourse was actually planned to act as a socialization agent for children especially to promote gender specific identity and behaviour.

Feminist writers like Andrea Dworkin, Kay Stone and Ruth Bottigheimer have all proposed that the fairy tales of Charles Perrault, The Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen have ascribed gender specific roles to girls and boys where femininity is marked by passiveness and masculinity as being active. So at the time when Grimms' tales were firmly rooted in German culture, 'Kaffeterkreis', an exclusive female literary salon, was established in Berlin as a response to exclusive male literary lobby and its members started working on breaking open the traditional framework lined in the tales. It was perceived that in the tales the females were “passive, silent, industrious, and rewarded with riches and a man to support them, while male models were destined to seek out adventure and take as their reward passive, silent, industrious females. Kaffeter fairy tales reversed these roles and presented heroines who found happiness in being educated and single rather than married and brain dead” (Teverson, 1999).

In the tale “Beauty and the Beast, the heroine is beautiful, morally sound, benevolent, and rehearsed to sacrifice self when mentioned about the deal made by her father with the Beast. She even loves and pardons her cruel sister displaying her martyr qualities. The message that a woman always must be inclined to adjust herself even if that means reconciling herself to a beast to better her father’s financial standing is entrenched in all the versions.

Apart from Beauty, whose vulnerability and her submission to the Prince who comes to her rescue is the key feature to feminist scholars, female passivity can also be seen in the tales of Sleeping Beauty who lies asleep waiting for her Prince to wake her up. Karen Rowe, an American literary critic, explains vividly on the social effects of passivity of females in fairy tales, noting, "These tales which glorify passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a heroine's cardinal virtues suggest that culture's very survival depends upon a woman's acceptance of roles which relegate her to motherhood and domesticity" (Lash, 2008).

These fascinating fairy tales originated from a variety of tiny tales thousands of years ago that were freely flowing in the world existing in unique ways under divergent environmental conditions. “The form and contents of the fairy tale were not exactly what they are today, for as a simple, imaginative oral tale that contained magical and miraculous elements and was related to the belief systems, values, rites, and experiences of pagan peoples, the fairy tale, also known as the wonder or magic tale, underwent numerous transformations before the invention of print led to the production of fixed texts and conventions of telling and reading” (Lash, 2008). Though print did not really help the fairy tales to settle and they continued to refashion and alter throughout the world by word of mouth. It was now shaped by both print and orality and many other technological innovations such as photography, painting, radio, film, Internet, etc.

“The fairy story affords the folklorist a very fruitful field for inquiry,

containing as it does a series of cultural layers. There is first the most primitive period, traces of which we find in the primitive customs and beliefs alluded to in the tale: such things as marriage customs, kingly state, the practice of cannibalism, helpful and talking animals, magical transformations, monsters, protracted sleep, separable soul, animism, the renewal of life, sorcery and taboo—a long list” (James, 1945).

We notice that right at the time of puberty Rapunzel is locked up in a tower, Snow White is sent out to be murdered, and Sleeping Beauty is in deep slumber, which unveils the fact that their freedom is severely chained down when in fact the young heroes of the tales are exhibiting full independence and increased power. Restrictions on girls at puberty contrasting with the freedom their brothers enjoy, is the reason why women have such a sympathetic reaction to the passivity of the heroines in the fairy tales. “In the specific tales mentioned, this restriction reflects anxiety about competition with other women that increased sexuality offers. It might also be seen as a protection for the heroine herself, who must remain pure for the one man who will eventually claim her. The restriction of women at puberty can also be interpreted as a reaction of men to the threat of female sexuality” (Stone, 1975).

The content of mass media is said to exert influence on their audience. To achieve their objectives they reflect the culture they are a part of as well as reflect its reality and needs. Thus, men are always projected as more powerful and vigorous than women, more intelligent, more logical and less emotional. Ideally the man should be more aggressive and less flexible while the woman should be submissive and who can easily adjust. “Men know their own minds and are less under the influence of emotions, less suggestible” (Saenger, 1995).

