

# **Drishti**: the Sight

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# **Drishti**: the Sight

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**A REFEREED (PEER-REVIEWED) BI-ANNUAL NATIONAL RESEARCH  
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# **Drishti**: the Sight

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# EDITORIAL

W. B. YEATS

The world observes the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of W.B. Yeats this year. Yeats retains his iconic status as a modernist poet and his popularity among the scholars, academicians and the general readers runs well beyond the age to which he belonged. Yeats took to poetry for he had to live with a growing concern with the problems of the age, for he believed that the clumsiness which marked the contemporary reality may be addressed with poetry and poetry alone, that could divert / draw the attention of the masses to the beautiful and the significant things in life. Yeats was one of those few lyrical poets who attempted to write on political themes by adopting a method which was symbolical. For most of his poems, he juxtaposed the images mentally, pictorially and rhythmically- in a way to evoke a flash of beauty, which in turn sensitized the readers with his own social vision *vis -a -vis* the contemporary reality. Yeats was especially affected by the cause of the Irish Revolution. The fervour of the Irish nationalism in him got further compounded by his love for Maud Gonne, who was one of the leading figures of the movement, in whom he saw a 'radical innocence'. Though his love for the latter remained unrequited, he took refuge to writing poems by referring to her directly or indirectly, thus to overcome possible heart-aches. For his poetic imagery, Yeats often turned to the classical myths and Irish folkore. In exploring the greatness of the poetry of Yeats one has to delve deeper into the making of the poet from various aspects of his genius, such as: as a naturalist, as a lover, as a stylist, as a symbolist, as a representative of a tragic generation, as an un-Wordsworthian romantic, as a modernist, as a social visionary, as a realist, as a political lyricist, as a prophetic lyricist, as a revolutionary idealist, as a critic of his age, as an occultist. What is also unique about him is that in his verses the various cultures, religions and philosophies of the world interacted. 'The Indian Upon God', for example, is based upon the theme of the omnipresence of God (he was thus able to gain insights from the Indian Vedic philosophies). As a source of inspiration and as the background to several poems by him, Ireland may have played a very effective role-but there was a greater plane which was active more than the locale of Ireland; that is: he had in him ingrained a deep sense of the universal cultural heritage. Besides writing poetry, Yeats also dabbled in writing prose and drama. Yeats was greatly disturbed by the shattering effects of the first world war and the industrial life upon the humanity and through all his writings he meditated over the implications of them.

Although Yeats does not belong to the present century, the relevance of his poetry cannot be ignored even today. *Drishti: the Sight* in offering glowing tributes to the genius of W.B Yeats, hopes that scholars would contribute write ups on their chosen topics on the works of Yeats for publication in its successive issues.

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# Home, Land and the Restless Ethnoscape: A New Historical Approach to the Works of Temsula Ao and Tiren Boro

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## **Abstract:**

*North-East India is the abode of diverge ethnic groups and indigenous people. Before British colonization some independent rulers ruled these regions. The Literature from North-East have various issues of insurgency, conflict, violence, migration, land alienation, discrimination, colonization, big dams etc. to be highlighted. Both Tiren Boro and Temsula Ao are the writers from North-East India. The issues and perspectives associated with Home (land), question of Identity and Ethnicity are the dominant themes of the writers. Tiren Boro depicts the problems of Bodos while Temsula Ao depicts that of Nagas- the two major ethnic groups of North-East India, their long standing problems of land, ethnicity and Identity. Temsula Ao's *These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone and Laburnum For My Head* are collection of short stories telling Naga insurgency, the Naga Independence movement, the conflict between Indian and Naga groups, the factional conflict within the 'freedom fighters' etc. Tiren Boro's *Bigrai arw Dwisrai (Bigrai and Dwisrai)* is a fictional depiction of Bodo movement for self-determination. His *Somni Nwjruti (The Perspectives of the Time)* is a collection of essays associated with tribal discourse of Assam, their problems and issues- movement for identity assertion and its consequences, marginalization, land alienation, the question of Ethnicity and Identity. The paper uses *New Historicism*, a theory propounded by Stephen Greenblat, which give scope to study the literary text in relation to non- literary text or the co-text.*

*The lore associated with land and home, the politics of identity assertion, the strategies and methods of struggle, the victims and consequences of the movements depicted in the works of Temsula Ao and Tiren Boro are studied in parallel with the co-texts. Keywords: Ethnicity, Home, land, Identity, Bodo, Naga, violence.*

The term 'new historicism' was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt. His book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (1980) is usually regarded as the beginning of New Historical Criticism. A simple definition of the new historicism is that it is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. American critic Louis Montrose defines it as a combined interest in 'the textuality of history, the historicity of texts'. History is not a series of events that have a linear and casual progress, rather history is a selective record. Both historian's records and literary fictions based on historical facts are regarded as interpretations. The literary fiction 'situated' on a historical fact is not mere reflection of that fact. Both the fictional interpretation and historical records have same weight. The seeming definiteness of accuracy may be attained through endless discourse of conflicting interpretations.

## **Ethnic significance of Home and Land**

The ethnic Bodos and Nagas have no short of myths and legends. In parallel to the scientific descriptions of the origin of earth, they have their own descriptions about the origin of earth. The land is known as *Bwiswmata* or *Bwiswmuti* i.e., the mother earth in Bodo. The myth regarding the creation of land tells

that there was no land before the creation of human beings, and there was water and water everywhere. *Bwrai bathou*, the God of the Bodos, sitting in the wave of spider, sent *Omasrwn*, the pig on the back of the Crab to bring land from *patalpuri* (the bottom of water). The crab picked some colds with its pincer, and the pig stumbled and splashed on the mud, and then they came back. *Bwrai Bathou* collected the colds and mud from the pincer of the crab and the skins and furs of the pig, and spread them on the surface of water and created the land. It is said that the crab has footprint of pig on its back as it carried pig on its back. The land is sacred- the mother feeder, and worshiped by the Bodos, which include in the five principles of *Bathou*, i.e., land, water, air, space and fire. The land play a significant role in the traditional marriage of the Bodos. The *barlangfa*, a responsible person of Bodo traditional marriage, sings and dances and picks up pieces of land on the way to bridegroom during marriage and keeps them before the bride and bridegroom and says, "You have to cradle this earth from today." This act of *barlangfa* suggests the beginning of the process of life and the continuance of earth. The earth is the creator of all life, hence the *amtisua* festival is observed every year, which is equivalent to the menstrual of woman. In this festival the farmers do not plough the land.

In the Ao-Naga myth, *Lijaba* is the creator of earth. He first created a few plains and valleys, and then began to surround them with hills. But his work was interrupted by a huge cockroach, which alarmed *Lijaba* by shouting, "Beware! Beware! Enemy warriors are fast approaching" (Ao 82). He worked in a desperate hurry and created the rest of the Ao country in an extremely haphazard manner, and therefore the Ao region is hilly and doesn't have many beautiful plains, valleys, or rivers. For the Nagas, land is the temple in which they worship. Land relates to their Creator, the *Lijaba*. Mar Imsong observes that the Naga "... activity on the land is reverential and priestly because the Supreme Being and its regents spirits dwell on or in the land. Land is the abode of God-Spirits-Humankind" (Imsong 196). The understanding of ethnic Naga identity that is shaped by a communitarian, relational, liberating, inclusive, and ecological concept of land is found in the Naga traditional ethos. Land is

sacred and can be neither bought nor sold. While for many modern people, land is regarded as a productive economic resource, for the Nagas the land is something greater, called territory/place and space.

The Folklore of Bodos and that of Nagas establishes their ethnicity firmly. Opposing to the modern interpretation of the history of migration and settlement, such folklores show that they migrated from nowhere. They belongs to the land, and land belongs to them. God created them, and created land for them. Both Temsula Ao and Tiren Boro utilize such folklore in their works abundantly to establish ethnicity and strong bases for identity assertion.

The Ao-Naga myth of human origin tells that their ancestors were born from a place named Lungterok from where they emerged out of the earth 'one after another.' This phenomenon is known as Poktet in Ao language. The myth further goes on to say that there were six human beings who 'burst out' of the six stones. Hence the place of origin is known as Lung terok (Lung meaning stone, terok meaning six). Of these, there were three males and three females. The men were LOGPOK, TONGPOK and LONGJAKREP. The women were LONGKAPOKLA, YONGMENALA and ELONGSE. TONGPOK married ELONGSE, LONGPOK married LONGKAPOKLA and LONGJAKREP married YONGMENALA. The three men emerged from Lungterok are said to be patriarchs of the three main Ao clans. LONGPOK is the patriarch of PONGENER clan, TONGPOK is the patriarch and LONGJAKREP is that of Jamir clan.

The myth of Ao-Naga origin appear and reappear in most of Temsula Ao's creative writings. In her song *Stone-People from Lungterok* she describes the characters of Ao ethnicity as poetic and politic, finders of water and fighters of fire. They know the language of birds and animals, their students could learn from the ants, and they are the hunter of heads of the enemies:

STONE-PEOPLE

Savage and sage

Who sprang out of LUNGTEROK

Was the birth adult when the stones broke?

Or are the STONE-PEOPLE yet to come of age?

(“Stone-People from Lungterock”) (Ao 109).

### The lost home

Both Tiren Boro and Temsula Ao feel nostalgic for their old good homes. The Bodos ruled their homeland with the help of *Siobrai* (*Bathou bwrai*) with five philosophical principles or *baad*, i.e., (a) Agorbaad (b) Phongsloed baad (c) Daokibaad (d) Khoulobod baad and (e) Khowalibaad, and worshipped *Bathou*, which includes five principles of deep philosophical significance. (‘Ba’ means five and ‘thou’ means deep philosophical thought). The ‘*Bathou*’ mantra reveals such embodiment. They had five traditional musical instruments, i.e., *Kham*, *jota*, *serja*, *sifung*, *jabkring*. But such uniqueness of culture and traditions have been threatened under the influence of other dominant culture, religion and languages. *Fungbili* (1985) depicts the plight of Bodo language and the preparation for the ground to regain the marginalized identity of the Bodos. Jangila Brahma, the hero of the novel, was initially apprehensive towards Puwati Nisha Boro, the heroine of the novel, because she could neither speak Bodo language nor wore *dokhona*. Jangila is presented as the patriot of Bodo language and culture. He did not like to identify himself as Assamese. Sharma sir of Siphajhar, the teacher of Jangila when he was a student of class six of Assamese medium asked him what was his mother tongue (...*Jangila*, *Koasun tumar matrivhasa ki?*). Jangila quickly replied that his mother tongue was Bodo. The teacher was provoked by Jangila’s reply and gives him a sound slap and scolds him with abusive words, “*Burbok*, *gahorikoa matat eko nai* (Boro 3)” (Brainless, pig eater idiot). From that day Jangila decided not to speak pure Assamese even though he knew it. Situation compelled Puwati to learn Assamese language and adopt Assamese identity, but her mind was yearning to identify herself as Bodo. The song of Puwati explains the situation of the Bodos of the time. The song says that, it is because of lack of unity among them, the Bodos have lost their kingdom. The old days were golden with their own culture, language and territory. They have become prey of dominant culture and language. They believe that they have lost their distinct written history because of the conspiracy of the enemies:

We have lost Dimapur one after another  
No identity written in history of Bodos  
Guava, jackfruit andwith plenty of Nature  
Everywhere there were prosperity.  
Bwirati fetched betel nut  
Danced bagurumba in kherai  
Traditional customs have become vulnerable.  
  
No heroes like Swmdwn and Sikhwna  
On these days of crisis have come forward.  
Kham, cymbal are silent  
No sound of harp.  
Ethnic symbols  
Are calling us crying  
Hidden under the curtain. (*Translated*)

The same echoes are heard in the song of Temsula Ao. She feels uncomfortable with her present hills which have lost attractiveness. The bird songs of old good days are replaced by the sound of sophisticated weaponry of war:

But to-day,  
I no longer know my hills,  
The birdsong is gone,  
Replaced by the staccato  
Of sophisticated weaponry  
My Hills (Ao 157).

*Bigrai arw Dwisrai* (1992) was written during the Bodo Movement of 1980s. The writer says about the book : “The novel is written with the materials collected from different corners of Assam during Bodoland movement. The novel try to depict a picture of how a linguistically and culturally distinct ethnic community faced innumerable hardships, tortures and human right abuses due to the conspiracy of an advanced community on their struggle to determine identity in the world” (Boro preface). When the marginalized and dominated Bodos raise their voices for constitutional rights, they are identified as extremists (Boro 2). The village Sonapuri of the novel is the microcosm of Bodoland movement as the village Kanthapura is the microcosm of Indian Freedom movement in Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938). The hardships faced in Sonapur tells what happened in Bodo villages during Bodoland Movement. Bigrai Khungur Brahma, the hero of the novel is presented as the active

participant of Bodoland Movement. He was encouraged by the inspiring speech of Bodofa Upendranath Brahma, the then president of Kokrajhar district All Bodo Students' Union, "One day Bodofa Upendranath Brahma, the President of Kokrajhar district All Bodo Students' Union came at Gerua open field. His sharp inspiring speech delivered before the several thousand mass gathering, transformed Bigrai into a revolutionary patriot" (Boro 4). There was untold tortures on the common people of Bodo village, and there was re-assessment. Faodur, the younger sister of Bigrai was shot dead because she requested the police force to release ten old innocent Bodo people. This fictional presentation echoes the first woman martyr Helena Basumatary (15), who was "brutally shot dead by Police Force while she along with some women of Saraibil area was trying to prevent the arrest of 8 innocent Bodo villagers on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1988" (Bodoland 36). Rape was common practice to crush the movement; Dwisrai, the woman leader of the movement including twelve Bodo women, some of them teenager of 10/11 years, married and unmarried, mother and childless mother of Rupapuri were brutally raped by the police: "That dark night was terribly heinous, the thirteen women of different age groups, ranging from teenagers to married and unmarried women were gang raped by the peace keeper police force. Another evidence of hollow civilization had been proved on the innocent Bodo women" (Boro 93). The fictional presentation echoes the brutal gang rape of 10 Bodo women and girls by police on 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1988 at No. 12 Bhumka.

*The Jungle Major* shows the underground movement where many of the villagers were involved without understanding it, "...the entire land was caught in the new wave of patriotic fervor that swept the imagination of the people and plunged them into a struggle, which many did not understand" (Ao 3). Some of the villages became the part of the network, which kept the underground outfit supplied with information, food and occasional arms. "The subject of independence became public talk; young people spoke of the exploits of their peers in encounters with government forces and were eager to join the new band of 'patriotic' warriors to liberate their homeland from 'foreign' rule"

(Ao 3). *Soaba* shows the birth of a new group of people who "became the disquieting elements in the power struggle between the two warring groups" (Ao 12). Such environment was created by the government, because they needed a band of die-hards who would be their 'extra arms' beyond the law and civil rights. The fellow Nagas are employed as flying squads to inform about the movement and activities of their own people creating suspicion and disbelief among them. *The Last Song* tells the pathetic plight of Apenio, an innocent village girl and her mother, who were brutally tortured, raped and killed by Indian army. The might of the gun and brutal rape of the army could not stop her prayer to God. She died with song in her mouth. The leader of the army "grabbed Apenio by the hair and with a bemused look on his face dragged her away from the crowd towards the old church building. All this while, the girl was heard singing the chorus of her song over and over again" (Ao 28). Her mother could not tolerate the scene, "When she came upon the scene at last, what she saw turned her stomach: the young Captain was raping Apenio while a few other soldiers were watching the act and seemed to be waiting for their turn. The mother, crazed by what she was witnessing, rushed forward with an animal-like growl as if to haul the man off her daughter's body but a soldier grabbed her and pinned her down on the ground" (Ao 28). *The Curfew Man* depicts the life of Satemba, his war born profession as an informer, and the suffering of common people, who "has to face the hostility between two warring armies; the one overground labeling the other as rebels fighting against the state and the other, operating from their underground hide-outs and calling the Indian army illegal occupiers of sovereign Naga territories" (Ao 34). In *An Old Man Remembers*, the old man Imtisashi tells the hard times they faced during their youths for the movement. He is caught in the dilemma, "whether he is right to keep youngsters like his grandson in the dark about the price their parents and grandparents had paid for a piece of the earth they now called Nagaland" (Ao 93).

**Conclusion:** The land plays a very important role in the life of Bodo and Naga people. They worship land because it is the source of their livelihood. As there is importance of family for privacy, coziness and

happiness, there is importance of Homeland to maintain language, culture and tradition. Both Tiren Boro and Temsula Ao yearn for old good days, when they lived with traditional values. They are uncomfortable with present scenario of their community. The disturbed homeland haunts both the writers. There is no denying the fact that home is an abode of peace, happiness and one of the basic amenities required for one's living. After the day-long fatigue, people take rest at home and thereby gather new energy to keep pace with their assigned tasks and move in the world. Moreover, one's sense of being "rooted" is intrinsically related to one's home.

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# Re-reading Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

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## Abstract:

*This paper attempts to analyze William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* from a reader-response perspective. I have used here Wolfgang Iser's concept of "The Implied Reader" in this novel. This paper would first attempt to outline the basic concepts put forward by Wolfgang Iser in "The Implied Reader" and then see how his theory can be put to understand Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.*

*Key Words:* Reader-response, meaning, chronology, re-reading

Among the critics who are strongly concerned with reading, Wolfgang Iser's approach is rather distinctive. His approach is correspondingly mentalistic, attributing lesser importance either to the observed behaviour of literary participants or to the surface text of the literary work. He differs from the other reader-response critics in the sense that he does not analyze actual reading of the texts, but proceeds from an ideal "implied reader". The text leaves greater portion unexplained to the reader thereby inviting him to actively participate in synthesizing meanings. The interaction between author and reader is at the center of Iser's idea of the implied reader. The implied reader is the reader "inferable from the entire text" and he exists only in the theoretical world and not in the real world. He envisions an elaborate mental construct elicited by the work and subjected to continuous transformations as the reading proceeds.

In his essay, "The Reading Process", Iser asserts that literary meaning is a convergence of texts and readers. He also shows how the 'gaps' and 'blanks' in literary texts stimulate the reader to construct meanings.

The gap must be filled by any reader who reads this story. It is noticed that the different perspectives compete with each other to arrive at one final meaning. The constant revision and correction in the face of this demanding gap is what powers the reader's experience of the story. Iser is of the opinion that a literary work is dynamic and a reader can unfold its dynamic nature through the reading process. For him the text has both the written and the unwritten part. It is the unwritten part that stimulates the reader to creatively participate in the process of reading and understanding a text.

According to Iser, the activity of reading can be characterized as a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintensions, recollections. A single text can have multiple potential interpretations. As Iser says, a second reading also puts in a different impression from the first because of familiarity. A re-reading of a particular text will result in a different time-sequence as the reader would already be aware of what is to come.

William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1928), is one of the complex works of fiction. It is a book that takes the reader through the same story four times from the perspective of four different characters. The title is taken from Macbeth's reflection that "Life is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of Sound and Fury / Signifying nothing." The narrative expands into a universal story of man where time and place are not important. In effect, the modes of interpretation are such that any insistence on the particular would limit the scope of the narrative. In life there is no chronology. Chronology is something that refers to the fixity of truth. Interestingly, in Faulkner, every section is not chronological but ordered according to truth. There is a transparency of perception. There are four sections

in the novel. Although the novel is full of narrative dislocation and disjunction, it can be said to be completed.

In fact, in his *The Implied Reader*, Iser analyses Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* to assert that in the modern era, the traditional hero is no longer the reader's point of reference. Iser begins by describing how Benjy's section forces the reader to see how the narrator experiences the world, this experience being erratic with no regard for temporal order. Benjy's sentences do not form a unified story, for Benjy lacks the consciousness that would coordinate his perceptions. Therefore, this section evokes in the reader a sense that reality is elusive and the reader's desire for a more traditional narrative creates a tension he thinks will be relieved by the forthcoming sections. The second section does seem to promise relief, but again the reader is frustrated. Neither Quentin's section nor the other sections provide the relief sought by the readers. Basically, *The Sound and the Fury* is a book about the collapse of the American South. Here Faulkner shows people trying to defy time but falling prey to it. He uses time as a philosophical concept and a fictional device. It is noteworthy that the four sections are marked by dates that are significant in their own ways. The first section narrated by Benjy is dated 7 April, 1928 which is Holy Saturday. The second section narrated by Quentin is dated 2 June, 1910 which is Passion Thursday, the day Jesus had his last supper. The third section by Jason is dated 6 April, 1928, Good Friday and finally, the fourth section by Dilsey is April 8, 1928, which is Easter Sunday. Thus it is obvious that Faulkner consciously wants to add those days to depict Abstract Time, Continuum. However, he takes away the convergence which ensures that he does not make it entirely a Christian text. Just as Iser has stated in his essay, 'The Reading Process', the first time reader would probably not be able to relate these days to their Christian contexts. It is only later that they could identify these.

Texts that are termed "difficult" are ones that leave large gaps full of ambiguities that the reader must work through. An example is William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, where the first chapter especially, narrated from the perspective of a mentally challenged man, presents great difficulties for a reader striving to construct a coherent narrative. Faulkner challenges the

reader to derive meaning from the text from the first sentence itself:

"Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit" (*The Sound and the Fury* 3).

The readers are presented with a situation where the first-person narrator talks about a situation involving people whom he refers to as 'they'. We are not given any names apart from Luster and we, the readers are still not clear about who Luster is. The reference to the fence indicates that the narrator is observing the situation from the other side of the fence and hence he is not actively involved in the activity. However things change as the reader proceeds to read the next sentences. Gradually the reader would realize that the "I" is Benjy, a thirty-three year old, mentally challenged man watching golfers play. Things would be easier for the second time reader. The first reading that he had previously done would have enabled the reader to decipher the situation better than the first-time reader. It is also because he is aware of the situations that follow.

A few lines down and the reader is presented with a scene where the narrator is caught up in a nail while crossing the fence. Immediately Faulkner presents a situation in italics.

*Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see. We stooped over and crossed the garden, where the flowers rasped and rattled against us.* (Faulkner 4)

Again, a first time reader would not be able to find the connection between the two situations. However, the reader who is reading the text for the second, third or fourth time would not be at all confused. He would know that Caddie is Benjy's sister and the sentences in italics are the memories of Benjy's past that are triggered by external stimuli. In this case the act of crossing the fence reminds Benjy of an incident of his childhood where he and caddie had crossed the fence. At this point it can also be mentioned that an

observant reader can now also be able to see the symbolism of the Blood of Christ in this memory passage.

Throughout the first section the reader is left to decipher meaning from the incoherent utterances of Benjy without being warned that there are probably time shifts ranging to thirty years. Characters are named without describing the relations that they share with the narrator. The readers are controlled and guided by the text which consequently leads them to actively participate in creating the fictional world of the characters. At various points in the novel, Faulkner uses italics to highlight Benjy's confusing state of mind to the readers. The first-time reader is ignorant of what the italics signify. Faulkner uses "Stream of Consciousness" technique to suggest the way that Benjy's mind flows through time: memory, reality and emotion meet, shift and kaleidoscopically recombine. The first-time reader comes to this text in innocence, empty of pre-conceptions and ready to be guided how to read the text full of inconsistencies.

Benjy is innocent and absolutely committed to truth. His memory is triggered by external stimuli. Since his world is of innocence, his narrative is a cyclical pattern of loss and renewal. His section is spatially located. There the readers can see a projection of the forgotten moments. This projection, however, is not easily made available to the first time reader. As Iser asserts that every reading of the text enables the reader to see the same situations in a different light, here too, the subsequent re-readings would enable the reader to identify and then understand the cyclic as well as complex narrative pattern. Benjy remembers around 18 events and significantly, Caddy is associated with all of them.

Again, Benjy does not have any sense of time and context. He is doubly alienated from family and society. Like Tyresias in T.S.Eliot's *The Wasteland*, he is a prophet who knows but is forbidden to speak. He howls and tries to say a thing. He can be said to be a Christ-figure whose mode of communication is not understood by anyone except Caddie. It is noteworthy that Benjy does not remember events but he remembers sensations. Things like rain, water, fire, mirror, green, etc triggers his stimuli. As the reading progresses the reader is made aware that Benjy and Caddy are natural allies and that perhaps in the present, due to some

situations, Caddie is distanced from him.

There is a constant shift of time in the novel. It can be said that through Benjy's section, Faulkner tries to highlight irrational interpretation. Benjy's memory is collapsed as if everything happens at the same time. This collapse makes it difficult for the first time reader to understand his thought-process and come out with a situation. However, the reader reading it for the second time would face less difficulty while trying to interpret the text. Benjy is almost like a one-man chorus in Greek tragedy. He is the symbolic substitution of the moral world of the Compsons. Faulkner anticipates the collapse of a certain moral code in Benjy's absence. Benjy is more than the idiot figure, he is a prophet. Again, Benjy and Caddy are natural allies.

Throughout this section, there is a repeated reference to Caddie smelling like trees again. At the first reading it might be difficult to understand the connection between trees and the Caddie but later the reader realises that for the mentally challenged Benjy, smelling like tree means back to being pure again. Certain incidents make Caddie's presence repulsive for Benjy but after she acknowledges or rectifies her mistakes, she "smells like trees again". Benjy can then again include her in his own small world. At this point it is to be noted that in the first section, it is extremely difficult for the reader to form a fixed idea about what the story is about apart from the fact that Benjy, Caddie and the other characters are related in one way or the other and it is influenced by Caddie's disappearance from the family.

It is noteworthy that the readers face difficulty not only in Benjy's section but also in the other sections. The second section of the novel, narrated by Quentin, a well-educated man, develops out of some images of a poet/lover. For the reader reading the text for the second time, Quentin's section has certain images of love and betrayal in literature. The reader can observe a kind of literary self-fashioning in Quentin. A re-reading of the text would reveal that unlike the first section where Benjy is attached to the past memories, Quentin wants to forget the passage of time. Benjy is at one with Caddie when he remembers the past whereas Quentin feels that when he grows up by entering the passage of time, he will lose Caddie. It is noteworthy that his grandfather's clock reminds him of his responsibility. However, by attempting to destroy the

clock, he tries to destroy time. It is Faulkner's way of symbolizing the ongoing war between man and time.

Similar to Benjy's section, in Quentin's section too, Faulkner uses pronouns with unclear references, for example, "*Thinking it would be nice for them down in New London if the weather held up like this*" (Faulkner 77). It is later that we understand that "they" is a reference to Quentin's friends planning to go sailing. Here, too, the writer assumes the reader to be an implied one, without giving any warning or hint to the first-time reader. In this section, Caddie is referred to as "she" several times before her name is pronounced. However, on the basis of reading the Benjy section, the reader can understand that it is Caddie because there are repeated references to Quentin's obsession for Caddie. Like Benjy's narrative, Quentin's narrative too transcends the boundaries of time and the first-time reader, notwithstanding the impact of reading Benjy's section, would find it difficult to understand the situation.

Jason's part of the narrative starts with the dialogue he has with his mother: "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. I says you're lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you" (Faulkner 180). After tackling two difficult narratives, the reader is initially relieved to come across a proper narration. Unlike the first two sections, here "Stream of Consciousness" does not play a role and the narration is coherent. However, for the problem lies in the fact that he cannot easily identify with the moral world of Jason, the younger Compson, who is often cruel. He can be considered to be the least trustworthy narrator. For the reader who has become attuned to reading Benjy and Quentin's poetic modes of telling, Jason's dry mode would seem unappealing.

However, for the readers, the fourth and the final section narrated by Dilsey is the most coherent. Here the readers would be acquainted with certain traits of those characters with whom they have become acquainted over the last three sections. It is noteworthy that the reader can face problem here also in the sense that here, too, there is repeated reference to sound-Benjy's wail, Easter sermon, etc. Sound here plays a significant role in transmitting meaning as in the case of the other three sections. Thus it can be said that Faulkner considers the readers to be implied readers,

present on the scene and hence, an outsider. It is for this reason that this particular novel poses several difficulties for the first-time readers.

In order to understand the first two sections properly, it is necessary for the reader to empathize with the narrators, Benjy and Quentin respectively. Interestingly, none of the three brothers have a proper narratee. Benjy's and Quentin's section are narrated in the "Stream of Consciousness" technique and hence there is no necessity of a narratee. In Jason's case, the possibility of him confessing his misdeeds to someone else can also be negated. It can be said that in Faulkner's *The sound and the Fury*, the success of communicating the meaning rests with the readers. If through subsequent reading they want to decipher coherent meanings, they would be able to do so. However, if they are unreceptive, they cannot understand the text well.

In conclusion, it can be said that if Iser's theory is applied to the novel, it becomes clear that the book takes a totally different shape in the reader's mind from that which forms while reading it.

Most readers who come to the text for the first time without prior knowledge of it will be profoundly disoriented in the first section of the novel. It is only when one proceeds to the subsequent sections that the reader can sort out what went on in the earlier sections. As we read, we constantly try to make assumptions about what any given passage means in the light of what has happened in the text and what we expect to happen. Reception-theorists like Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish are interested in finding out how much control the text has on the reader's assumptions. In fact, they are concerned with how the text teaches the reader to read. The role of the implied reader comes into play here.

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# Pathological Sensitivity in Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*

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Female sensitivity is a major thematic pattern that emerges from Anita Desai's works. Novelist and short story writer, Anita Desai, believes that it is not the amount of suffering but sensitivity to suffering which enables an individual to share others' woes and sorrows. She demonstrates profound understanding of female psyche and sensibility. Being a woman is an added advantage to her, in that she can feel and give an authentic account of the female condition in her surroundings. A woman's reaction to the objects and atmosphere around is different from that of male sensibility. J. C. Masilamani states, "Anita Desai's preoccupation with the feminine sensibility is unique in the annals of the Indian English novel. The feminism is not of a demanding, obtrusive, clamouring, gifted women married to gentle, dutiful but insensitive men and who are slowly sinking in the bag of a dull matrimonial relationship" (25).

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) Anita Desai has tried to depict the life of a sensitive and lonely middle-aged Sita, who behaves in strange and neurotic manner although she is happily married to Raman, a factory owner and has had four children with "pride and pleasure sensual, emotional, Freudian, every kind of pleasure that supposedly goes with pregnancy and parturition (20). Alienated from her husband and children, Sita undergoes an acute mental agony, solely because of her sharp existential sensibility.

The novel is divided into three parts namely: "**Monsoon' 67**", "**Winter's 47**", and "**Monsoon' 67**". In the first part of the novel Sita rebels against her family and decides to go to the Island of Manori, "what I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again" (32). In the vehemence of her bellicosity

there appears no redemption from madness. The insane obstinacy of her wish to hold back the child, and the overwhelming despair, put her in the category of the character heading for a neurosis, psychosis or sudden end. Afflicted by her fifth pregnancy, she acts neurotically. Her wish to hold back the birth by magic—is an outcome of a sick mind. With her paranoiac rage, enigmatic demands and querulous behaviour, she makes her family miserable.

The second Part depicts Sita's life twenty years back, her life with her father. Here one can see her development as a compliant person. Her moral and emotional issue oscillates between the two polarities of 'Yes' and 'No'. Third part of the novel is a continuation of part One. Raman visits the island to fetch his children whom she took with her to Manori. Sita however at this point decides to accompany Raman. Personally she reconciles with her situation. Her stay on the island awakens her to life's reality, and she chooses to accept the routine of her existence. Her final resolution to reconcile with life, saves her from melodramatically drastic end. The "quest note" with which the novel ends, speaks of the maturity of perception achieved by both Sita and her creator.

In terms of female sensibility, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* portrays the feeling of ennui, boredom and meaningless existence experienced by Sita. Even after a well settled family of a husband and four-children, she has no sense of achievement, fulfilment or satisfaction to make her life worth living. It is the world of radical female resistance against a defined concept of normality. Her refusal to let her fifth child be born into a world where "The creative impulse had no chance against the over-powering desire to destroy" (30), is a bold expression of this female

resistance. Sita is “applied” by the pervasive phenomenon of violence that she observes in nature, - the ruthless chase of a young eagle by the greedy crows; in family, - the sarcastic comments of Raman, the presence of the women folk of Raman’s family; in society.

The first section of the novel is heavily loaded with image of brutality and violence. It is the violence which operates within and finds expression in subtler form of cruelty. Sita is unable to bear the violence and destruction around her in the gossip and quarrelling sessions of the servants, the fighting amongst the children, and civilizations ridicule of her efforts to protect and preserve. Raman finds delight in Sita’s failure to protect the eagle, when he says, coming out with his morning cup of tea, “Look at the feature sticking out of that crow’s beak” (27) and he laughs. The crows symbolize fear and destructions which evoke contempt and disgust in her mind as they “formed the shadow civilization” (38). Raman and his other family members are accommodative and considerate toward Sita, while she is always repulsive. It is not only the complacency and the violence of the life around her but also the violence in the world at large, which she confronts when her husband “casually handed her the newspaper on his way to office” (37).

Violence and aggressiveness are used as means of survival by Anita Desai’s women. Several shades of aggression and violence are visible in the character of Sita a shattered and frustrated woman, who feels trapped in the monotony of her house which offers nothing but “a curst of dull tedium of hopeless disappointment” (58). Sita’s neurotic fears and anxieties make her terribly aware of her surroundings. She finds it intolerable, a potent threat to her identity and sanity. Her behaviour shows the signs of violence seething inside her and forcing her to find fault with everyone, even in her children and husband an integral part of women’s existence. She indulges in verbal aggression and open criticism of others. Her habit of smoking shows her vengeance and the sadistic impulse to hurt others’ sentiments. Raman’s self-respect and social prestige get threatened when she calls his business partners as animals, “They are nothing- nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matters. Animals (47).

Sita’s violent outbursts are an obvious device to

protect her from self-hate, indifference and neglect. Raman is shocked to see her in a state of rage, fear and revolt, because a woman in her forties, greying and ageing should not lack self control. Her panic at the small incidents like fighting and playing of her children all puzzle and confuse Raman. Violence terrifies Sita because of her sense of insecurity. She has grown muddled and wonders if “by releasing it in a violent, plain wracked blood-bath, would she only be destroying What was, at the moment, safety contained and perfect?” (56) Sita develops the phobia that the world around her is not moving according to her whims and fancies and can no more offer security and safety. She is frightened of her own revengeful actions. Unconsciously, she craves to destroy all others because if no exists around her, her fear of other will not exist. But if she succeeds in destroying her false self-image, she can be saved from being crushed by it. As Alan W. Watts suggest, “Waiting to get out the pain... when you discover this desire to escape “merges” in the pain itself and vanishes” (89). Denying herself joy, enthusiasm, anger and fear the whole range of sentiments that make us human Sita loses the urge to assert and affirm herself. Devoid of these natural feelings, she becomes a female sensibility and melancholy incarnation, a depressed woman, bored with life: she presents a gloomy picture to her children and a quizzical one to her husband sitting on the balcony, smoking endlessly, staring blankly at the sea, as if she were waiting for something. Her entire life acquires the colour of waiting.

On a deeper level, waiting presupposes the beginning of a wish to reach beyond a state of despair and transcend emptiness and apathy into constructive potentialities. In Sita’s case, the vacuity exercised by her heuristic control system, blocks the possibility for assertion and spontaneity. The terror of the ensuing child-birth that Sita harbours has several psychological causes. Her confinement will force her to forsake her strenuously guarded strategies of detachment. It will entail getting involved in life once again-physically as well as emotionally. A deeper psychic reason however is the fear of her guilt feeling caused by the awareness that she has not exercised self control in sexual desires. Self reproach in the form of a gnawing feeling “I should have known,” makes her feel small.

Sita thus gives vent to her fury. There are visible signs of “self tormenting intents” marking within her psyche. Her desire to keep the child inside her is a kind of procrastination meant to continue her suffering. Since her primary driver is self-effacement, the urge to magnify her suffering is a part of her mental make-up. Harney calls it “schaden fende” i.e. a vindictive satisfaction at the self-inflicted pain. This is confirmed by Anita Desai’s observation in an interview with Jasbir Jain that in Sita’s wish to perpetuate her pregnancy there is a kind of rebellion right through to the last moment (7).

Sita goes to Manori revolting against all norms and advices. She becomes inhuman towards everybody. This single motif of not to give birth on which the entire structure of the novel is based, shows the combination of her compounded solutions-withdrawal, expansion and self effacement. By closing her eyes to the reality and resolutely following her fantasy, Sita manages to make herself immune from the assault of herself loathing. She lures to a kind of victory by rebelling against her bondage, and overcoming her weakness. In protecting her child from the callous world, Sita is guarding her self-image. To the world she appears crazy. Her attitudes, her outburst of anger, her appearance, all substantiate her whimsical approach. Is Sita really “mad” as Moses her servant and his friends describe her? Why is she always angry? The answer lies in the aggressiveness brewing within her, as herself effacing solution fails. She wants to master life and by her behavior she creates an atmosphere denuded of love.

Menaka is grown-up enough to retaliate her mother’s strange moods by her defiance. The girl comprehends that she can rely more on her father than on her moody mother. Sita is never normal with her children; as such they are attached to Raman. Whatever solution Sita adopts self effacing, aggressive or resigned - she is always heavily charged under her over pride system. She either bores them by her perpetual misery, or intimidates them by her arrogant vindictive drives, or her detached unconcern keeps them at a distance. Her capacity to give spontaneous love is seriously impaired.

Sita is in a mental state where there is hardly any difference between creativity and destructiveness.

Her thoughts of violence seem to be phantasized. Even when she is away from the world of reality, the thoughts of violence and destruction keep troubling her. It is her own anguish which is reflected in her thoughts and projected through her eyes. Harry Stack Sullivan believes that the way a person perceives other is influenced by the way he perceived himself. Every person to a greater or lesser extent sees others in his own image, attributing his traits to others. He observes:

The self may be said to be made up of reflected appraisals, If there were chiefly derogator... Then the self-dynamics will itself be derogatory. It will facilitate hostile, disparaging appraisals of other people and it will entertain disparaging and hostile appraisals of itself. (171)

Sita’s rage is an internalization of inner turmoil and an expression of feminine sensibility. She feels that even her husband does not understand her tender feelings for preserving the baby. She wants to take all sorts of sufferings on herself rather than bringing the baby into the world full of violence and brutality. Sita’s unwillingness to deliver the baby is symbolic of her desire to prevent the very cycle of experience that makes suffering and violence possible. She is against all “happening” for it become unthinkable that anything should happen for happenings were always violent. Regarding Sita’s perpetuation of pregnancy, Anita Desai says in an interview with Jasbir Jain:

...The idea behind that was really not the theme of pregnancy or creation but more the theme of rejection. In many ways her experience of life had been bleak and drab, grey, in many ways harrowing and depressing and she couldn’t bear the thought of bringing the child into a world as dreadful as this which is really the opposite of happy pregnancy and the expectations attached to it. (7)

Her neurotic experience originates presumably from her sensitivity and reverence for life and her unwillingness to accept violence in any form. Sita had moved from one particular life to another, one life from being a young girl into a housewife and a mother, from the familiar life on the island to the unfamiliarity of city-life, without being able to locate herself. She suffers from a deep sense of alienation, which has a hypothermic effect on her. Desai demonstrates the possibility of island being a refuge and an illusion as

against the boredom of the mainland. In the struggle between the inner and outer world, the imaginary and the social, the self and the non-self, the island provides such a centre to Sita. She is able to re-construct the past in her mind and it is only when the predicament of the present takes over that the time past is forced to resign itself to the time present.

Desai is interested in presenting the inner world of her protagonist. The island offers material refuge to Sita. The retreat to the island acts as a significant interlude in the life of Sita. It becomes the focal point of her consciousness. It seems to hold that magic which her father had discovered there and which she imagines will be able to discover once she finds herself there. She was afraid of it once, now she is drawn to its magic:

The Island had been buried beneath her consciousness deliberately, for years. Its black-magic, its subtle glamour had grown-too huge had engulfed her at time when she was still very young and quite along. (39)

The Island acquires the tremendous significance it is synonymous to Sita's sensibility. It becomes symbolic of those archetypal urges that lead and motivate Sita to seek a separate and unique identity of her own.

She was on the Island, in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth. Wasn't this Manori, the island of miracles ... she had four children with pride with pleasure-sensual, emotional, Freudian, every kind of pleasure with all the placid serenity that supposedly goes with pregnancy and parturition. (31-32)

Earlier pregnancies had provided her with something to look forward to. She had enjoyed giving birth. The process had filled her with a sense of vocation. It was a release of her restless dreams. The break between her and the child is perceived by Sita as a terrifying moment of loss. For it is birth, it is also a loss of herself identity that had been embraced by her womb. A life that is built on aggression and indifference does not appeal to her.

Withdrawal from husband's home to the Island of Manori is followed by the ambiguity of the second section focusing on the winter of 1947. The second section of the novel "Winter 47" is an attempt to retrieve the life on the Island of more than twenty years ago. It is not only a celebration but an explanation. It seeks to

highlight the character's total predicament and her disenchantment with life. It also explains her need for altering the present. This section of the novel reflects on the childhood of Sita. It is only because she becomes so upset with life around her that she withdraws into her psyche of childhood days on the magic Island.

The spatio-temporal sequence of the novel highlights the inner mood, anxiety and sensibility of its principal character. The house as a metaphor represents the tensions faced by the central protagonist and the breach between her desired self and the existing self. The symbols of the sea and the Island are the main unifying elements in the novel. The sea is symbolic of the "mystic unknown" between the polarity of the city and the Island, for if the city is symbolic of a rational way of life, the Island becomes symbolic of "the primitive reality."

The Island is also symbolic of an undifferentiated form of life, free from all categories and distinctions, a kind of threshold of existence where one comes to discover the meaning of life. Ironically, a retreat to the Island with its promise of reveal and regeneration implies at the same time alienation, whether it is personal as it was in the case of Sita's father who discover and possibly creates an identify for himself and his followers, but he remains a strange fantasy figure for his own children.