Starting from oral to literary, tales were always written to silence the voice of females and this was further cemented when these were

made into films. Brocklebank (2000) cites Jack Zipes ("Breaking the Disney Spell" 27) and explains that "the second significant movement in the institutionalization of the fairy-tale genre was the shift to film, for visual images now imposed themselves on the text, creating their own separate textual meaning". Walt Disney Productions has had its supremacy over fairy tale films and has been quite influential in promoting gendered images. Animated feature films like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty are most sharply criticized by scholars in children's literature as they star all passive heroines and female villains and these films have further promoted the already sexist stereotype of womanhood within the verbal texts and strengthened its position as a purveyor of social pedagogy and ideology.

Walt Disney kept the fairy tale genre alive as well as became quite influential in keeping the gendered images intact. In 1937, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs released and his representation of the victimized yet contented princess keeping domestic order in a tiny house and crooning "someday my prince will come" became exceedingly popular topping the charts of all times. This cinematic representation of femininity not only restricted to children but Snow White became a model which real women identified with.

Cinderella, Disney's first full length feature film, released in 1950 and this too echoed the success of Snow White. The movie again had a charming heroine and a scheming and villainous stepmother, again reflecting and influencing gender roles of the time. "Disney's stepsisters could never have cut a fine figure anywhere. They are purposely grotesque to heighten the drama. They are lazy, nasty creatures whose main purpose in life seems to be to argue among themselves. While they are not as frightening as the wicked queen in Snow White, they are equally repulsive" (May, 1981). The makers wanted Cinderella to be a universal model so that any woman could relate to and identify with her.

1989 saw the release of *The Little Mermaid* and the makers proudly displayed their updated their traditional gender portrayal by creating a feisty and spunky heroine, Ariel. Film critic Roger Ebert lauded Disney for their depiction of "a fully realized female character that thinks and acts independently, even rebelliously, instead of hanging around passively while the fates decide her destiny".

After *The Little Mermaid*, Walt Disney Pictures released *Beauty and the Beast* in 1991. Linda Woolverton, the scriptwriter for *Beauty and the Beast*, offers the following explanation for her conception of Belle: "You have to consider what kids are like now in terms of sophistication, you have to make sure that your themes are strong, that people can relate to the characters, that the story isn't sexist. Belle is a strong, smart, courageous woman. She sacrifices herself for her father. There are great themes of passionate love in the story, almost operatic themes. She's a Disney heroine who reads books. It excites me. We've never seen that before" (Brocklebank, 2000).

Though Ariel and Belle deviated from the gender stereotypes by following their unconventional desires, yet in the end they do confirm to the culmination of marriage. In fact, Ariel's upward mobility costs her voice and identity and Belle sacrifices her hopes of adventure to a restrained domestic life. In this context of children's culture medium, thus, we see that these characters enjoy a prominent place in the "constituents of contemporary children's subjectivities, encouraging and spreading strict standards of femininity and masculinity", (Odinino, 2016).

Fairytales has revealed a vantage point from which one could understand the world of women, understand the world of men as well as understand the interrelationship between the two worlds. These tales have been maneuvered through social, political and educational lanes and we often feel the need to abstract a moral from them, be it repressive or emancipatory. It also depends on the minds of the readers who show their responsiveness or unresponsiveness to the

contents of the book. This is explained by the theory of Cultural Lag which helps in reflecting change in the patterns of the mindset of the society of that particular time. Change in children's books is unhurried and displays established values and attitudes of the general mass.

A deep understanding is required to comprehend the complex cultural patterns, coding and personal insights imbibed in the structure and language of these tales. Today there may be greater acceptance of girls in active roles and stories can easily incorporate female characters as more bold, adventurous and dynamic. Female characters have definitely undergone cultural changes but still subtle differences in gender are visible even today, in the culture of consumption.

There exists a controversy about what is biologically conditioned and what is learned. Questions like is passivity biologically imbibed in women; or is it affected by culture; do they reflect female characteristics or do they serve as training manuals for young girls; do the 'rewards' reflect societal values or are they inherent in nature. There is a chance that the traditional features of femininity found in these stories are actually stamped in the minds of the children and are reinforced by the stories themselves.

So what we can do is we balance the beloved old fashioned classical tales that clearly defines our childhood with stories that even things up a bit and reflects the current position of women in the world.

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