The mystery of the mother's absence becomes a puzzle to the growing daughter. In her early years the absence of the mother as well as the father (for he spent a lot of time in prison) was taken for granted. The Island forces Sita to confront the disturbing influences around her. Sita's alienation from her husband was inherent in her relationship with her father, which is more powerfully communicated in a scene of part I or "Monsoon 67", where Raman and Sita discuss their different attitudes to the stranger they had encountered while returning from Ajanta and Ellora, "He seemed to brave, "She blurted out... "Brave? Him?" Raman was honestly abused (35).

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* we see the withdrawn, wandering, restless character of Sita always in waiting. The girl's identification with the mother is incomplete because of her lack of contact with her. It is the sister who has taken vacant place. Her sister's accessibility and her own inaccessibility

to the father fill Sita with a longing for the missing mother on one hand and nurture heterosexual jealous on the other. She is jealous of father's preference for Rekha.

The Island becomes the true threshold of her sensibility. The appearance of the characters in the past memories provides a time perspective to the happenings on the Island, for here, the past illuminates the present indicating a continuity that persists despite change. For Sita, the trip to Island becomes a trip of self-discovery and recognition of reality. Memories and uncertainties of the past are at ones rendered more clearly by her indulgence in them. She returns to her childhood memories, to find meaning in her life.

Consideration of Sita's unusual childhood is necessary to arrive at a proper evaluation of her character. A motherless child, she experiences neglect and uncertainties right through her childhood. Sita's father had neglected her completely. He had no time for his children. He was a public figure, admired and revered by the people. There was always an "impossibility of talk between her and her father" (79). He was immersed so much in his self-glorification that he regarded his son Jivan and daughter Sita just as his sycophant chelas and devotees.

The atmosphere, in which Sita had lived, was that of neglect and hypocrisy. Consciously as well as unconsciously, she was uneasy and sensible to the things around. She was not able to solve the mystery the why and how there was no resemblance between the two sisters until Jivan had made a disclosure that Rekha was not her real sister. Sita felt discarded and unwanted when she noticed her father's tenderness toward Rekha. There are also the suggestions of their incestuous relationship. This experience bred the feeling of worthlessness and its consequent strategy was rebelliousness. Both rebellion and loss of self worth become the empirical expression of Sita's sensibility. Father's dubious ways steeped down her psyche as a bad human experience. It was "a strange life an unusual life" it did not offer her freedom to acquire unique individuality but let her "withdraw" into the protective chrysalis of childhood.

The disintegration of family, immediately after her father's death, testifies the bitter truth and they had nothing substantial to bind them as a family. Rekha did not even stop to shed tears for him and left as though

she had waited for and planned for this moment of release from the old man's love" (99). Rekha opted for fame than anonymity on the Island and became a singer in a radio station. She left Manori for never to come back, unlike Sita, who finds meaning in the Island even after so many years of her father death. Jeevan also disappeared a couple of days before the demise as if he had a fore knowledge of the calamity. Only Sita was left behind and she married Raman. Lack of parental matrix was the most damaging situation for Sita. Her father could not provide her a home of feasible conditions. The feeling of belongingness does not pervade Sita's life:

Belongingness... means a subjective feeling of one's personal involvement to the extent that one feels himself to be an integral and in dispensable part of the system. (63-64)

In this novel female sensibility takes the form of vague fears, an abiding sense of dissatisfaction, nausea and mortal dread of taking on responsibility of the newcomer. It indicates the sense of insecurity bred in childhood which leads to an alienation from self. A way out of this is the adoption of some psychological tendencies. We see Sita's bargain when she submits to the marriage proposal of Raman, who marries her out of pity, "out of lust, out of a sudden will for adventure, and because it was inevitable" (99).

In contrast with the life on the mainland, life on the Island of Manori seemed bizarre, unappealing and after her father's death, Sita had been more relieved to leave it behind. Despite the presence of her husband and children, Sita feels drained washed out with full tedium, on the mainland also. The theme of female sensibility emphatically interprets itself in Sita's dissatisfaction with interpersonal relationships even with her children and husband. Non-living and dead father's Island appeals her more than the living human beings and her relationship to them.

Sita's return to Manori reveals her desire to indulge in fantasy rather than face the reality. The moment she arrives here, she wonders, if she is really going to perform an act of creation or going to protect the child for ever. By closing her eyes to the reality and resolutely following her fantasy she receives a kind of victory by rebelling against her bondage, and overcoming her weaknesses. For Sita it is easier to

avoid reality than to face it. By doing this she gets lost in the world of illusion. We See Sita mostly bored with the disintegration in life. A mental and physical inertia pervades her spirit. But in confronted with the reality she realizes that the Manori of her past has nothing to sustain her children. It is a land with palm and deserted beach and open drains. She realizes that revisiting the past is impossible:

If I had ever existed-black sparkling and glamorous as in her memory-it was now buried beneath the soft grey-green mildew of the monsoon, chilled and chocked by it. (103)

It is Sita's disillusionment with her immediate surroundings that had forced her to make a return journey.

Female sensibility is a process of self-discovery and self-actualization. In both cases, a woman struggles with obstinate paradigms. It entails living in continuity with the memory of past. Sita breaks this continuity in order to find new connections with life. Female sensibility thus makes a progression from self-loss to self-discovery. The final section "**Monsoon 67**" reveals Sita's recovery from her plunge into existential nullity and liberation from this peculiar kind of sensibility.

Sita discovers her natural roots and connections by reviving her contact with the soil. Her healing and renewal begins with a ritualized mud bath. It is her first physical and vital contact with the soil of the Island:

Or hear more. Twilight shade and silence-these made up not only the natural but the necessary atmosphere of the Island. She went back to her Pellet and lay looking out of the open door at the indigo darkness that the shapes of bats wings now and then cut and sliced and at the palm trees turned to monument of blackened silver by the moonlight. (59-60)

Sita once again learns to laugh and yet ironically the very hour of her triumph over loneliness turns to be the hour of her defeat. The dialogue between Sita and her daughter Menaka bring to focus sensitivity of a woman, who had an unfulfilled relationship with the absent mother and failed to develop a rapport with the elder sister but her relationship with her daughter Menaka is also extremely complex and dramatic. Menaka is a pragmatist like her father. The mother-daughter relationship is fraught with anxiety tensions. Menaka does not approve of her mother's highly

eccentric temperament. De Beauvoir gives us an insight into this sort of a relationship.

In her daughter the mother does not hail a member of the superior or caste; in her she seeks a double. She Projects upon her daughter all the ambiguity of her relationship with herself and when the otherness of this alter ego manifests itself, the mother feels herself betrayed. Sita desires to see herself in Menaka. As a child Menaka had shown an aptitude for drawing and Sita was proud of her creativity. She wanted her to pursue the career of an artist but Menaka feels neither compassion nor pity for her mother's wish, "She had enough of her mother's disorder and nonsense-she would escape it wholly" (47). Sita wants to live and cultivate the life of an artist. And for Sita an artist alone can live a life of imaginative freedom, she can be expressly "inside," be in the world yet live outside it. An artist alone can transcend the miseries of current human existence. Having lived a life of a mother and a wife, a daughter and a woman, Sita still is unsatisfied. She feels everyday life is in itself dull, corrupt and uninspiring. It has very little to offer in terms of fulfillment. An artist committed to her art alone can fulfill, add meaning to her life. Without meaning and without vision a commitment to art alone can bring "oblivious joy" (115). According to Rilke:

May this gazing out of myself, which consumes me to emptiness, be get rid of thought a loving preoccupation with interior fullness. (110)

One way of overcoming this sense of nothingness is suggested in Sita's retreat to the Island.

Remarkably free from the violence of the initial section, the third part, "Monsoon '67", with its imagery of sea, sunshine flowers and colours shows Sita's sensitivity, her awareness of the tender and the delicate in life, her acute and sensuous feeling for nature in its colourful variety. It captures the sounds of the monsoon season in their multiple rhythms resembling the multiple rhythms of Sita's consciousness. Similarly the description of the clouds during a break in the monsoon evokes a strong sense of ephemerally and changes. She returns from her way of negation to an affirmation of life.

Sita's return journey to the Island of Manori is positively refreshing. The monsoon enlivens her interest in life, in nature, in the wild pleasure of the unkempt world. She becomes the young girl of her youth,

carefree and uncaring. She is simultaneously made aware of the responsibility of the baby nurturing in her womb. The Island may be divested of magic, but it still retains the power to regenerate life in her.

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* the Island is both a threat and a solace. In it, she has both been received and rejected. On her return to the Island not only is she able to discover old joys but is forced to reconcile herself to the past mysteries and future uncertainties. Also, it seeks to create a precipice between Sita's inner state and her external appearance. Sita's inner stasis thaws on the Island as she plays with her children games of mud and sand.

As an adult Sita does not feel restricted on the Island. Not only does the present encounter with the sea and the Island provide her with some inner respite but it also teaches her to respond to life. Thwarted by the life on the mainland she abandons herself to the "presences" within Manori. She succeeds in being "completely inside" on the Island. The Island provides her a nexus and a nest. And once able to see inside, be within herself, Sita is temporarily satisfied. She is able to look out. Her vision does not remain stifled expands beyond the self. The self having reached the inner zone of existence realizes the necessity to look outwards. She becomes conscious of the ties which bind her.

It is intensely personal domain that Anita Desai's women have recourse to Sita's return to the Island are significant gesture in herself. For in her we witness not merely hysteric's reaction or a mad woman's anguish but they stand apart as attempts to restore her lost self. Her own process of "mothering" has been incomplete because of the absence of the mother therefore the need for symbiosis has remained unfulfilled. The natural mother's absence has failed to initiate the "separation individuation" process through which a female child learns to separate and see herself.

The landscape, however takes maternal significance. Sita subconsciously learns to relate to the landscape. Manori held's such, a place in Sita's life. The yearning for the lost mother, this maternal hunger, transfers itself to the yearning for the lost Island. Sita's moment of awakening is set in contrast with her stay on the Island. Manori comes as a turning point in her reassessment of filial ties. It is on her second visit to the Island that Sita learns to make a pack with life.

First the monsoon "like an unceasing burial", and later "a break in the monsoon" emphasize the urgency of Sita's mood ranging from despair to helplessness, to a sense of belonging and calm to reconciliation a final human gesture. Like the disorder wrecked with the tide of the storm and the sea, Sita too needs to bring her disorderly life into order:

Sita comes to an understanding that "wild values and wild searches" will not lead her anywhere. She cannot live without the approval and love of her husband and children. The Island itself has become a mirror of her desolation. The wild storm has disrupted the life on the Island and for Sita this comes as a revelation. Even the seasons are in a rhythmic pattern. Monsoon gives way to sunshine those setters "Its dull silver coins upon the waves" (119). She can see that the Island which has always seemed protected and secure is only partially so, the monsoon has disrupted its calm, and terminated her own search for a sense of security. She recognizes that the desire to prevent the birth of the baby is impossible.

We are, by now, prepared for the ultimate denouement which is precipitated by Raman's arrival on the Island. His arrival works the end of Sita's spiritual voyage, the end of her life and epiphany and ecstasy:

She had escaped from duties and responsibilities, from order and routine, from life and the city, to the unlivable island... but now the time had come for her epitaph to be written-che face per viltate ile grain rifinte. Very soon now that epitaph would have to be written. (101-102)

When Raman mocks her attempt to identify herself within the jelly fish and asks her to consider "what she had done to all of them, "she replies in a vague manner" But you have nothing to do with it... that's all" (108). She feels like a liberated soul purged and purified in the fire of passion.

Her final perception of existence as a duality of illusion and reality is brilliantly communicated through a series of images. After her reconciliation with Raman, Sita and Raman "walk up the stone step to the grave" (110). In this moment of illumination, finally, Sita seems to have perceived reality. She is at ease now with no tension whatsoever disturbing her soul. This conclusion takes the novel beyond the resolution of Sita's sensibility and her crisis. It points to a reality that transcends

individual crisis or predicament.

Sita's compromise with life constitutes a sure step forward to recognize reality. The awareness that life is not meant to be shunned but to be experienced, is significant. Her personal problems transcend into existential ones and her neurotic despair and anguish give way to a more philosophic perception of the absurdity of human condition. If human existence is so impoverished, it is better to affirm life, here and now. According to **May Sarton**, "private dilemmas are, if deeply examined, universal and so if expressed, have human value beyond the private" (60). At the end of the novel we can't make out whether she manages to lead a healthy life after her return to Bombay, or she simply strides back into her former neurotic rage and fears. When asked about the child, Anita Desai affirms in an interview that the child is born and learns to compromise.

Anita Desai, in *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* has explored the emotional world of Sita, revealing a rare imaginative awareness of various deeper forces at work and a profound understanding of feminine sensibility as well as psychology. She sets Sita to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women terminated by existential

problems and predicaments. Desai is concerned with the psychological angle of the problem faced by Sita. Her serious concern is the "Journey within".

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# দেউৰী জনগোষ্ঠীৰ সমাজ জীৱনত নাৰীৰ ভূমিকাঃ এটি আলোকপাত

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## সাৰাংশ

এখন দেশ তথা এটা জাতিৰ সৰ্বাংগীন বিকাশ হ'বলৈ হ'লে পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰী সমানে আগবাঢ়ি যোৱা প্ৰয়োজন। সমাজ গঠন আৰু গতিশীলতাত পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰীৰ উভয়েৰে ভূমিকা অপৰিহাৰ্য। অতীতৰে পৰা প্ৰায় সকলোবোৰ সমাজতে পুৰুষ-নাৰী উভয়ে ঘৰুৱা আৰু সামাজিক জীৱনত বিভিন্ন ধৰণে ভূমিকা পালন কৰি আহিছে। পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজত নাৰীৰ ভূমিকাক স্বীকৃতি নিদিয়াৰ এটা প্ৰৱণতা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। অসমৰ অন্যান্য সমাজৰ দৰে জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ সমাজতো নাৰীয়ে সমাজ জীৱনত বিভিন্ন ৰূপত ভূমিকা পালন কৰে। অসমৰ অন্যতম জনগোষ্ঠী দেউৰী সমাজতো নাৰীয়ে সমাজৰ সকলো ক্ষেত্ৰতে এক গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰি আহিছে। বাতিপুৰা শুই উঠাৰ পৰা বাতি পৰ্যন্ত বন্ধা-বঢ়া, সন্তানৰ প্ৰতিপালন, পথাৰত ৰোৱা-তোলা আদি নানা কামত তেওঁলোকে ব্যস্ত থাকিবলগীয়া হয়। দেউৰী সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন দিশত প্ৰতিফলন ঘটা নাৰীৰ ভূমিকাৰ সম্পৰ্কে এই প্ৰবন্ধত আলোকপাত কৰা হৈছে।

## ০.০১ অৱতৰণিকা :

এখন দেশ তথা এটা জাতিৰ সৰ্বাংগীন বিকাশ হ'বলৈ হ'লে পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰী সমানে আগবাঢ়ি যোৱাৰ প্ৰয়োজন। কিন্তু বহু পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজত নাৰীক সদায় পুৰুষৰ তলত ৰখাৰ এটা প্ৰৱণতা দেখা যায়। সমাজত প্ৰচলিত সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতি, পৰম্পৰা, বিশ্বাস আদি বহু সামাজিক মূল্যবোধেও এই ক্ষেত্ৰত অনুপ্ৰাণিত যোগোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। ফলস্বৰূপে সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্ৰত নাৰীয়ে ভূমিকা পালন কৰে যদিও পুৰুষৰ তুলনাত সমাজত অৱদমিত হৈ থাকিব লগা হয়।

সমাজত পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰীৰ সামাজিক প্ৰস্থিতিৰ সম্পৰ্কে বিভিন্ন পণ্ডিতে বিভিন্ন দৃষ্টিকোণৰ মাজেৰে যেনে— জৈৱিক, নৃতাত্ত্বিক, ব্যৱহাৰিক, ফ্ৰয়েদীয় আদি নিজ নিজ ব্যাখ্যা আগবঢ়াইছে। নৃতাত্ত্বিক দৃষ্টিকোণৰপৰা এচ.বি. আৰ্টনাৰে এই

ক্ষেত্ৰত আগবঢ়োৱা ব্যাখ্যাটো অতিকৈ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ তেওঁৰ মতে, মানৱ সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান পুৰুষতকৈ সাৰ্বজনীনভাৱে অৱনমিত হোৱাৰ কাৰণ জৈৱিক নহয়। সাংস্কৃতিকহে। অৰ্থাৎ দৈহিকভাৱে নাৰী পুৰুষতকৈ দুৰ্বল হোৱাৰ কাৰণে নাৰীৰ স্থান পুৰুষৰ তুলনাত নিম্ন নহয়। বৰঞ্চ সাংস্কৃতিক পৰম্পৰাইহে সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান পুৰুষতকৈ নিম্ন স্তৰত ৰাখে।

## ১.০০ দেউৰী জনগোষ্ঠী :

স্বকীয় ভাষা-সংস্কৃতিৰে সমৃদ্ধ অসমত বসবাস কৰা জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ভিতৰত দেউৰী জনগোষ্ঠীও অন্যতম। নৃতাত্ত্বিক বিচাৰত দেউৰীসকল মংগোলীয় গোষ্ঠীৰ আৰু ভাষাতাত্ত্বিক বিচাৰত চীন-তিব্বতীয় ভাষা পৰিয়ালৰ তিব্বতবৰ্মী শাখাৰ অন্তৰ্গত। পূৰ্বতে জনগোষ্ঠীটোৰ সকলো লোকেই নিজা দেউৰী ভাষাকেই ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছিল। পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত জনগোষ্ঠীটোৰ লোকসকল অসমৰ বিভিন্ন স্থানত সিঁচৰতি হৈ পৰে আৰু বিভিন্ন ভাষা-ভাষীলোক দ্বাৰা প্ৰভাৱান্বিত হয়। সেয়েহে জনগোষ্ঠীটোৰ কিছুমান লোকে বৰ্তমান দেউৰী ভাষা ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত নহয়। অসমত বসবাস কৰা দেউৰীসকলৰ মাজত বৰ্তমান তিনিটা ফৈদ পোৱা যায়। এই কেইটা হৈছে— দিবঙীয়া, টেঙাপনীয়া, বৰগঞা। বৰ্তমান দিবঙীয়া ফৈদৰ লোকসকলৰ মাজতহে দেউৰী ভাষা প্ৰচলন আছে। টেঙাপনীয়া আৰু বৰগঞা ফৈদৰ লোকসকলে অসমীয়া ভাষাক মাতৃভাষা ৰূপে গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। ২০০১ চনৰ লোকপিয়ল অনুসৰি অসমত বসবাস কৰি থকা দেউৰীসকলৰ মুঠ জনসংখ্যা ৪১,১৬১ জন। ইয়াৰে ২০,৮০৯ জন পুৰুষ আৰু ২০,৩৫২ গৰাকী মহিলা। কিন্তু দেউৰী ভাষা কোৱা লোকৰ মুঠ জনসংখ্যা ২৩,৩৬৬ জন। ইয়াৰে ১১,৭৮৫ জন পুৰুষ আৰু ১১,৫৮১ গৰাকী মহিলা।

দেউৰী সমাজ পুৰুষ-প্ৰধান হ'লেও তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থিতি মনকৰিবলগীয়া। বাতিপুৰা শুই উঠাৰ পৰা বাতি পৰ্যন্ত বন্ধা-বঢ়া, সন্তানৰ প্ৰতিপালন, পথাৰত ৰোৱা-তোলা আদি

নানা কামত তেওঁলোকে ব্যস্ত থাকিবলগীয়া হয়। দেউৰী সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন দিশত প্ৰতিফলন ঘটা নাৰীৰ ভূমিকাৰ সম্পৰ্কে তলত আলোকপাত কৰা হ'ল।

### ১.০১ পৰিয়ালত নাৰী :

সকলো সমাজতে পৰিয়ালক প্ৰাথমিক সামাজিক গোট হিচাপে বিবেচনা কৰা হয়। সাধাৰণতে পিতৃ-মাতৃ আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ অবিবাহিত সন্তান-সন্ততিক লৈ এটা একক পৰিয়াল গঢ় লৈ উঠে। আনহাতে, পিতৃ-মাতৃৰ দুই বা ততোধিক বিবাহিত পুত্ৰই যেতিয়া তেওঁলোকৰ সন্তান-সন্ততিৰ সৈতে একেলগে এটা পৰিয়াল হিচাপে বসবাস কৰে, তেতিয়া তাক যৌথ পৰিয়াল বুলি অভিহিত কৰা হয়। আন বহু জনগোষ্ঠীৰ সমাজৰ দৰে দেউৰী সমাজতো একক পৰিয়ালৰ উপৰিও যৌথ পৰিয়ালৰ প্ৰাধান্য দেখা যায়। একক পৰিয়ালেই হওক বা যৌথ পৰিয়ালেই হওক, পৰিয়াল পৰিচালনাত প্ৰাপ্তবয়স্ক নাৰীসকলে বিভিন্ন দিশত ভূমিকা পালন কৰে। দেউৰী সমাজত পৰিয়ালৰ বিভিন্ন দিশত নাৰীয়ে পালন কৰা ভূমিকাসমূহ হ'ল—

### ১.০১ সন্তান লালন-পালন কৰাত নাৰী :

আন সমাজৰ দৰে দেউৰী সমাজতো সন্তান জন্ম আৰু লালন-পালন কৰাতো পৰিয়ালৰ এটা মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য হিচাপে বিবেচিত হয়। পিতৃ প্ৰধান দেউৰী সমাজত সন্তান জন্মৰ পাছত সন্তানৰ লালন-পালনৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ দায়িত্ব মাকে লয়। সন্তানক সময় মতে খোৱা-বোৱা যোগান ধৰাৰ উপৰিও পৰিষ্কাৰ-পৰিচ্ছন্নতা সকলো কাম মাকৰ লগতে পৰিয়ালৰ আন মহিলাসকলেহে কৰে। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত পৰিয়ালৰ পুৰুষসকলৰ বিশেষ ভূমিকা নাথাকে বুলি ক'ব পাৰি।

পৰিয়ালৰ ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীবিলাকৰ সামাজিকীকৰণ প্ৰক্ৰিয়াতো নাৰীসকলেই অগ্ৰণী ভূমিকা পালন কৰে। শিশুসকলক সামাজিক মূল্যবোধ আৰু সজ আচৰণ বিধি প্ৰদান কৰাৰ উপৰিও পৰিয়ালত শৈক্ষিক আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক বাতাবৰণ বৰ্তাই ৰখাত পুৰুষৰ তুলনাত নাৰীসকলৰ দায়িত্বহে অধিক।

### ১.০২ সাজপাৰ প্ৰস্তুত কৰণত নাৰী :

দেউৰী নাৰীসকল বয়ন শিল্পত অতি দক্ষ। তেওঁলোকে তাঁতশালত তৈয়াৰ কৰা পৰম্পৰাগত সাজপোছাকসমূহে তেওঁলোকৰ ৰুচিবোধ, সৌন্দৰ্য্যচেতনা আৰু শিল্পনিপুণতাৰ স্বাক্ষৰ বহন কৰে। নাৰীসকলে পৰিয়ালৰ সকলো সদস্যৰ বাবে প্ৰয়োজন হোৱা সাজপাৰসমূহ ঘৰতে তৈয়াৰ কৰি লয়। অৱশ্যে, বৰ্তমান তেওঁলোকে ঘৰতে এৰী-মুগা পুহি সূতা প্ৰস্তুত কৰাৰ উপৰিও বৰাজত পোৱা বিভিন্ন ৰং-বিৰঙৰ সূতা ক্ৰয় কৰি আনিও সাজপাৰ

প্ৰস্তুত কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।

### ১.১.৩ খাদ্যপ্ৰস্তুত কৰণত নাৰী :

দেউৰী সমাজত পৰিয়ালৰ খাদ্য প্ৰস্তুত কৰাত বাতিপুৱাৰ পৰা গধূলিলৈকে মহিলাসকল ব্যস্ত থাকে। মহিলাসকলে চাঙৰ ওপৰতে আটোম টোকাৰিকৈ দুদেপাতি (জুইশাল) সাজি লয়। এই দুদেপাতি সাধাৰণতে চতুৰ্ভুজ আকাৰৰ চাৰি-পাঁচ ফুটমান দীঘ-প্ৰস্থৰে আবৃত। দুদেপাতি তৈয়াৰ শৈলী সুকীয়া। গোবৰ-মাটি ভৰাই মিহিকৈ লিপি মচি শুকুৱাই লৈ ব্যৱহাৰৰ উপযোগী কৰি তাৰ সোঁমাজতেই মাটিৰেই উধান সজাই লয় বা লোহাৰ চিয়াকতি (জাকি) বহুৱাই দিয়া হয়। এনেধৰণৰ দুদেপাতি প্ৰত্যেক ঘৰতে কমেও দুটাকৈ থাকে। তাৰে এটা ৰান্ধনিশালত আৰু আনটো কোঠালিত। মহিলাসকলে ৰান্ধনিশালত থকা জুইশালতে খাদ্য প্ৰস্তুত কৰে। তেওঁলোকে নিজে হাবিৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰা বনৰীয়াশাক-পাত উছৰাই তেল নিদিয়াকৈ আঞ্জা প্ৰস্তুত কৰে। দোকানৰ মছলাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে হাবিৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰি অনা বনৰীয়া মছলা আঞ্জাত দি খায়।

দেউৰী সমাজত নিয়মিতভাৱে সেৱন কৰা এটা প্ৰধান পৰম্পৰাগত পানীয় খাদ্য হৈছে চুৰ্জে (মদ)। এই চুৰ্জে বা মদ প্ৰস্তুত কৰা প্ৰণালী দীঘলীয়া আৰু কেইবাটাও পৰ্যায়ভুক্ত। পৰিয়ালৰ নাৰীসকলে হাবিৰ পৰা বনৰীয়া ঔষধিযুক্ত গছ-বন সংগ্ৰহ কৰি মদৰ পিঠা প্ৰস্তুত কৰাকে ধৰি নিয়মিতভাৱে চুৰ্জে প্ৰস্তুত কৰে।

### ১.১.৪ পৰিয়ালৰ সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণত নাৰী :

দেউৰী সমাজ পুৰুষ প্ৰধান হোৱাৰ বাবে নাৰীসকলে সমাজ পৰিচালনাত পুৰুষৰ সমমৰ্যদা নাপায় বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। তেওঁলোকে ঘৰুৱা আৰু সমাজ জীৱনত পুৰুষসকলৰ আদেশ মানি চলিব লগা হয়। ঘৰুৱা বা সামাজিকভাৱে যিকোনো সিদ্ধান্ত লওঁতে নাৰীৰ মতামতক কিছু পৰিমাণে গুৰুত্ব দিয়া হয় যদিও পুৰুষৰ মতকহে অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ দিয়ে। কিন্তু বৰ্তমান সময়ত অন্য সমাজৰ সংস্পৰ্শত আৰু মহিলা সৰ্বলীকৰণ আন্দোলনৰ প্ৰভাৱত দেউৰী সমাজতো মহিলাসকলে নিজৰ মৰ্যদাৰ প্ৰতি সচেতন হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে।

### ২.১ অৰ্থনৈতিক দিশত নাৰী :

এখন সমাজ বা এটা পৰিয়ালৰ উন্নতিত আৰ্থিক দিশে এক বিশেষ প্ৰভাৱ পেলায়। দেউৰী সমাজত পুৰুষসকলৰ উপৰিও নাৰীসকলে অৰ্থনৈতিক দিশত বিভিন্ন প্ৰকাৰে অৰিহণা আগবঢ়ায়। তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজৰ নাৰীসকলে অৰ্থনৈতিক দিশত অৰিহণা আগবঢ়োৱাৰ প্ৰধান দিশসমূহ হ'ল—

### ২.১.১ কৃষিকার্যত নাৰী :

দেউৰী সমাজৰ আৰ্থিক ভেঁটি প্ৰধানকৈ কৃষি নিৰ্ভৰশীল। ধান খেতিৰ উপৰিও তেওঁলোকে মাহ, সৰিয়হ, মৰাপাট, কল, তামোল-পাণ, নানা ধৰণৰ সেউজীয়া শাক যেনে— লাই, লফা, বেঙেনা, পালেং, জলকীয়া, পিঁয়াজ, নহৰু আদি খেতিও কৰিবলৈ পৰিমাণে কৰে। দেউৰী সমাজৰ নাৰীসকলে ঘৰুৱা কাম-বনৰ উপৰিও পুৰুষৰ সমানে পথাৰৰ কৃষিকার্যতো অংশ গ্ৰহণ কৰে। পথাৰত হালবোৱাৰ বাহিৰে জাবৰ গুচোৱা, দলি চপৰা ভঙা, নিৰণি দিয়া, ভুঁই বোৱা, কঠিয়া তোলা, ধান দোৱা, ধান মৰা আদি সকলো কামতে নাৰীসকলে ভাগ লয়। তদুপৰি গ্ৰাম্যাঞ্চলত বসবাস কৰা বহু মহিলাই মূৰত ডাঙৰি কঢ়িওৱা অৰ্থাৎ পথাৰৰ পৰা ধান কঢ়িওৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।

### ২.১.২ পশু-পালনত নাৰী :

পশু-পালন কৰাটো দেউৰী লোকজীৱনৰ এক পৰম্পৰা। কৃষিকার্যৰ বাবে পোহা গৰু, ম'হ, ঘোঁৰা আদি জন্তুৰ বাহিৰে তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত আন পোহনীয়া জীৱ-জন্তু প্ৰতিপালন পুৰুষসকলে সাধাৰণতে নকৰে। মহিলাসকলেহে হাঁহ, কুকুৰা, পাৰ, ছাগলী, গাহৰি আদি পুহে আৰু এইবিলাক বিক্ৰি কৰি তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয় বয়-বস্তুসমূহ নিজে ক্ৰয় কৰি লোৱাৰ উপৰিও পৰিয়াল পৰিচালনাত আৰ্থিকভাৱে অৰিহণা আগবঢ়ায়। তদুপৰি তেওঁলোকৰ ঘৰুৱা আৰু সামাজিক পূজা-পাতলত বলি বিধানৰ বাবে প্ৰয়োজন হোৱা হাঁহ, কুকুৰা, পাৰ, ছাগলী আদি যোগান ধৰাৰ উপৰিও আলহী-অতিথি বা ঘৰৰ কাৰণে মাংসৰ যোগান ধৰে। এনেদৰে তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজৰ নাৰীসকলে পশু-পালনৰ জৰিয়তে পৰিয়ালৰ আৰ্থিক দিশ টনকিয়াল কৰাত সহায় কৰে।

### ২.১.৩ ব্যৱসায়-বাণিজ্যত নাৰী :

দেউৰী সমাজৰ বহু নাৰীয়ে বৰ্তমান প্ৰত্যক্ষ বা পৰোক্ষভাৱে বিভিন্ন প্ৰকাৰৰ ব্যৱসায়-বাণিজ্যত জড়িত হৈ সমাজ তথা পৰিয়ালৰ আৰ্থিক দিশত টনকিয়াল হোৱাত সহায় কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। জনগোষ্ঠীটোৰ কিছুসংখ্যক মহিলাই ব্যক্তিগতভাৱে দোকান দিয়া, ঘৰত উৎপাদিত দ্ৰব্য সামগ্ৰী বজাৰত বিক্ৰী কৰা আদি কাম কৰাৰ উপৰিও সমূহীয়াভাৱে আত্মসহায়ক গোট প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিয়ো বিভিন্ন ব্যৱসায়-বাণিজ্যৰ লগত জড়িত হৈ পৰিছে। চৰকাৰী আঁচনিৰ সহযোগত তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত বিভিন্ন মহিলা আত্মসহায়ক গোট গঢ়ি উঠিছে আৰু এই গোটবিলাকে গামোচা, আচাৰ, পিঠা-পনা, চিৰা, মুড়ি, আঁঠে, সান্দহ গুড়ি আদি প্ৰস্তুত কৰি বজাৰত বিক্ৰী কৰিছে। এনে কাম-কাজৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি গ্ৰাম্যাঞ্চলত বহুতো গ্ৰাম্য বজাৰ গঢ়ি উঠা দেখা গৈছে। এনেদৰে দেউৰী সমাজৰ

মহিলাসকলে ব্যক্তিগত বা সমূহীয়াভাৱেই হওক ব্যৱসায়-বাণিজ্যৰ লগত জড়িত হৈ নিজে স্বাৱলম্বী হোৱাৰ লগতে পৰিয়াল তথা সমাজৰ আৰ্থিক উন্নয়নত সহায় কৰিছে।

### ২.২ উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানত নাৰী :

এখন সমাজৰ উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানসমূহক সেই সমাজখনৰ সংস্কৃতিৰ এটা মুখ্য উপাদান হিচাপে গণ্য কৰা হয়। এই উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানসমূহে সমাজৰ ঐক্য-সংহতি ধৰি ৰখাৰ উপৰিও সামাজিক পৰম্পৰা আৰু প্ৰমূল্যবোধ জীয়াই ৰাখে। দেউৰী সমাজতো বছৰৰ বিভিন্ন সময়ত বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠান পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে পালন কৰি আহিছে। উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানসমূহত পুৰুষ-নাৰী উভয়ৰে ভূমিকা আছে যদিও কিছু ক্ষেত্ৰত মহিলাসকল অৰহেলিত বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে, নাৰীয়ে কেতিয়াও দেওঘৰৰ পূজাৰী হিচাপে পুৰোহিত্য কৰিব নোৱাৰে, মৃতকৰ পিণ্ড দিব নোৱাৰে, দেওঘৰত অনুষ্ঠিত পূজা-পাৰ্বনত আৰ্শীবাদ দিয়াৰ অধিকাৰ নাপায়, দেওঘৰৰ মূল মন্দিৰত নাৰীসকল প্ৰৱেশ কৰিব নোৱাৰে, উৎসৱ-পাৰ্বণ নতুবা সকাম-নিকামৰ বাবে বন্ধা-বঢ়া কৰোঁতে নাৰীক আগভাগ ল'বলৈ দিয়া নহয়, গাঁৱত হোৱা বিচাৰ সভাবিলাকত নাৰীক গুৰুত্ব দিয়া নহয় আদি? ইয়াৰ উপৰিও ৰাজহুৱাভাৱে পালিত উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানত পুৰুষসকলেহে সদায় আগস্থান লাভ কৰে। অৱশ্যে, তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত ঘৰুৱা বা সামাজিকভাৱে অনুষ্ঠিত দেওবৰীয়া সকাম (আই সকাম), লখিমী সবাহত মহিলাসকলে আগভাগ লয়।

### ২.৩ শিক্ষা-দীক্ষাত নাৰী :

দেউৰী নাৰীয়ে পুৰাৰপৰা গধূলিলৈকে ঘৰৰ সকলোবোৰ কাম নিয়াৰিকৈ পৰিচালনা কৰাৰ উপৰিও বৰ্তমান আনুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষাৰে শিক্ষিত হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। অৱশ্যে, গাঁৱলীয়া সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰী শিক্ষাই বিশেষ প্ৰসাৰ লাভ কৰিব পৰা নাই। গ্ৰাম্য জীৱন-যাপন কৰা মহিলাই উচ্চ শিক্ষাৰ সুবিধাৰ পৰা এতিয়াও বঞ্চিত হৈ আছে। সেয়ে নিৰক্ষৰতা আৰু অজ্ঞতাই নাৰীসকলৰ উন্নতিৰ এক অন্তৰায় হিচাপে থিয় দিছে। সমাজখনত শিক্ষাৰ প্ৰসাৰ নোহোৱাৰ বাবে পিতৃ-মাতৃয়ে ছোৱালীবোৰক খুব কম বয়সতে পঢ়া-শুনা বাদ দি গাহস্থ্য জীৱনত সোমাবলৈ বাধ্য কৰায়। ইয়াৰ মূল কাৰণ হ'ল - আৰ্থিক অনথসৰতা আৰু সমাজখনৰ ৰক্ষণশীল মনোভাৱ। অভিভাৱকসকল আৰ্থিকভাৱে টনকিয়াল নোহোৱাৰ বাবে ছোৱালীবোৰক উপযুক্তভাৱে শিক্ষা দিব নোৱাৰে। এটা পৰিয়ালত শিক্ষা প্ৰদানৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ছোৱালীৰ তুলনাত ল'ৰাইহে অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ পায়। ছোৱালীসকলক পঢ়ি বুলি দিয়াতকৈ

তেওঁলোকে ঘৰুৱা কামৰ মাজত আৱদ্ধ কৰি ৰখা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। বৰ্তমান এনে দৃষ্টিভংগীত কিছু পৰিৱৰ্তন আহিছে যদিও এতিয়াও গ্ৰাম্যাঞ্চলত শিক্ষা প্ৰদানৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত লিংগ-বৈষম্য পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।

#### সামৰণি :

দেউৰী সমাজত নাৰীসকলে পাৰিবাৰিক আৰু সামাজিক ক্ষেত্ৰত ইমানবোৰ ভূমিকা পালন কৰে যদিও নাৰীসকলক পুৰুষৰ তলতীয়া হিচাপে বিবেচনা কৰাৰ প্ৰৱণতা এটা তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজতো দেখা যায়। সমাজৰ প্ৰগতি আৰু গতিশীলতাৰ স্বার্থত নাৰীসকলৰ প্ৰতি কৰা এনে বৈষম্যমূলক সামাজিক আচৰণ কেতিয়াও কাম্য নহয়। সমাজ-ব্যৱস্থা এনেদৰে গঢ় দিয়া উচিত যাতে পুৰুষ-নাৰী নিৰ্বিশেষে সকলোৱে সম অধিকাৰ লাভ কৰে আৰু নিজৰ যোগ্যতাৰে সমাজত নিজৰ স্থান নিৰ্ণয় কৰিব পাৰে। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত দেউৰী সমাজে নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি পোষণ কৰি অহা সামাজিক দৃষ্টিভংগী

পৰিৱৰ্তন হোৱাৰ প্ৰয়োজন আছে।

#### প্ৰসংগ পুথি :

##### ১। অসমীয়া

দলে, বসন্ত কুমাৰ (সম্পা.) : *অসমৰ জনগোষ্ঠী এটি পৰিচয়*, অসম সাহিত্য সভা, সপ্ততিতম অধিবেশন, ধেমাজি, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৯।

দেউৰী ভঁৰালী, বিশ্বকান্ত : *দেউৰী পাঠ*, অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৬২।

দেউৰী, ডম্বৰুধৰ : *দেউৰী সংস্কৃতি*, শিৱসাগৰ, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৬৪।

ষড়ানন দেউৰী : *দেউৰী ভাষা সাহিত্য সমাজ*, বীণা লাইব্ৰেৰী, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ ২০০৭।

পাটৰ, পদ্ম (সম্পা.) : *জনজাতি সমাজ সংস্কৃতি*, বিংচাং প্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৮।

২. Census : Census of Assam, 2001.



# অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ বিকাশত অৰুনোদইৰ থলুৱা লেখকৰ অৱদান

স্নেহা গগৈ

গৱেষিকা, অসমীয়া বিভাগ

ডিব্ৰুগড় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

সাৰাংশ :

আধুনিক কালত সাহিত্যৰ প্ৰচাৰ আৰু প্ৰসাৰৰ দিশত সংবাদপত্ৰ আৰু আলোচনীসমূহে এক বিশেষ ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰি আহিছে। জাতীয় জীৱন আৰু ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ উত্তৰণৰ বাবে অসমত অৰুনোদই কাকতৰে আৰম্ভ হোৱা আলোচনী ভিত্তিক সাহিত্যিকৰ্মই অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ বোঁৱতী সঁজিটোক এক নতুন মাত্ৰা প্ৰদান কৰে। খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্মৰ প্ৰচাৰৰ উদ্দেশ্যে অসমলৈ অহা আমেৰিকান বেপ্তিষ্ট মিছনেৰীসকলৰ হাততে অৰুনোদইৰ প্ৰকাশ কেৱল অসমৰ সংবাদপত্ৰৰে নহয় সমগ্ৰ অঞ্চলটোৰ সামাজিক, সাহিত্যিক ইতিহাসেৰে এক উল্লেখযোগ্য আৰু তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ সংঘটন। এই অৰুনোদইক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰিয়েই আধুনিক অসমীয়া ব্যাকৰণ, অভিধান, নাটক, কবিতা, বিবিধ প্ৰবন্ধ, পঢ়াশলীয়া পুথিৰ সৃষ্টি অতিকৈ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ। ১৮৪৬ চনত প্ৰকাশিত অৰুনোদইৰ প্ৰকাশৰ অন্তৰালত খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ উদ্দেশ্য নিহিত থাকিলেও পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত এই সংবাদপত্ৰই অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত এক নতুন ভাবধাৰা আৰু পৰিৱৰ্তিত জীৱন মূল্যবোধৰ ধাৰা প্ৰবাহিত কৰিলে। এই অৰুনোদইক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰিয়েই এচাম থলুৱা লেখকৰ সৃষ্টি হ'ল। যিসকলৰ অৱদান অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ বিকাশত অতুলনীয়। আমাৰ এই আলোচনাত অৰুনোদইৰ থলুৱা লেখক আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ লেখনীয়ে অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ দিশত আগবঢ়োৱা অৱদানৰ বিষয়ে এটি আলোচনা দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

০.০০ অৱতৰণিকা :

অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ ইতিহাসত ঊনবিংশ শতিকাতো এক তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ সময়। অসমৰ জাতীয় জীৱনৰ ৰাজনৈতিক, সামাজিক, বৌদ্ধিক আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক আদি সকলো

দিশতে অস্থিৰতা, অনিশ্চয়তা, দ্বন্দ্ব আৰু সমস্যাবে জৰ্জৰিত হৈ পৰিছিল এই শতিকাৰ কেইটামান দশকত। অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ এনে সংকটময় কালত অসমত খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ উদ্দেশ্যে আমেৰিকান বেপ্তিষ্ট মিছনেৰীসকল আহে। মিছনেৰীসকলৰ পদাৰ্পণে অসমীয়া সামাজিক আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক জীৱনৰ সঁজিটোক নতুন ৰূপ প্ৰদান কৰিলে। ১৮৪৬ চনত শিৱসাগৰত ছপাশাল খুলি খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্ম পুস্তিকাসমূহ চপোৱাৰ লগতে প্ৰথম অসমীয়া অভিধান, অসমীয়া ব্যাকৰণ প্ৰকাশ কৰি উলিয়াই। এই মিছনেৰীসকলৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাতেই প্ৰথম অসমীয়া সংবাদপত্ৰ অৰুনোদই য়ে ১৮৪৬ চনৰ এক জানুৱাৰীত প্ৰকাশ লাভ কৰে। এই মিছনেৰীসকলৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাতেই প্ৰথম অসমীয়া সংবাদ পত্ৰ অৰুনোদই ভাষা সাহিত্যৰ বিকাশত আগবঢ়োৱা অৱদানৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰা হৈছে।

১.০ অৰুনোদইৰ থলুৱা লেখক আৰু লেখনি :

অসমত খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ উদ্দেশ্যে অহা বেপ্তিষ্ট মিছনেৰীসকলৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাত ১৮৪৬ চনত প্ৰকাশ হোৱা অৰুনোদই সংবাদপত্ৰই সৃষ্টি কৰা অসমীয়া থলুৱা লেখক আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ লেখনীয়ে অসমীয়া ভাষাক পুনৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰাৰ লগতে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যক নতুনত্ব দান কৰিলে। প্ৰায় ষাঠী জন থলুৱা লেখকৰ অৱদানৰ বিষয়ে এই সংবাদপত্ৰখনত পোৱা গৈছে। আলোচনাৰ সুবিধাৰ বাবে থলুৱা লেখকসকল আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ লেখনিসমূহক বিষয়বস্তু অনুসৰি কিছুমান শিতানত অৰ্ন্তভুক্ত কৰি আলোচনা কৰিব পাৰি -

১.১ ভাষা বিষয়ক :

ঊনবিংশ শতিকাৰ অসমত ভাষা চৰ্চাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অৰুনোদই কাকতে আগবঢ়োৱা অৱদান অতুলনীয়। অৰুনোদইৰ পাতত অসমীয়া ভাষা সম্পৰ্কীয় আলোচনাৰ প্ৰথমটোৰ দিশ হৈছে 'কলিকতাত থকা

‘অসমীয়া বন্ধু’ নামধাৰী গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱাই লেখা ‘অসমীয়া লোকে অচমিয়া ভাষা সিকাৰ ফল’ পত্ৰৰ জৰিয়তে।

অৰুনোদইত প্ৰকাশিত অসমীয়া ভাষা সম্পৰ্কীয় আন এটা উল্লেখযোগ্য আলোচনা হৈছে ১৮৫৪ চনৰ দ্বিতীয় সংখ্যাত প্ৰকাশিত গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱাৰ ‘এজন এচমিয়া লোক’ নামেৰে পৰিচয় দিয়া ‘অচমিয়া ভাষা’ শীৰ্ষক প্ৰবন্ধ। ইয়াত অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ মূল সংস্কৃতি হোৱাৰ সপক্ষে যুক্তি আগবঢ়াইছে। বাংলা আৰু অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ মাজত সাদৃশ্য থাকিলেও দুয়োটা ভাষাই প্ৰকৃততে স্বতন্ত্ৰ। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও আনন্দৰাম ফুকনৰ (১৮৫৬, ডিচেম্বৰ) ভাষা বিষয়ক উল্লেখযোগ্য নিৰ্দেশন পোৱা যায়।

## ১.২ বিজ্ঞান বিষয়ক :

অসমীয়া ভাষাত বিজ্ঞান সাহিত্যৰো আগমন ঘটিছিল প্ৰথমখন অসমীয়া সংবাদ পত্ৰ অৰুনোদইৰ পাততে। বিশেষকৈ অন্ধবিশ্বাস, কুসংস্কাৰ, নানা বৈজ্ঞানিক ধাৰণা, বিজ্ঞানৰ নতুন নতুন আৱিষ্কাৰ, স্বাস্থ্যবিজ্ঞান সম্পৰ্কীয় সতৰ্কতা আদি বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ অৰুনোদইয়ে অসমীয়া সমাজৰ পাঠকলৈ আগবঢ়াই দিছে। এই বিষয়ত চৰ্চা কৰা থলুৱা লেখক কেইজন হ’ল – পূৰ্ণানন্দ সমা ডেকা বৰুৱা, জেমচ সিবৰাম ত্ৰিপ, দয়্যৰাম চেটিয়া।

‘অৰুনোদই’ত (১৮৪৬, ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী) প.স (পূৰ্ণানন্দ সমা ডেকা বৰুৱা) ছদ্মনামেৰে প্ৰকাশ হোৱা ‘প্ৰিথিৰিৰ আকাৰ বিসই’ এটি উল্লেখযোগ্য লেখা। ইয়াত পৃথিৱীৰ আকাৰ ববাব টেঙাৰ দৰে বুলি উল্লেখ কৰিছে। পৃথিৱীৰ পৰিধি জনাৰ উদ্দেশ্য ৫ খন জাহাজৰ পৃথিৱীৰ ভ্ৰমণ আৰু পৃথিৱীৰ আকাৰ সম্পৰ্কে চন্দ্ৰগ্ৰহণৰ প্ৰসংগ আদি বিজ্ঞানৰ বিভিন্ন প্ৰসংগৰো বিশেষ অৱদান আগবঢ়োৱা দেখা যায়।

মাইক্ৰস্ক’পৰ আৱিষ্কাৰৰ বতৰা থলুৱা লেখক সকলৰ বিজ্ঞান মানসিকতাৰ উল্লেখযোগ্য নিদৰ্শন। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও স্বাস্থ্য বিজ্ঞান সম্পৰ্কীয় পূৰ্ণানন্দ সমাৰ ‘গ্ৰহনি ৰোগৰ সংক্ষেপ বিৱৰণ’ (১৮৫৪, ডিচেম্বৰ) মিৰ মজস্কৰ হুচেনৰ ‘জননিৰ বিৱৰণ’ (১৮৫৩, নৱেম্বৰ)ত বেমাৰী মানুহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত দৰবৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা, জহনিৰ বাবে ইংৰাজ ডক্তৰৰ দৰবৰ ঔষধি আদি বৰ্ণনা সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈছে। ইয়াত জেমচ সিবৰাম ত্ৰিপে জ.ট. ছদ্মনামেৰে ‘আকৰ্শন আৰু তাপৰ বিসই’ সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা আগবঢ়াইছে। দয়্যৰাম চেটিয়াৰ ‘চাপাখানাৰ বিৱৰণ’ (১৮৫৩, ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী)ত ছপাখানাৰ উদ্ভাৱন সম্পৰ্কে ব্যাখ্যা আগবঢ়োৱা দেখা যায়।

ইয়াৰ উপৰিও আন কেইজনমান বিজ্ঞান লেখক আৰু লেখাসমূহ হ’ল – কাতিৰাম দাস পেক (ক)ৰ ‘কাকতি ফৰিঙৰ

কথা’ হেমচন্দ্ৰ বৰুৱাৰ ‘আচৰিত গছ’ গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱাই (গ) ‘ভাপ ৰথৰ বিৱৰণ’ আদি লেখা অন্যতম।

## ১.৩ ইতিহাস বিষয়ক :

‘অৰুনোদই’ সংবাদপত্ৰত অসমীয়া ইতিহাস চৰ্চাৰ এক উল্লেখনীয় দিশ। ১৮৫০ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দৰ আগষ্ট সংখ্যাত প্ৰকাশ পোৱা ‘পুৰণি অসম বুৰঞ্জী’ শীৰ্ষক পুথিৰ প্ৰকাশ। ১৮৫২ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দৰ আগষ্ট মাহলৈকে মুঠ ২২ টা খণ্ডত ‘এই বুৰঞ্জী সেস পৰিছে।’ অৰুনোদই কাকতৰ ইতিহাস বিষয়ৰ থলুৱা লেখকসকল হ’ল – গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱা, হেমচন্দ্ৰ শৰ্মা, নিধি লিৰাই ফাৰবেল। এজন উল্লেখযোগ্য থলুৱা লেখক গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱাৰ ‘আসাম বুৰঞ্জী’খন প্ৰাচীন বুৰঞ্জী প্ৰীতিৰ ঐতিহ্যৰ ভেঁটিত আধুনিক নিৰপেক্ষ দৃষ্টিভংগী আৰু সৰল ৰচনা ভংগীৰ উৎকৃষ্ট নিদৰ্শন বুলি ক’ব পাৰি।

হেমচন্দ্ৰ শৰ্মাৰ ‘ইংৰাজ দেশৰ বুৰঞ্জী’ (১৮৬০, জানুৱাৰী) নিধি লিৰাই ফাৰবেলৰ ‘হিন্দুস্থানৰ বুৰঞ্জী’ (১৮৫০, মাৰ্চ) গজনিৰ চুতীয়া ৰজা মহমদৰ আখ্যান (১৮৫০, এপ্ৰিল) গজনিৰ চতুৰ্থ ৰজা মজুদ আদি ইতিহাস সম্পৰ্কীয় লেখা অন্যতম। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও ছোৱা ছোৱাকৈ প্ৰকাশ কৰা অন্যতম এখন বুৰঞ্জী হ’ল ‘কামৰূপৰ বুৰঞ্জী’। এই পুথিখনত ১৮৫৩ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দৰ অক্টোবৰৰ পৰা মুঠ আঠটাৰ খণ্ডত প্ৰকাশ পাইছিল।

## ১.৪ অৰ্থনীতি বিষয়ক :

অৰুনোদই সংবাদ পত্ৰত অৰ্থনীতিৰ লগত জড়িত লেখা ৰচনা কৰা ব্যক্তিকেইজন হৈছে আনন্দৰাম ঢেকিয়াল ফুকন, বলৰাম ফুকন আদি। থলুৱা লেখকৰ দ্বাৰা লেখা এই সম্পৰ্কীয় লেখনি দুই এঠাইতহে দেখা যায়।

আনন্দৰাম ঢেকিয়াল ফুকনৰ ‘ইংলেণ্ডৰ বিৱৰণ’ শীৰ্ষক প্ৰবন্ধত এই সম্পৰ্কীয় সতৰ্কতা অসমীয়া মানুহৰ বাবে প্ৰকাশ কৰা দেখা যায়। তেখেতে মিস্ত্ৰ চাহাবৰ ওচৰত দাখিল কৰা স্মাৰক পত্ৰত অসমৰ কৃষি-কাৰ্যত আধুনিক যন্ত্ৰ আৰু বৈজ্ঞানিক পদ্ধতিৰ প্ৰয়োগৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাৰ বিষয়ে অৱগত কৰাও দেখা যায়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও ‘তেজপুৰ ক্ৰিসি পদাৰ্পন’ বলৰাম ফুকনৰ এই লেখাটো মূলতে আছিল সম্পাদকলৈ লিখা লেখা। অসমীয়া সমাজক লেখকে উৎস পৰিছে এইদৰে – “এই দেশত ক্ৰিসি কাৰ্য্যৰ উন্নতি হৈ জাতে দেশৰ বৰ্তমান হিনাৱস্থা গুচি সিলে সি ব্ৰিডি হষ্ট, তাৰ প্ৰতি মনোজানি আৰু দ্ৰিষ্টি ৰাখিবাইক।

## ১.৫ সাহিত্য বিষয়ক :

অসমীয়া সাহিত্য জগতত পুথি সমালোচনাৰ শুভ

আৰম্ভণি ঘটে এই অৰুনোদই সংবাদপত্ৰৰ পাততেই। আনন্দৰাম ঢেকিয়াল ফুকনৰ ‘অসমীয়া ল’ৰাৰ মিত্ৰ’ পুথিখনৰ দ্বিতীয় আৰু তৃতীয় ভাগৰ সমালোচনাধৰ্মী পৰিচয় প্ৰকাশৰ জৰিয়তে। আৰু এই লেখা প্ৰকাশ পাইছিল ১৮৪৯ চনৰ অক্টোবৰত। সাহিত্যৰো উৎপত্তি স্থল এই সংবাদপত্ৰখনেই। ১৮৪৯ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দত প্ৰকাশিত প্ৰাননাথ বৰুৱাই লিখা ‘কবিতা (কলিকতা) আদি ভাটি দেশৰ বিৱৰণ’ অন্যতম। ভ্ৰমণ কাহিনীটোৰ লেখক বৰুৱাই তীৰ্থৰ বাবে যাত্ৰা কৰি মুৰ্চিদাবাদ, গয়া, কটক, শ্ৰীক্ষেত্ৰ আৰু কলিকতাত ঘূৰি যি দেখিছিল তাৰ বৰ্ণনা সুন্দৰ ৰূপত দাঙি ধৰা দেখা যায়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও আন এটা ভ্ৰমণ বিষয়ক লেখা হৈছে নিধি লেভি ফাৰৱেলৰ ‘তিনিজন ভাইৰ মিস্যনেৰি জাত্ৰা’ (১৮৫২, ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী)

শিশুৰ উপযোগী ৰচনা প্ৰকাশ কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো এই সংবাদ পত্ৰৰ অৱদান দেখা যায়। অসমীয়া শিশু-সাহিত্যৰ উপযোগী পৰিৱেশ পটভূমি এটা গঢ় দিবলৈ সংবাদপত্ৰখনে চেষ্টা চলোৱা দেখা যায়। প্ৰথম বছৰ চতুৰ্থ সংখ্যাৰ (১৮৪৬, এপ্ৰিল) অৰুনোদইত ‘চিত্ৰসহ সিংহৰ বিৱৰণ’ আদি লেখাই এক বিশেষ ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। শিশু উপযোগী ৰচনাৰ লগত চিত্ৰ সংযোজনৰ যি প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা সেইয়া অৰুনোদইয়ে বহু পৰিমাণে পূৰণ কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিল।

কবিতাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো ‘নৰকৰ বিৱৰণ’ বিনয় বচন আদি কবিতা প্ৰকাশ হোৱা দেখা যায়। অৰুনোদইত কবিতা চৰ্চা কৰা থলুৱা কবি কেইজন হ’ল কিনাৰাম সত্ৰিয়াৰ কলিকতাৰ সুখিয়াতি, গোবিন্দৰাম ভূঞাৰ ‘নগাও জিলাৰ বৰ্ণন’, জাতিৰাম গোস্বামীৰ ‘পুলিপেনাং মাজুলিৰ বিৱৰণ’, ধৰ্মকান্ত গোস্বামীৰ ‘গুৱাহাটীৰ বিৱৰণ’ আদি অন্যতম।

কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্ৰত এই সংবাদপত্ৰখনত হাস্য ব্যংগাত্মক ৰচনা প্ৰকাশৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাও দেখা যায়। শ্ৰী শ্ৰী মলুআ ছথ নামত লিখা ‘মলুআ ৰজাৰ এখনি চিঠি’ৰ কথা ক’ব পাৰি। ইয়াত এফালে অসমীয়া মানুহৰ অধ্যয়ন বিমুখীতা আৰু আনহাতে বাতৰি কাকত পুথি-পাজিৰ বাবে ধন ভাণ্ডাৰ অনিচ্ছুকতাৰ বিষয়ে দাঙি ধৰিছে।

ইয়াৰ উপৰিও ১৯৫৮ চনৰ মাৰ্চৰ পৰা গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱাৰ ‘ৰামনৱমী’ নাটকখনে ছোৱা ছোৱাকৈ প্ৰকাশ পায়।

এনেদৰেই থলুৱা লেখকৰ হাতত অৰুনোদই সংবাদপত্ৰই নতুনকৈ প্ৰাণ পাই উঠিছিল।

### ১.৬ ধৰ্ম বিষয়ক :

যিহেতুকে খ্ৰীষ্টধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ উদ্দেশ্যে অহা বেপ্তিষ্ট

মিছনেৰীসকলৰ হাততেই অৰুনোদই কাকত মূৰ দাঙি উঠিছিল গতিকে বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ ধৰ্মীয় বিষয়ক লেখা প্ৰকাশ হোৱা দেখা যায়। এইক্ষেত্ৰত থলুৱা লেখকৰ ভিতৰত নিধি লিবাই ফাৰবেল অন্যতম। নিধি লিবাই ফাৰবেল ছদ্মনামত বহুতো ধৰ্মীয় বিষয়ক লেখা লিখিছিল। ‘জ্ঞাতনা ভোগ কৰা জন’, ‘ঈশ্বৰে মোক দেখিব’। বৰুৱাম এবোনজৰ কাৰো এ.ৰু. ছদ্মনামত ‘সোম্বৰী চফায়া নামে এজনী যুৱতী, খ্ৰীষ্টিয়ান তিবোতাৰ বিৱৰণ’ আদি অন্যতম।

### ১.৭ ভূগোল বিষয়ক :

অৰুনোদইৰ থলুৱা লেখকসকলে বিশেষ গুৰুত্ব দিয়া আন এটা বিষয় হৈছে ভূগোল। ‘অ’ (আনন্দৰাম ঢেকিয়াল ফুকন) ছদ্মনামেৰে ‘আমেৰিকা দৰ্শন হোআৰ কথা’ প্ৰকাশিত হয়। ‘অলম’ (আনন্দৰাম ফুকন)ৰ ছদ্মনামেৰে ‘ইংলেণ্ডৰ বিৱৰণ’, ‘হিন্দুস্থানৰ না না প্ৰদেশ’, কলিকতাৰ সুখিয়াতি, ‘গ’ (গুণাভিৰাম বৰুৱা)ৰ ছদ্মনামেৰে ‘নানা দেশৰ সম্বাদ’ত অসমৰ বিভিন্ন দেশৰ ভৌগোলিক বৰ্ণনা আগবঢ়ায়। প্ৰাণনাথ বৰুৱাৰ ‘কলিকতা আদি ভাটি দেশৰ বিৱৰণ’ এই দিশৰ অন্যতম অৱদান।

### ১.৮ অন্যান্য বিষয়ক :

অৰুনোদয়ত প্ৰকাশিত বিভিন্ন শিতানবোৰৰ উপৰিও সমাজ সংস্কাৰধৰ্মী লেখা, নীতিশিক্ষাৰ বিষয়ৰ লেখা, সম্পাদকলৈ চিঠি আদিও বিৱৰণ দেখা যায়। আনন্দৰাম ফুকনৰ পৰিশ্ৰমৰ ফল (১৮৪৬, ডিচেম্বৰ) চিকা দাসৰ ‘বিদ্যাৰ সিকাৰ নিবেদন’, হেমচন্দ্ৰ বৰুৱাই মোনাৰ চাঁদ নামত লিখা ‘অনেক বিয়া কৰা অনুগুত’ (১৮৫৬, এপ্ৰিল) অন্যতম।

সম্পাদকলৈ চিঠি লিখা থলুৱা লেখকসকল আছিল শ্ৰী সিরদেৱ গোস্বামী (শ্ৰীযুত অৰুনোদই সম্পাদক মহামইৰ সমীপেষু) শ্ৰী শ্ৰী আউনি অটিয়া গোস্বামী (অসেম পুনলিঙ্গিত শ্ৰীযুত অৰুনোদই সম্পাদক মহাসসেষু) আদি অন্যতম।

### ২.০ উপসংহাৰ :

অসমীয়া ভাষা সাহিত্যলৈ বিভিন্ন দিশত অভূতপূৰ্ব অৱদান আগবঢ়াই যোৱাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অৰুনোদইৰ থলুৱা লেখকৰ অৱদান অতুলনীয়। ঊনবিংশ শতিকাৰ প্ৰথমার্ধৰ অসমৰ চৌদিশে হৈ থকা অস্থিৰ অৱস্থাত মিছনেৰীসকলৰ হাতত অৰুনোদইৰ জন্ম তাৎপৰ্যপূৰ্ণ বিষয়। এই সংবাদপত্ৰক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি সৃষ্টি হোৱা থলুৱা লেখকসকলৰ লেখনিয়ে অসমীয়া ভাষাক পুনঃপ্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰি অসমীয়া সাহিত্যক সুস্থিৰতা প্ৰদান কৰিলে। অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ আধুনিক গদ্য শৈলী গঢ় লৈ উঠিল

অৰুণোদই গাত ভেজাঁ দিয়েই। ইয়াৰ লগতে অৰুণোদই কাকতৰ থলুৱা লেখকসকলৰ লেখাই আন এচাম সমাজ সচেতন লেখক জন্ম দিয়াৰ লগতে তেওঁলোকক লিখিবৰ বাবে প্ৰেৰিত কৰিলে। ইয়াৰ লগতে এই সংবাদপত্ৰৰ আৰ্হিতে হিন্দু ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ বাহকৰূপে সংবাদপত্ৰ প্ৰকাশ কৰাৰ মনোভাৱেও গা কৰি উঠাৰ লগতে এনে চিন্তাৰ ফলশ্ৰুতিত আন কেইবাখনো সংবাদ পত্ৰই জন্ম লাভ কৰে।

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# Temsula Ao as an Exemplary Poet of Contemporary Northeast India : A Reading of Selected Poems

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## **Abstract:**

*North East India is one of the most culturally vibrant regions of the Indian subcontinent. It is the amalgamation of people belonging to different ethnic groups, communities and tribes. The region is constantly pushed to the margins for its nonconformity to the superimposed norms and concepts of 'Indian-ness'. The portrayal of the region is in a fashion which Homi Bhabha would call 'Totalization of Culture'. Needless to say that as a literary genre, 'Tribal literature of North East' remains a contested terrain, for both the terms 'North East' and 'tribal' hints at an attempt to view the region in terms of the Self/Other binary.*

*This paper analyses Temsula Ao's Songs From The Other Life (2007) as the quintessential Tribal English poetry of North East India. Despite the distinctiveness that marks the poetry of each of the poets of North East India, certain unifying traits are found in the poetry of the region. Oral traditions, the quest for Identity and Selfhood, the Hybridization of indigenous cultures as an outcome of the advent of modernity and Christianity, a desire for Cultural Revivalism and avowal of faith in the indigenous philosophies of Animism are some of the issues that are recurrently dealt with in the poetry of North East.*

*The paper also makes an attempt to establish the Postcolonial notion as to how one can make use of the language given by the Colonial Masters to deconstruct and demystify misconceptions about the tribal world of North East India, and how, in doing so, one can succeed in writing back to the Centre or the 'mainland India' where writings from the North East is usually met with a Neo-Colonial*

*apathy. It seeks to showcase the greatness of Temsula Ao as a poet whose compelling poetry not only asserts the distinctiveness of tribal literature of North East but also has an aesthetic universality.*

**Keywords:** *Marginalization, Self/Other, Identity, Hybridization, Cultural Revivalism*

*"What cannot be said above all must not be silenced but written." – Jacques Derrida*

Northeast India is one of the most culturally vibrant regions of the Indian subcontinent. It is the amalgamation of people belonging to different ethnic groups, communities, cultures and faiths. A place renowned for its ethereal beauty and bewildering diversity, North East India is the home of over 166 tribes speaking a range of different languages and adhering to different customs, practices and beliefs.

The region is strikingly different from the rest of India. And for decades now, it has been continuously pushed to the margins as a nonconformity to the general norms and concepts of 'Indian-ness'. This marginalization leads to Northeast's exclusion from the Centre. A confined space is created where the marginalized and 'Otherised' Northeasterners are but 'voiceless subalterns' who are denied their history and identity. In an attempt at homogenization of a culture that is hugely heterogeneous, the mainland India not just segregates, but also denigrates the Northeast as a land of 'tribals'. Baruah (2005) rightly says that "'Northeast' is a representation of a forced homogenization or standardization that has resulted in a situation of deficit democracy." (p. 23)<sup>1</sup>

The portrayal of Northeast is in a fashion that Homi Bhabha would call 'totalization of culture'. It points at a failure in understanding the diversity of the people of this place and their cultures. Similarly, the

term 'tribal' also bears undertones of disregard of the sensitivities of an ethnic group. In differentiating the 'tribal' from the 'non tribal', often, a subordinate status is assigned to 'tribal'. More often than not, 'tribals' are viewed negatively. They are seen as uncivilized savages who are but a source of contamination. Prof. K.C. Baral (2006) argues that "the word 'tribe' is a stereotype, a construct, a product of colonial anthropology and is often politically exploited in our country under the constitutional provision of protective discrimination." (p. 57)<sup>2</sup> As literary genre, 'tribal literature of Northeast India' remains a contested terrain, for both the terms 'northeast' and 'tribal' hint at attempts to view the region in terms of the self/other binary.

Literature, like all art forms, shares a dialectical relationship with society, history and geography. Therefore, it goes without saying that the poetry produced in the Northeast, in all its magnificence, transcends from being mere literary pieces to being the voices of the gloriously diversified culture of the region. The works of the different poets are just as varied as the diversified backdrops that these poets hail from. It is almost as if the poets of Northeast write to bespeak of their uniqueness and distinctiveness, to subvert the constructed homogenous nomenclature and identity imposed upon them.

Nonetheless, certain unifying characteristics are found in the poetry of the region. Oral traditions, the quest for identity and selfhood, modernity, the hybridization of indigenous cultures as an outcome of colonization, modernity and advent of Christianity, a desire for cultural revivalism and the animistic philosophies of life prevalent in the region are some of the recurrent themes in the poetry of Northeast. Also, as the literature produced in a land plagued by years of terror and violence, the poetry of Northeast India is also to a large extent what Desmond Kharmawphlang calls 'terror lore'. Traces of fear, pain, anger and also of hope, endurance and faith are splattered across the poetry of this region. Besides, the poetry produced in this region is mostly mellifluous and lyrical. Enriching the poetic language are images, metaphors, allusions to indigenous myths and folklores. All these factors together have given tribal poetry of Northeast India a life and identity of its own that is very different from that of the poetry produced in the rest of India.

Literature, especially poetry, of Northeast India has acquired momentum in the last few decades. Many

writers from the region have conquered the national and global platform and have stirred sensations with their radical and compelling compositions. Besides, attempts are also being made to resuscitate the literature written in the earlier times by re-critiquing them from novel perspectives. Some of the important names in Northeast poetry are Mamang Dai from Arunachal Pradesh, Nilamani Phookun, Anupama Basumatary and Hiren Bhattacharya of Assam, Robin S Ngangom and Saratchand Thiyam of Manipur, Meghalaya's Desmond Kharmawphlang and Easter Syiem, Mizoram's Mona Zote and Cherie L Changte, Tripura's Piyush Raut and Bijoy Kumar Debbarma and also Easterine Iralu, Monalisa Chankiza and Temsula Ao of Nagaland.

Temsula Ao is one of the most critically acclaimed writers of Northeast. A professor by profession, she has been the recipient of many awards including Padmashri in 2007 and the Sahitya Akademi award in 2013. Her most widely known works include two collections of short stories called *These Hills Called Home* (2006) and *Laburnum for My Head* (2009) and an essay called *Henry James' Quest for the Ideal Heroine. Songs That Tell* (1998), *Songs That Try To Say* (1992), *Songs Of Many Moods* (1995), *Songs From Here and There* (2003) and *Songs From The Other Life* (2007) are some of her notable collections of poetry. An Ao Naga by birth, her works heavily reflect the cultures, traditions, practices and beliefs of the Ao people of Nagaland, a tribe with its own overflowing cultural archive. Though Temsula Ao deals with the issues concerning the Ao tribe in particular, in many ways, her works also capture the quintessence of the 'tribal poetry of Northeast India' in general. Reading through Ao's works is almost like reading through a cross section of the kind of poetry being written in this region.

Some of the salient features of Northeastern tribal poetry present in Temsula Ao's collection of poem *Songs From the Other Life* have been briefly discussed below, with examples from selected poems of the collection.

Tribal poetry of Northeast India laments the loss of indigenous culture, traditions, beliefs and history that has come to plague the tribal societies over the years. Tilottoma Mishra (2011) states that, "an intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiations with 'other' cultures is a recurrent feature of the literatures of the seven

Northeastern states.” (p. xiii)<sup>3</sup> The writers of the land, through their writings, attempt a kind of “cultural revivalism”. They attempt to overcome the culture shocks they have received by trying to revive and preserve the nuances of their histories and traditions in their works and also by proliferating their histories amongst the younger generations. And this is precisely what Ao does in *Songs From the Other Life*. The very name of the collection hints at this fact, for these are songs from an ‘other life’- a life that once was, but is no longer continuing. In a versified epigraph of the collection, which is named *History*, Ao clearly states her objective behind writing — “to redraft history.” Temsula Ao (2013) writes:

“*These Songs  
From the other life  
Long lay mute  
In the confines  
Of my restive mind  
.....  
.....  
They now resonate  
In words of new  
Discernment  
To augment the lore  
Of our ancient core.*” (p.239)<sup>4</sup>

Northeast India is also a land with a rich and exquisite oral tradition. Histories, beliefs, saying, anecdotes and most importantly stories that embody all of these others have continued to be orally passed down to the younger generations. Orality and the collective memory are core components of every tribal society of Northeast. These stories capture the very essence of the people’s identity. Ben Okri’s words “We are part human, part stories” are very true in the case of the different ethnic groups of the Northeast. Here, every community is in possession of a vibrant story-telling tradition. There are bristling galaxies of stories archived in the collective memory of the people which to a large extent determine their ways of life and beliefs. These stories are a dominant influence on the literary creation of the region. Temsula Ao’s *The Songs From Other Life* also draws heavily from these indigenous lores, myths and legends. Almost every poem in this collection is preceded by a brief stating of the story that the poem deals with. These help the non-Ao readers to understand the poems better. From the myth of origin of the Nagas from the six stones at Lungerteok, to the tales about the stealth of the Naga

script, Ao delves into a number of folk tales. In *The Old Story Teller*, she writes:

“*Story telling was my proud legacy  
.....  
I told stories  
As though they ran in my blood  
.....  
and each story reinforced  
my racial reminiscence*” (p.240)<sup>5</sup>

Another significant feature of Northeast poetry is that it talks extensively about the issues pertaining to ‘colonialism’ and its impacts. Colonialism brought in concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘christianity’ to the virgin lands of Northeast India. It led people to question and abandon their native faiths, beliefs and cultures. With modernity grew unchecked ambition and greed that soiled the chaste minds of the tribal folks. Tilottama Mishra (2011) states that “The invasion of an alien culture that lay exclusive claim to modernity and compel the indigenes to be apologetic about their own culture has been the subject matter of much of the writings from the region.” (p. xix)<sup>6</sup> Ao’s *Songs From the Other Life* also deals with these issues. In *Blood Of Other Days*, a depiction of the process of colonization and its aftermath is also found. Ao writes:

“*We borrowed their minds,  
Aped their manners  
Adopted their gods  
And became perfect mimics.*” (p. 297)<sup>7</sup>

Many of her poems carry an undercurrent of skepticism about the supposed civilization and refinement of the tribals brought about by the colonizers. She is also skeptic about the stigma and derision that has come to be associated with the indigenous ways of life. In the poem *Blood of Other Days*, Ao also succinctly describes the advent of Christianity and the “hybridization of culture” that resulted out of embracing Christianity. She writes:

“*Then came a tribe of strangers  
Into our primordial territories  
Armed with only a Book and  
Promises of a land called Heaven  
Declaring that our Trees and Mountains  
Rocks and Rivers were no Gods  
And that our songs and stories  
Nothing but tedious primitive nonsense.*”

*We listened in confusion  
To the new stories and too soon  
Allowed our knowledge of other days  
To be trivialized into taboo.*

.....  
.....

*We stifled our natural articulations  
Turned away from our ancestral gods  
And abandoned accustomed rituals  
Beguiled by the promise of a new heaven.” (p. 297) <sup>8</sup>*

With modernity, there has grown amongst the young incredulity about the age-old societal practices. The dissensions of the youths of the Ao tribe and their irreverence for traditions find expression in *Night of The Full Moon*:

*“The youth had prevailed in the huddle  
Where the new strategies were planned,  
But some old ones are deeply disturbed  
At what was resolved,  
Because unlike such other nights  
Tonight they walk  
With no customary tributes  
For their king.” (p. 261)<sup>9</sup>*

Identity politics are also at play in most of the tribal poetry of Northeast. The nationalist agenda of identity assertion is one of the primary aims of composing poetry in the Northeast. Haunted by feelings of rootlessness and ignominy, the poets of this region proudly vindicate their identities as tribes of Northeast. Temsula Ao is no exception. She is of the belief that despite external forces like ‘modernity’ which compel many to garb ‘hybridized identities’, the essence of the core remains unchanged. She seems to adhere to what Bhabha says in *The Location of Culture*(1991): “The effect of mimicry is camouflage... it is not a question of harmonizing.” Ao, in the last lines of *Night of the Full Moon*, echoes a similar thought:

*“We may have altered our name  
But our person remains the same.” (p. 266)<sup>10</sup>*

Ao accepts that preservation of cultures in their pristine and undiluted state is an impossibility. She also acknowledges that this results in the alienation of identities and cultural chaos. And perhaps this is what she hints at in *Nowhere Boatman*. When she describes the ageless boatman as being stuck ‘*on the river between/ two irreconcilable worlds*’, she perhaps

refers to the conflicts and indecisiveness occurring in the minds of people while choosing between their indigenous identities and their globalized counterparts.

The following quoted lines of *Nowhere Boatman* are powerful lines that evoke the need for restoring the lost identities of the tribes. She writes:

*“A soul without status  
Is how I see myself*

.....  
.....

*What advantage*

.....  
*Of relocating well-defined souls  
In preordained spaces*

.....  
*An ageless, nameless  
Indispensable anomaly.”(pp. 246, 247)<sup>11</sup>*

Animism is yet another significant feature of the tribal poetry of Northeast. The tribal worldview is that all objects of nature are endowed with souls. Animals, plants, rivers, mountains etc, are seen as having a spirit within. These spirits are believed to be in possession of not just human-like qualities but also supernatural powers. In the folklores of the various tribes, man is seen as living in perfect harmony with nature. More often than not, these spirits find a deity-like position in the pantheon. The disruption of the balance of nature, it is believed wrought disastrous consequences. These beliefs also find expression in the poetry of the region. And hence, they offer scopes for reading and analysis from the perspectives of ecocriticism.

Most tribal societies thrive in the lap of Nature and have close associations with the natural environment. Far away from the bustle of urbanization, these societies have lifestyles, rites and practices that are ecofriendly. Thus, it goes without saying that tribal literatures can be analyzed from the perspectives of Ecocriticism. In *Songs From The Other Life* as well, traces of Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism can also be found. These lines from *The Leaf Shredder* highlight how the women of the Ao tribe share an affinity with Nature:

*“She remembers at times the vast forests  
Where she roamed freely  
Venturing into the darkest depths  
Where even the bravest did not dare to venture.*

.....  
.....

*She talked to all the creatures*

.....  
*She scoured the deepest forests....”* (pp. 254, 255)<sup>12</sup>

Violence, as is believed, is a characteristic feature of the poetry of this region. As a region plagued by issues like militancy and insurgency, the violence latent in the land is often reflected in the poetry. However, Temsula Ao's *Songs from the Other Life* talks about a violence of another sort. She critiques the head-hunting tradition of the Ao tribe and empathizes with its victims. A believer in non violence, she says in the preface to *These Hills Called Home* (2006) “there are no winners, but only victims and the results can only be measured in human terms.”(p. x)<sup>13</sup> She dismisses the bloody pursuit of glory as “meaningless heroics” in the poem *Trophies*. The following excerpt from the same poem also echoes her cynicism with the head hunting games:

“*These men.....*

.....

*Are an absurd lot,*

*Rejoicing over some ugly*

*Severed heads, stupidly unmindful”* (p. 284)<sup>14</sup>

Many emerging writers of the region who represents the new voice in literature of the Northeast have adopted English as their medium of expression and make use of the language of the colonial masters confidently. But, like Rushdie and Chinua Achebe, these writers too continue to use certain words from their native language repertoires. They resort to a *chutneyfication* of their own in order to retain the indigenous flavor in their poetry. Ao too sprinkles her poems with native words, myths and other cultural references. Her poems are splattered with Ao words like ‘*Lijaba*’ (creator), ‘*Onger*’ (Village chief), ‘*Genna*’ (taboo), and ‘*Shunak*’ (a traditional shawl). Thus she renders her poems distinct from the rest.

Easterine Iralu, another Naga writer, in her essay ‘*Should Writers Stay In Prison?*’ (2011) writes “We do not celebrate invisibility. We fear and reject invisibility.”<sup>15</sup> Temsula Ao's poetry has brought Northeast out of the shadows of nameless anonymity. It has captured the imagination of the nation and has,

to a large extent, succeeded in doing away with the injustice meted out to the literati of Northeast. It has, to a large extent, triumphed in effacing the dismissive neo-colonial attitude of ‘mainland India’ towards the ‘tribals’ and the ‘the tribal writings of Northeast’. Vindicating the inimitability and uniqueness of her land and people, Ao dismantles the ‘colorless homogeneity’ superimposed upon the region. Just as Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* writes back to the empire, Temsula Ao, through her poems, writes back to the ‘mainland India’ wherein the tribal writings of Northeast are usually met with disdain and apathy. Besides, these poems, deconstructs and demystifies the ‘tribal constructs’ and the tribal worldview that regulates their life. The emerging writers from Northeast India bear the responsibility of projecting ethnic specificity as well as aesthetic universality and Ao, with all her powerful poetry, has succeeded in doing that. Her poems not only assert the distinctiveness of tribal literature of Northeast, but also have a universal appeal.

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# Defining Divine Boundaries: Folk Narratives and Ecological Conservation

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## **Introduction**

*“I bow my head in reverence to our ancestors for their sense of the beautiful in nature and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of Nature with a religious significance.”* (Mahatma Gandhi. See Shah1989:106).

The intertwining relationship between nature and religion goes back to time immemorial. Our forefathers had revered natural manifestations, deified and propitiated them and understood the importance of harmonious co- existence. The Rigveda contains no less than 1000 hymns in propitiation of the natural phenomena. As a matter of fact, ancient Hinduism was pantheistic in nature and revered the spirits that gave shape to the universe. This aspect is not specific to Hinduism alone but can be seen in ancient world cultures. A number of forest deities such as Pan, Demeter and the sylvan nymphs, Dryads of the ancient Greeks, Ceres and Feronia of the Romans, Medeina of Lithuania, Yoruba Orisha of African mythology, Vana Devata of India etc. are some deities and spirits associated with primitive religions that presided over nature, particularly forests. However, this great link between man and nature weakened gradually, influenced by many factors and man became more and more isolated from the natural order in the modern world. And in today’s world, the oft heard terms to have become synonymous with modern life are environmental degradation, the need for ecological conservation, policy formulation and implementation and so on. A report in The Times of India on 10.07.2014 cites the Indian State Forest Report (ISFR) statistics

to show that there is a marginal rise in India’s forest cover to 5,871 sq.km but the North Eastern states have shown a decline of 627sq. Km. leading the Hon’ble minister for Environment and Forest, Prakash Javadekar to call for building a mass movement for environmental protection. While it must be accepted that ecological issues must be foregrounded and awareness created as to the drastic fallout if the degradation continues, yet it must also be accepted that it is easier said than done. Any action that takes place at a collective level has deeper psychological implications than it is often understood. What may not be accomplished by logical reasoning is often done through a collective belief system as the collective will translating into action, is often unconsciously governed by the norms and mores, taboos and sanctions of the culture to which a person may belong. This may be true of ecological concerns too, as this paper aims to show.

It may be said that in the modern age, the thrust is on the individual rather than the collective. Over time, humanity has undergone a transformation and we have moved forward to the rational age where all must come under the jurisdiction of the empirical and the explainable. Science, while bestowing us with new knowledge bases, taught us that nature is first and foremost a resource to be utilized for man’s benefit. This definition defied the traditional ecological knowledge that viewed man as a part in the great mystery of the universe. It demystified nature and naturally threw out all the spirits and deities out of their sylvan sphere. Consequently, the accomodative spirit

of pantheistic religions was replaced by a hierarchical one with man reigning supreme.

Exploring the attitudinal transformation in the modern world, Arupjyoti Saikia in his editorial for the *Folklore and Environment* issue of the IFL pointed out that the growth of rationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century postulated that science was the only way to understand nature (Saikia2008:3). He further commented on how even the histories of the period disregarded the colonial attitude towards natural resources and the intricate relationship of people who were dependent on these resources for their survival (ibid). Thomas Carlyle in *Signs of the Times* (1928) famously says, “*We war with rude nature; and by our restless engines, come off victorious and loaded with spoils.*” This attitude demarcates the oppositional line between man and nature and posits a market based attitude towards nature as a resource to be used for material consumption. However, to trace the growth of this attitude, one must go much further back, to the times of the organized, religions and the monotheistic philosophy that triumphed over the primitive and pagan religions of the world. The structured religions are hierarchical and clearly anthropomorphic with man in the centre. Christianity defines the human kind as God’s chosen race, positioning him above the natural world. Even Hinduism which embraced and venerated nature and saw human being as a link in the cosmic chain underwent a transformation, relegating into the background the age old traditional belief system. Many of the old beliefs associated with nature invested the natural world with supernatural powers had no place in the modern thinking. They came to be synonymous with the unlettered; to be found in folk or vernacular religion. Thus, with the protective aura of divinity ripped, nature became vulnerable. However, a rereading of these beliefs associated with the unofficial religion, fantastic as they are and carried through their narratives and material motifs have shown that they are complex metaphors that carry among others, environmental concerns. It is further seen that traditional beliefs-irrational, fantastic or any other adjective that we may use, still existed, buried within the collective memory only to surface if not in individual actions but in the collective beliefs, carried and reinforced temporally and

spatially through narratives, songs, proverbs, motifs and structures that remains the domain of folklore. This aspect of folklore plays an important role in ecological conservation and this paper focuses on a few folk narratives associated with trees and forests and shows how these myths and legends help in the protection of forests.

### **Narratives of Folk Deities and Environmental Protection**

A point of similarity among folk deities of most cultures is that they love lush greenery and prefer the outdoors. Ann G. Gold had commented on this aspect during her fieldwork in Rajasthan. While travelling in the districts of Bhilwara, Ajmer, Bundi and Tonk in Rajasthan just before the onset of monsoons in 1980s, she noticed that the land was largely parched and barren but wherever there was a shrine, it was a “virtual oasis” (1989:211). Her local informant told her that the “gods objected to having their trees cut and often forbade the removal of dead leaves from their land. They loved birds and animals... like the *Ghanta Rani* who was protected by a hive of bees” (ibid). The instructions not to defile nature often came in the dreams of people and any breach was severely punished, providing the much needed tangible proof of divine authority and for folklore to flourish. In Tonk district she visited the temple of *Sri Kalyanji* who revealed in a dream to the priest that he refused to have a concrete structure and preferred the outdoors. Similarly, *Bathou*, the prototype of Shiva of the Bodos of Assam, is symbolized by the Shiju tree and temples are not built in his name. While these gods may be said to belong to local or vernacular religions, the official religions too do not remain detached from such lore.

While conducting fieldwork in the Vaisnavite sattrā of Bogi Ai Borelengi, to the south of Jorhat, we had come across an idol of Krishna that was kept under a tree in the courtyard. As this was an unusual custom, we had asked about it only to be informed in all seriousness that the idol refused to be confined in the *namghar* and every night there would be a great din inside it. Finally, the *sattradhikar* was informed of the Lord’s wish to reside under a *Bokul* tree in the courtyard. Needless to say that the tree is revered as

much as the deity and the divine sanction provides its protection.

The North East has a wide population of tribes and their pantheistic religions are treasure troves of such narratives categorized under the genres of myths and legends. A point worth noticing is that although many of the tribes have converted to Christianity they still retain vestiges of their native religion which are reflected in the beliefs that they adhere to. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Adis do not cut trees called *Rotne* as they believe them to be the abode of an evil spirit called *Epom*. Unless it is absolutely necessary, they do not disturb its habitat. Even then they propitiate it by sacrificing fowls and pigs before felling the tree. Bamboo groves called *epoeng* are felled only on the dark fourth night after the full moon called *ruruk* as they believe it is then free of an insect called *takit*. Some trees have grown from the bones of the mythical hunter *Kari bote* and ward off evil spirits (Choudhury 2008:4).

Desmond Kharmawphlang, a noted folklorist from Meghalaya, writes of the sacred forests of Meghalaya which come under the purview of the village priest or the village headmen and are protected through religious codes and sacred lore. The sacred forests of Meghalaya are set aside for religious purposes under the traditional land use system (Kharmawphlang 2009). He talks of the sacred forest of Mawphlaung as it stands undisturbed not because of legal sanction but because of the presence of the forest deity called *Basa*, who is also the village deity. One may go to these forests for amusement or academic concerns but cannot bring back even a leaf stuck to a shoe without inviting the deity's wrath. The belief persists that felling of trees would bring calamities into the villages and this keeps the forest protected. These beliefs are transmitted through the narratives told and retold and with the passage of time they acquire an authentication that requires no other proof than their antiquity.

To conclude, we present two narratives closer home. On the way to Bahona, about 6 kms from Jorhat, there is a small locality called Kathaniar Kuri. Its pride is the ancient *Namghar* believed to have been established by one of the chief proselytes of the 16<sup>th</sup>

century Vaisnava saint, Madhavdeva. Just at the entrance of the *Namghar*, there is a *bokul* tree, believed to be planted by the proselyte Badula Ata. The tree produces no fruit, perhaps in symbolic reference to the proselyte's celibate status but is said to be invested with supernatural powers. A colleague Madhurjya Bora had informed how people's wishes were fulfilled by lighting an earthen lamp near its roots. Shoes are not taken near the tree. People who show disrespect are threatened in their dreams or punished with dire consequences. The huge tree commands awe and attracts pilgrims.

Similarly, a grove of forest to the north-west of Jorhat city called Borbheti sees a huge turnout during the harvest season from all walks of life as wishes are fulfilled here if one ties a *gamosa* or lights a lamp under the trees. The trees are never felled.

These narratives carry cultural codes for the people who believe in them and also help transmit traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). The discourse elicited from these narratives addresses a number of issues. The sacredness associated with these narratives is an important weapon to avert nature's destruction. They attach meaning to the cultural life of a people, whether told for mere amusement or instruction; and when told to an outsider, they act as distinct identifying markers of their village, state or locality. The sacredness associated with these trees and forests arouse the inquisitiveness of the tourist. Psychologically it gives an identity to the locality and economically it boosts their income besides performing the larger task of environmental protection. Thus, folklore and folk religion often penetrate deeper and achieve success in areas and among people where policy formulation and pedagogy fail to reach.

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# The Other in the Chawls: Manu Joseph's Serious Men as a Study of Development's Double

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Manu Joseph's debut novel *Serious Men* is set in Mumbai and traverses two parallel worlds. One is the poignant Institute of Theory and Research where great minds relentlessly pursue the elusive truth; the other is the BDD chawl where memories and lives intertwine in shared space and shared history. The narrative unfolds through the cynical yet practical voice of Ayyan Mani who lives in a BDD apartment and plays second fiddle in the prestigious Institute of Theory and Research. The chawls of Bombay, existing alongside swanky apartment buildings, are indicative of the existence of a world that the new liberal economy has failed to erase or uplift.

In *Serious Men*, the central character Ayyan Mani swings between his tenement in a BDD chawl and his workplace which is the swanky Institute of Theory and Research. Ayyan is acutely aware of the limitations associated with life in a chawl. Every time he walks through the gloomy corridors of his building, he is transported into a future that he dreads. Ayyan devotes his days in devising new ways of breaking through his fatalistic existence in the chawls. Through Ayyan's tirade against the building blocks of the Indian nation state, viz., science, technology, caste, religion and politics, the readers are led to ponder over the meanings of a new and developed India. Acting as a foil to Ayyan's practicality, Dr. Arvind Acharya represents the presumed austerity and self-importance of the stakeholders of science in India. Serious men engaged in discussing lofty issues and immersing themselves in the search of ultimate truth create a comical picture of scientists. These scientists carry out their research in complete ignorance or denial of lived realities. But the aura of their prestigious enterprises is

compromised by the petty politics they indulge in at the Institute of Theory and Research. Through the vantage point of the burning issue of caste politics, Joseph hints at the gaps and fissures in the metanarrative of new shining India. The glamour of an institution like the Institute of Theory and Research is interspersed by the gloomy existence of the residents of the BDD apartments. Ayyan is an outsider in both these worlds. He cannot be at home in his apartment because he fears that he would end up as the many insignificant, morose residents of the chawls who live their monotonous lives in cramped spaces. At the same time, he feels like a complete outsider in the Institute of Theory and Research where the reins of control lie at the hands of the Brahmin scientists for who Ayyan is a mere Dalit clerk who has done well in life. Ayyan is thus caught between two worlds where he does not belong.

The chawls of Bombay are testimony to how economic conditions of a particular region create a unique physical space that exists in synchrony with and influences the socio-political-economic conditions of that region. The booming cotton textile industry of the late nineteenth century made Bombay a lucrative place where one can seek employment. This resulted in immense migration to Bombay from various parts of the country, particularly the Western Ghats and the Konkan Coast. The influx of migrants to the city led to the emergence of chawls - miniscule tenements in multi-storeyed buildings distinguished by close proximity and open corridors. To cash in on the demand for living space, private parties built many chawls on what functioned as farmland. The chawls have since then become a symbol of the imagery of Bombay city. In

about a century, chawls have donned the role of an icon of industrialized Bombay, a symbol of religious and social harmony, a case-in-point of unsanitary living conditions, a reminder of the Bombay that was, and a parallel world that exists as a glum accompaniment to the post industrial liberalized Bombay. The colonial government's intervention in the creation of chawls came as a response to the outbreak of plague in 1898 which was attributed to the unsanitary living conditions of the chawls. The Bombay Development Department built what they considered to be modern structures with sanitary and hygiene considerations. In time, with the gradual disappearance of the cotton industry and the emergence of new India and new modes of wealth making, the chawls and their lower middle class occupants became marginal entities dotting the boundaries of the new world. The chawls of Bombay, reminiscent of a flourishing industrialism of a bygone era, have now become shadows jostling for existence in the presence of tall apartment buildings. Interestingly, many of these buildings were also chawls in the recent past. Developers often try to convince residents of chawls to sell their property so that it can be converted into plush residential spaces for the new middle and upper classes.

Joseph describes a typical scenario in the chawls thus:

“Ayyan made his way home down the broken, cobbled ways which ran between the stout buildings. Men and women, hundreds of them, just stood around. As if something bad had happened. Emaciated girls, with hollow chests, chatted among themselves...The women of BDD did not expect much from their men. Ageing mothers who had lost all their sons before those boys could turn thirty were still capable of laughing till they were breathless. Here the frailties of the male folk showed all the time in the tired faces of the newly dead, or in the vacant eyes of drunkards, or the resigned calm of the jobless boys who just sat for hours watching the world go by” (7).

This is the kind of desperation that Ayyan constantly runs away from. His clerical job at the Institute of Theory and Research, along with his abstinence from alcohol, bestowed the status of a legend on him in BDD. But Ayyan dreamt of a future that was in no way connected to his past, to his

ordinariness which made him an outsider in what has been his home for a very long time. His utter despondence of life in the chawls is indicative of the devastation unleashed by a liberal economy on a large part of the population. The flourishing textile industry of Bombay began to falter from the 1960s with the restriction on mills by the Indian government to save the handloom. The liberalization of labour laws and slackening in their monitoring led to a decrease in the power of trade unions. Low wages created discontent among the textile workers. The 1980s also saw the shift in demand from cotton based products to synthetic and mixed textile products which were cheaper than cotton. The problem was aggravated by the rise of the powerloom in the 1980s that could work more economically and efficiently. The entry of the powerloom revolutionized the production of cotton, synthetic and blended textiles and threatened the very existence of the mills leading to further wage reduction of handloom mill workers. The growing discontent among workers led to the historic Strike of 1982 which sounded the death-knell for the Bombay textile industry. The modernized version of the textile industry, i.e. the powerloom version was more suitable to the new patterns of demand. As such, the mill owners were more eager to close the mills than concede to the demand of the protesters. The closure of the handloom textile mills led to lacs of people becoming unemployed. Many families lost their livelihoods. The number of underpaid contract workers increased leading to a strengthening of the informal sector. The decline of unions and a liberal labour regime contributed to the violation of norms and the exploitation of workers. In a few years time, the chawls of Bombay peopled by textile industry employees were reduced to dilapidated buildings where people were trying to cope with new modes of living.

The Institute of Theory and Research where Ayyan works acts as a foil to his chawl life and stands for the life he desires. Working as a personal secretary to the Director, Ayyan is privy to the internal workings of the Institute; but he is always an outsider in that world. The scientists at the Institute engaged in their pursuit of truth are indeed caricatured personifications of Ayyan's own desire to surpass the ordinary. Ayyan spends much of his time plotting ways to transcend the ordinariness of his life. In his relentless pursuit of better

life, he resembles the scientists at the Insitute. Joseph presents both kinds of pursuits with irony;

“Ayyan could not bear it. This never-ending quest for truth....Now, truth was in the hands of the men in this room, and they were more incomprehensible than the men of God. Ayyan was certain that there was no such thing called truth. There was only the pursuit of truth and it was a pursuit that would always go on.” (58)

Ayyan’s frustration with his life in the chawl hints at the trials and tribulations faced by people who are at the margins of a liberal global economy. At the same time, the pages of the novel also indulge in nostalgia for a communal way of living where every individual success or failure becomes a public event. The casual chit-chat among residents while waiting for their turn in the common toilet, the games and meetings on the terrace and the swarm of people gathering at Ayyan’s house to be a part of the celebration of Aditya Mani’s genius symbolize the camaraderie characteristic of life in a chawl. The segregation between the public and the private spheres, typical of liberal-bourgeoisie approach to living, is conspicuous by its absence in the BDD. This nostalgic invocation of communal life, however, does not refrain from constantly reminding Ayyan/the reader of the harsh realities faced by the residents. Ayyan, who at some level, is fond of going to his house in the chawl, particularly because of what the narrator describes as his “good marriage” to Oja Mani, is always conscious of the reality:

“But in his mind he did not accept these men. He had to abolish the world he grew up in to be able to plot new ways of escaping from it”. (8)

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# Influence of Oral Traditions in some of the poems of Temsula Ao

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## **Abstract:**

*Literature from the North Eastern part of India has its own identity. This distinct identity comes from the rich influence of various legends, myths and folklores particularly in poetry. The region is particularly rich in various myths and folk tales that have become a part of the cultural life of the people. The influence of these myths has given a distinct colour and taste to the literature of this region that has created a distinct identity for the literature of the North East. Oral traditions of telling and retelling these myths have enriched the literature of North East and thus in a way supplements to the genre and tradition of Indian Writing in English. This paper attempts to show the influence of Oral traditions in some of the poems of Temsula Ao, a seminal writer from the Ao Naga community. Through her poems she invites the world to come and explore the rich traditions of her community and in a way attempts to preserve the rich heritage.*

**Key Words:** *Local Colour, Myth, Folktale, Identity, Culture.*

When we speak about the literature of North East the dominant theme that presents itself before us is its uniqueness. This sense of being unique arises from the rich diversity of its culture, customs and social practices through its oral as well as written literatures. This region is unique for its myth, legend, folklores, dance, art and craft and distinct social structures and festivals. For most of the poets from North East these legends, myths and folklores are the main source through which they try to connect the past and the present.

Oral narratives just like written ones play a

dominant role in shaping the entire literature as well as the social life of this region. Temsula Ao being a writer from this region sticks to cultural mosaic while conveying her feelings through her poetry. The Nagas from the North East are known for their rich oral tradition and heritage. Almost every facet of Naga life ranging from history, religious belief, social life, culture, love, romance, marriage etc are deeply embedded in their folktales, folklores, legends etc. Temsula Ao uses these tales to let the entire world acquaint itself with the culture and belief of her community. In *Stone People from Lungterok* she uses the legend concerned with the coming of the first progenitors of her community. The poem brings to light the rich traditional heritage of the Ao Naga community. Here, she speaks of a collection of six stones that are associated with the origin of her community. At the end of the poem she provides a note to her readers where she explains the meaning of 'Lungterok' which is 'Six Stones'.

According to the Ao origin myth the forefathers of the community "emerged out of 'Lungterok,' meaning 'the six stones.' The myth further says that six humans 'burst out' or 'pocket,' of the six stones. Hence the place of origin is known as Lungterok. Out of the six stones, there were three males: Longpok, Tongpok and Longjakrep. The women were Longkapokla, Yongmenala and Elongse. It is a common belief among the Aos that these first patriarchs established the first Ao village called Chungliyimti, where all laws and social norms were established." (Chandra and Sentinaro, *A Discourse on Ao Naga Folktales*)

Ao begins her poem by invoking the place of

her origin and in the process brings to lime light the characteristic features of her community.

“Lungterok,  
The Six Stones  
Where the progenitors  
And forebears  
Of the stone-people  
Were born  
Out of the womb  
Of the earth.” (Ao, *Stone People from Lungterok*)

Temsula Ao, in the preface to her seminal book *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* has said that for the Aos “folklore is culture and culture is folklore”. The Aos take tremendous pride in their folklores for they believe that folklores preserve their rich cultural heritage. These culturally rich folklores exist in the form of storytelling as well as in the forms of proverbs, folksongs, myths and folktales. Since time immemorial story telling has served as an important way of preserving the cultural heritage of any community. Story tellers by retelling stories and tales transmit the culture from one generation to the other and thus pave the way for the preservation of the rich heritage. In due course of time certain folklores were written down while certain others still continued to be orally transmitted from one generation to the other. As it has already been mentioned that the Aos do not have any documented folklores still but they have succeeded to preserve their heritage in the form of oral narratives that has given them a distinct colour of their own.

In oral narratives memory plays a decisive role in the way the folk narratives are told and retold from generation to generation. Memory connects the past to the present where mythic heroes and heroines are brought to the present to encourage children as well as adults to face adverse situations boldly. It is via memory that culture is transmitted to the younger generation by the ancestors. In this way culture remains preserved generation after generation. We can say that culture remains embodied in memory. Oral narratives mostly in the form of stories, poems, poetic-prose either told, chanted or sung are impregnated with deep social meaning that are generally associated with the tribe’s custom and tradition. Temsula Ao is deeply rooted in her mythical past and tries to retell the past, the land

with the people, the culture, the way of life and the tradition. By retelling those in *Stone People from Lungterok* she has provided a written document of the legends and myths of her community. Since poetry is immortal the myths and legends of her community has been immortalized through “Stone People from Lungterok” and others as well.

In the Ao Naga folklore it is very common that one would often come across forests, trees, animals, spirits etc. These forests, animals, trees, spirits etc form a part of the way of the religious and cultural life of the people. That is why Ao says:

“Stone-people  
The Worshippers  
Of unknown, unseen  
Spirits  
Of trees and forests,  
Of stones and rivers  
Believers of soul” (Ao, *Stone People from Lungterok*)

Oral narratives provide an identity to the tribal community as they uphold their ethos, social life, religious beliefs, and ethical values and norms. It provides their identity as a distinguishable tribal group whose social and cultural life is very much regulated by these oral narratives. These oral narratives serve as the foundation stone for the various rites, rituals and festivals organized by the Ao Naga community. According to one such narrative the Ao Nagas believe that their ancestors learnt song from the ‘Song Tree’. The narrative goes like that: a young girl fell in love with a young boy who appeared before her only during the nights. She once presented him a beautiful hand woven shawl. The next day during taking bath in a nearby pond she saw her shawl tightly wrapped around a tree. On seeing that she began humming. The tree on which the shawl was wrapped started singing and asked her to sing along him. There she learnt the song from the tree. From then onwards the Ao community believed that people learn different sounds of nature, birds and animals and use those songs to express their feeling and also use as mode for communications. That is why they are:

“Stone-people,  
The polyglots,

Knowledgeable

In bird's language

And animal discourse" (Ao, *Stone People from Lungterok*)

In another folk based poem "Soul-bird" she tries to negotiate the Ao Naga belief and the present world where a child sees a hawk soaring the sky as the ritualistic prayers are offered which is generally considered a good omen considering that the transition are over and this is the last visible sight of the departed soul on earth. The Ao Nagas believe that when a person dies the soul takes the form of a bird, especially a hawk. In the *Soul-bird* the hawk keeps circling on the burial site 'Emitting an unearthly sound'. Here, once again we find the tradition of the ancestor orally transmitting the tale which holds their entire system of rites, rituals and beliefs. The grandmother takes the role of that ancestral story teller who tells the grandchild:

"See what keening bird in the sky?

That's your mother's soul

Saying her final goodbye,

It is over

Come, Let us go home now." (Ao, *Soul-bird*)

The North Eastern region of India is a mosaic of different tribal cultures and beliefs. In fact almost all the cultural beliefs are related to the geography of the region. Nature plays a dominant role in all these tales and myths whether written or oral. Like the myths of the Adi tribe of Arunachal where nature and elements of nature play a pivotal role the myths of the Ao Naga tribe is also centred around nature. For Mamang Dai, the 'Mountain' tells stories of change yet it stands permanent as a witness to change, the mountain in Dai becomes the memory where the culture and tradition of the Adi community is preserved.

"I am the place where memory escapes

The myth of time,

I am the sleep in the mind of the mountain" (Dai, *Voice of the Mountain*)

The river is immortal and has witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations and mythic heroes and heroines. Temsula Ao, too, believes in the permanence of nature as a witness to change. The myths, folksongs, mythical beliefs have always revolved around nature. They

consider both the animate and inanimate objects of nature as friends, intimately linked to human life for survival and development. They consider the earth as a living entity where living and non living beings have a purpose and all are intricately linked as one entity. The Adi community of Arunachal like the Ao Nagas is full of respect for nature and believe that everything in nature has a life. Every form of nature – rocks, mountains, rivers, trees, hills and all life are sacred. The concept of 'Donyi-Polo' meaning 'Sun-Moon' is a manifestation of the Supreme Deity in physical form. Mamang Dai calls it 'World Spirit'. In simple words we may consider it as worship of nature. The Ao Nagas consider the earth as a living entity and they call their Supreme Deity as 'Lizaba' where 'Li' means 'land' and 'Zaba' means 'real' which again brings back the concept of worship of nature. For them the land and the whole of creation are the manifestations of the Supreme Being.

Thus we find that the oral as well as written narratives of the tribal world have given a distinct colour to the literature of this region. The literature particularly the poems are rich in local myths, legends and folktales that have provided a hue of nature which is found only in this part of the country. The Aos consider the oral tradition as not merely a process of telling or retelling the myths, legends associated with their social and cultural life but it has been treated as a lifeline of their community. These folklores connect the past to the present. They have no written script of their own so the preservation of their rich heritage which is nothing but the identity of the community depends on to what extent the new generation accepts it as a part and parcel of their life and their identity. Temsula Ao is full of respect and pride for the oral narratives of her community but she doubts the present generation when she says in *Songs from the Other Life*:

"I have lived my life believing

Story-telling was my proud legacy.

But now a new era has dawned.

Insidiously displacing the old.

My own grandsons dismiss our stories as ancient gibberish.

Who needs rambling stories

When books will do just fine?" (Ao, *The Old Story Teller*)

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# Thematic Concerns in Kamleshwar's *Kitne Pakistan*

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## **Abstract:**

*The paper is a critical analysis of Kamleshwar's Kitne Pakistan translated into English by Ameena Kazi Ansari as Partitions. Kamleshwar is a prolific hindi writer . Kitne Pakistan has successfully attempted to portray the peculiar world politics. Kamleshwar's technique is like post modernistic writing where characters are impelled to undertake a journey/quest forcing them to peep into their past so that they are enabled to examine it objectively and thus evaluate it into the right perspective. The novel is about people all over the globe, who have suffered injustice, oppression and dislocation of various kinds. Taking the partition of India as the main event, the novelist presents a vivid and realistic picture of the Indian sub-continent and also of the world at large. In this novel he acquaints us with the violence that has prevailed in the whole world. His basic aim is to show that humanity is the witness to such violence, be it in any part of the world.*

One event which has been repeatedly used as a subject for Indian fiction is that of the partition of the Indian sub-continent into Hindustan and Pakistan in August in 1947.

Kamleshwar has used 'Pakistan' as a metaphor for the division between man and man, between one community and another, between one race and another, in short between one heart and another. His novel deals with the divisions between man and man, and between different nations and civilizations in a historical perspective. The people have always created 'Pakistans' in different parts of the globe and kept the embers of hatred burning. It shows how innocent people

suffer in the name of caste, creed and race. Kamleshwar has made the point that the real victims of all sectarian violence throughout the world are the common people, irrespective of religious or denominational differences. His work is characterized by a sense of compassion, values of universal humanism and lucid narrative.

The human condition is above all for the author, the most gripping tale history has to narrate and while sagas of races and nations are for him means to discover the story of the lone individual, the ordinary man caught in the maze of events that ultimately reveals the most important lesson we need to learn from them. The content of the novel evolves out of the individual mind deeply involved in the circumstances of life. On account of the variety of its experiences and approach, the novel is multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and multi-directional.

Kamleshwar has telescoped history in his novel. History as a record of how small and large human groups grew and became powerful, how they competed with each other, how victory and defeat led to a new distribution of power and wealth. Most of the great changes in history have been the results of the misuse of power.

The novel has its basis in a clear identification of the facts of contemporary life. This identification has been done on two levels. Firstly Kamleshwar has observed and presented truthfully the contemporary relations, topics, problems, events and tumults and secondly he has probed into the ultimate motives fashioning them. In fact, it is the firm understanding of the latter that make his pictures truly authentic. His realism is comprised of the identification of the basic motives, and the external actions and events conditioned

by them. He has presented an authentic picture of world-wide violence of characters drawn from different races, nationalities, religious denominations and ideological persuasions, of their mutual relations, of the various problems and events and of emotional and intellectual conflicts and adjustments arising out of these relations.

The protagonist of the novel is 'Adeeb'. He is the 'All Seeing Conscience' who has lived through a crucial epoch of the world's history and seen both the best and worst of times. He is the witness to each and every act. He is the articulate voice of the common man's concerns which have gone largely unheard in history's relentless march of time. The long journey of Adeeb is the agonized search of something which can convert hatred into concern for the 'Other' and mutual forgiveness. The 'All Seeing Conscience' is assisted by 'Cognitive Conscience' who is Adeeb's peon. He acquaints him with the basic facts and also serves as a discriminatory power that wants to bring forth the point that human bliss lies in righteous conduct.

The novelist works his way through a persistent memory at both the levels of the domestic, private domain and the public sphere the vexing problems of nations, migrations and of the individual life. He disrupts the regular expectations of time, historical event and space. He in a crucial way tries to fill the gaps that exist in authorized histories giving speech to silence, a silence sometimes enforced by the state and sometimes by misinterpretation. The novelist is aware of these gaps left behind both by history and the traditional narratives. He rejects the notion that the past and present need to be represented and categorized under separate chronologies which do not admit each other in to their folds as he undertakes to sometimes even invert memory, allowing the present to be rewritten and retold by the past.

Kamleshwar believes that trial is the true preceptor in life. In the novel he fully agrees with this. The Adeeb embodies the court of dead people where corpses come and question the reason of their death. History is presented as a mode of inquiry. Historical figures are summoned and they have to justify their actions. Centuries come and reveal the actual facts. The novelist shows history impinging itself on the personal life of the characters. The attempt is to recover

missing segments of history and the relentless task of searching, finding and the telling of incidents.

The novelist possesses the skill of placing a story in a particular setting, and then joining it with another story to show how innocent people are killed throughout the world. He merges the stories of corpses who die in different parts of the world, so that when a corpse is telling his story, another one from some other country but in. "As Mohammad bin Qasim was relating his story, a tremendous din rose in Kashmir. Tajikistan screamed. American bombing over Iraq resembled a Fireworks display. Bosnian Serbs attacked Muslims again. The 3000 Sri Lankans Pribhakaran had killed, groaned from beneath the ground, where they lay buried." (144)

*Partitions* is full of hyphenated characters who seek a sense of place and belonging—a home—within homelands torn apart by colonialist, imperialist invasions and civil wars. It is a novel whose story stretches out from and around the experiences of South Asian hybrid characters. It is packed with historically verifiable details, and announces dates in chapters to remind chronology. Its thematic material is carefully organized according to the principles that govern the crafting of fiction.

*Partitions* include a recorded history. The immediate impulse would be to read the novel as a postcolonial novel that revises and dramatically transforms ordinary people that traditionally have silenced or erased the subaltern presence and agency. Kamleshwar invents a third-person narrator that relates a story in a helical fashion that simultaneously fictionalizes that makes real historical subject and event. As such, the narrative often slips into free indirect discourse to open up free-flow of information between the reader and character's minds, the author of actual, historical narrative cannot. So although the author employs a third-person omniscient narrator that exists at a remove from the story world, it is not bound by the conventions of the work of history. The narrator is not bound by chronological convention; he even makes huge leaps in years with the turn of the page. By making real, the narrator represents the characters as real according to the terms of the fictional narration.

Kamleshwar tries to undertake the idea that throughout the world there are people striving for their

own selfish interests. Thousands of innocent men, women and children are sacrificed every year at the altar of hatred and jealousy. Adeb takes up the stories in the beginning narrates them half and then they are completed towards the end. In between historical facts are revealed and against this background the stories are completed.

*Partitions* is a triumph in the treatment of its subject, its theme. It has potential for sociological interpretation which raises the consciousness of people and compels them to think on certain issues. *Partitions* assumes the form of a historical document of the time and it conveys an important lesson to mankind that history should never be allowed to repeat itself in an ugly and disgusting manner, that men, institutions and nations should learn from history. It forces its readers to engage with the possibility of an alternate historiography, in which the traditionally disempowered subjects are the real puppet masters. It is a novel that insists on transcending political imperatives in favour of a broad based humanism. The very title of the novel *Partitions* suggests that the novel is not concerned with the partition of one country but with the partitions which are being done throughout the world. Kamleshwar's attempt is to present some of the evils which create rifts in human hearts. The range of the novel is very vast as it covers almost all civilizations and tries to present how the evil tendencies have succeeded in exerting their control again and again throughout the history of mankind.

*Partitions* is surcharged with power motifs. As a political novel it engages itself with contemporary developments and policies and explores the consequences of political decision. But it also simultaneously searches for continuity, thereby acquiring a historical dimension. Though the immediate historical framework of the novel actually focuses on the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, the political agitations and upheavals of this period are used to analyse the various ideological strands handed down by various civilizations of the world. The novel shows that power politics operates everywhere. People want to satisfy their own lust for power. The aim of the novelist like any other political text is to raise people's awareness and compel them to think that what factors underlie political decisions.

Kamleshwar is not a historian; he is a social novelist who is mainly concerned with society as well as with the world at large. He does not merely depict the historical events but with a keen insight and sensitivity, he tries to present and acquaint us with such forces which trap humanity again and again. The very title of the novel *Partitions* suggests that the text is not concerned with 'partition' of one country but with the 'partitions' which are being done throughout the world.

The catastrophic event of the partition of India is only a spring board from where Kamleshwar jumps to analyse various kinds of partitions that ancient civilizations all over the world have witnessed and that continue to affect the different societies of the present day world with disastrous consequences. Adeb begins with the Indian political system. He tries to analyse the historical facts as reported by the court historians of that time and finds that these facts were not authentic.

Kamleshwar then tries to highlight the world-wide imperialistic tendencies. The imperialistic countries were keen to make more and more colonies. Kamleshwar tells the reader that the big nations are always keen to make more and more colonies.

The novel is rich in images, which are generally used by the novelist to communicate his feeling to decorate his language. It is by use of images that abstract ideas or emotional states can be conveyed accurately and clearly to the readers. In the case of *Partitions* Kamleshwar's use of imagery is of great importance, since its quality is one of the most striking feature of the novel. Images convey some idea or emotion and not merely to beautify language.

Kamleshwar's images grow from visual to emotional. His images are controlled by selectivity and undercut by a surge and flow of ideas and movement. In such images the words become the main current which reinforce the idea which is presented. In the poetic and extremely sensitive use of language in the evocation of images that transcribe the human conditions and in the poignant fictionalization of the human predicament Kamleshwar's skill is incomparable. The novel is rich in strong pictorial images where the world is surrounded by darkness. Such images help to create a surreal atmosphere in which anti-human forces, mostly political flourish. As he says:

“Then the year 1669 came roaring into the court terrified voices Reverberated around the place. Fear permeated the atmosphere Temples collapsed hours crumbled into fragments and scattered far and wide. The sculpted images of deities disintegrated.”(157)

This paragraph prepares the reader to expect something sinister associated with it. It shows that there was some evil associated with this century whose consequences haunt the future which the year was very eager to narrate. The words like crumbled, fragments, scattered, suggest the disintegration of human relationships. The terror portrayed in the novel comes through images clicking one after the other. Yet another description which portrays the horror associated with the twentieth century runs as follows: “Predators prowl everywhere tremors set off by chaos, plunder, genocide, abduction and rape, reverberate around us hyenas, dogs and vultures on rotting carcasses and aborted fetuses. Horrific sights of blood-letting abound—more horrific than the flood that swept away mankind, eons ago.”(37)

Kamleshwar points out the contrast between the violence of the early centuries with the present day violence. Adebh harks back to mythical stories and finds out that the number of people killed today exceeds the number of people killed in Noah’s deluge. Noah’s deluge was a deliberate attempt by God to restore moral order in the world. Today human beings have themselves become Gods and have propagated hatred and animosity. It is not man as an individual alone that concerns Kamleshwar ; it is man in a social order, tortured, starved, disillusioned, thwarted and driven to disaster by the forces of system which cares nothing for the general welfare of society. Man moves across not as a free and detached individual ,not even as an individual in relation to a few characters who are associated in the immediate scene, but as a being who is connected with a network of complex social forces which form the background of his existence and which surround him from birth to death.

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The foremost challenge confronting contemporary man is to discover and affirm men’s faith in each other and bring it into full play in the marvelous play of life for the attainment of some new leap forward in human transcendence. The novelist with an unbiased attitude makes a plea that as long as religion, race, caste and imperialistic tendencies continue to hold mankind in thrall, as long as lust for power and supremacy thrives, the world will continue to witness the birth and evolution of many such monstrous ‘Pakistans’. He believes that every individual is the means of his own enlightenment, he alone can liberate himself from the compulsions of the materialistic world.

Partitions is a microcosmic novel that succeeds in creating a deep understanding of the complex issues involved in violence, both meditated and mindless. The violence depicted is contemporary and so daringly expository that this novel brings us face to face with the atavistic and dormant strain of primitivism in mankind over by the superficial façade of civilization. As the events portrayed in the novel have solidity of specification and as the characters are notwithstanding the fact that a large number of them are ghosts, corpses, the work creates a sense of solid reality and a feeling of danger, anxiety, horror, desperation and violence on an unprecedented scale. The work can be called a protest novel against the imperialistic designs, communal violence and exploitation. The novel highlights the mindless communal violence and the impact of partition on innocent lives. On the surface, the human beings, because of the differences in caste, colour, creed or nationality may give the impression of being different from one another and subject to different laws but in reality they suffer at the hands of the powerful who become architects of their lives.

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# Indian in Blood and Soul: A Study of R.K. Narayan's Characters in *The Guide*

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## **Abstract:**

*This paper is an attempt at understanding the art of characterization of R.K. Narayan through the study of his novels, especially, *The Guide*. The main characters in the novel have been analysed to unveil the technique the novelist has used to bring them to life. The paper has its own limitations as it discusses mainly *The Guide*, not all of R.K. Narayan's novels. But it is hoped that the discussion of the characters in *The Guide* (which is admittedly the author's best novel) will throw sufficient light on his art of characterization in general.*

'I am not so great as you imagine. I am just ordinary' (Narayan 8). This is what Raju, the hero of *The Guide* wanted to say to Velan, the villager when the latter looked at his face with devotion. And this gives us the clue to Narayan's forte in characterization. His main characters are not drawn from great people in society. They are 'just ordinary' 'not so great'. They are common men in the society but, what is important, they have the potential for the uncommon. Raju in *The Guide*, Margayya in *The Financial Expert*, Krishnan in *The English Teacher* or Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* are all common men but they all along in their lives try to realize and make use of their full potentialities. Again they are not from the lowest or oppressed class in the society like Mulk Raj Anand's heroes. They belong to the middle class Indian society. Moreover, they are not virtues incarnate. They have their foibles; some streaks of villainy are there in each of them. They are stupid in the sense that they do not do things with conscious effort and with deep thinking. But in spite of all these negative qualities they are lovable because they have inherent simple-mindedness and gusto and retain a peculiar nuclear

innocence to the end. Another quality of Narayan's characterization is that he never engages himself in his characters' insides. They are all extroverts, not introverts. They grow in breadth, not in depth. The writer also does not pass moral judgements on his characters. They reveal themselves through their activities.

Raju in *The Guide* is the son of a very ordinary shopkeeper in Malgudi, a fictional town in South India, who sold peppermint, fruit, tobacco, betel leaf, parched gram' (10), etc., to begin with. Later on, when railways came to the town his father owned a shop in the station and after his death Raju had to manage it. Railways brought tourists from different parts of the country who wanted to see interesting spots and Raju, the railway vendor became Raju, the tourist guide. Then he drifted from one role to the other – Rosie's lover (wife-seducer), business manager, jail-bird, ascetic and lastly, saint.

Although Raju was an ordinary man he stood out from other ordinary men by virtue of his inherent potentialities which were manifested in course of his life. In his railway platform shop along with other things he also bought and sold old paper and books, and during quiet hours browsed through them and read whatever interested him. He says "I read stuff that interested me, bored me, baffled me, and dozed off in my seat. I read stuff that pricked up a noble thought, a philosophy that appealed, I gazed on pictures of old temples and ruins and new buildings and battleships, and soldiers, and pretty girls around whom my thoughts lingered. I learned much from scrap" (49). His readings from these scrap papers and old books equipped his mind to manage his role as an ascetic or saint in the last part of his life in the story. He could manage a situation

well. When the villagers of Mangal did not turn up, Raju coaxed a shepherd boy with a plantain and sent message to the villagers. They gathered in a great mass in the temple to ‘watch the radiance on his face’ (44) because they had thought that he was the kind of yogis who could travel to the Himalayas just by a thought and his absence (actually Raju had hidden himself behind the temple) was credited to that. “The children stood around and gazed in awe. Raju tried to manage the situation by pinching a few cheeks and saying some inanities or even indulging in baby-talk in order to soften the awkwardness of the situation”(44). As a tourist guide Raju had learnt the tricks of the trade by observing or, one may say, reading the behaviour of the tourists. He says, “Later in life I found that who saw an interesting spot always regretted that he hadn’t come with his wife or daughter, and spoke as if he had cheated someone out of a nice thing in life. Later, when I had become a full-blown tourist guide, I often succeeded in inducing a sort of melancholia in my customer by remarking, ‘This is something that should be enjoyed by the whole family, and the man would swear that he would be back with his entire brood in the coming season’(57). When he was infatuated with Rosie he also understood the husband-wife relationship better, particularly, what a wife wanted – from his dealings with Rosie and Marco. A wife likes to be praised for her beauty, appreciated for her art and other things by her husband. She also wants a ‘real, live husband’ (to use Rosie’s own words)(85). But Marco was not that. He was only interested in stone wall-paintings in caves. This provided an opportunity to Raju to win over Rosie by showering praise on her whenever he got a chance: “I praised her dancing. I spoke out my love, but sandwiched it conveniently between my appreciations of her art. I spoke of her as an artist in one breath and continued in the next as a sweetheart. Something like, ‘What a glorious snake dance! Oh, I keep thinking of you all night. World’s artist number one! Don’t you see how I am pining for you every hour! (84). Such was the resourcefulness of his personality. A simply ordinary man does not have these qualities in him.

Moreover, although Raju was an ex-convict and was taken to be a *sadhu*, *swami* or *yogi*, whatever, by the simple-minded villager, Velan (maybe, the sylvan surrounding of the temple caused it), he rose to the occasion and lived up to the expectations of the

villagers by uttering ‘mystifying statements’(52) like ‘All things have to wait their hour’ (51); ‘Keep your ears open and mouth shut, that’ll take you far’ (50); ‘What can a crocodile do to you if your mind is clear and your conscience is untroubled?’(47); ‘It’s our duty to make everyone happy and wise’ (46); ‘I am but an instrument accepting guidance myself’ (46); ‘We cannot force vital solutions. Every question must bide its time’ (21), etc. But what is important here is that the author does not show Raju himself knew consciously that he was uttering sentences loaded with wisdom or philosophy. It was only that this resourcefulness was latent in his personality and was getting manifested naturally. Whatever he had heard from his mother in his childhood in the way of bedtime stories like the stories from *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, etc. or from his readings from old scrap books were made good use of with the villagers of Mangal. As the writer says, Raju himself felt ‘he was attaining the stature of a saint’ (16), ‘he was growing wings’(22), ‘He was surprised at the amount of wisdom welling from the depths of his being’(47) and ‘He was hypnotised by his own voice’(47).

Narayan’s main characters are not immaculate. They are not great and virtuous. They *have* their foibles and little sins. Raju is infatuated with Rosie’s youth, beauty and manners. The incompatibility between her and her husband’s nature gives him an opportunity to exploit the situation and seduce her. Rosie also, being denied of the ‘excitement’, ‘thrills’ and ‘common pleasures’ of life by her ‘wall-gazing’ husband, in a daring moment surrenders to the weakness of the flesh. But the writer’s art is so persuasive, or one may say, magical that the reader does not dislike the protagonists for their little weaknesses. It is perhaps because nowhere in the story the novelist passes any moral judgement on them – neither on Raju nor on Rosie. Even he does not pass any comment on Marco’s insensitivity to his wife. Whatever negative has been said about him has been said through the mouth of Raju. Nor the author extols Marco’s academic interests in rock cave paintings. He remains completely detached from his characters. He presents them dispassionately. He stands aloof and looks at their antics bemused but never wants to interfere in them or change them. Therefore, Narayan has often been compared with Chekhov by critics for his detachment from the foibles of his characters.

R.K. Narayan's characters retain their essential Indianness to the core. Therefore they have been called Indian in blood and soul. It is true not only of the hero but also of other characters in the novel. Rosie although an M.A. in economics and a dancer was of the opinion that she should eat last in the family 'like a good housewife' (77). Later, although Marco's indifference to her interests made them fall apart, for her, he continued to be the husband still, like an informally separated husband would be to any other Indian (Hindu) woman. In this connection C.D.Narasimhaiah writes in his critical essay "Narayan's *The Guide*", "The refrain 'after all, he is my husband,' runs through her mind during all the years of her separation from him. And the novelist sums up the tradition of centuries and her genuine regard for him, when she says, it is far better to end one's life on his doorstep" (Naik 186).

Raju's mother was like any other Indian mother who wanted to see her son married to a good girl. In Indian families the proposal was always put forth indirectly which Raju's mother did: Raju says, "Occasionally she threw in a word about her brother's daughter in the village before blowing out the lamp. She was always hoping that someday I would consent to marry the girl, though she never directly said so. 'Do you know Lalitha has got a prize in her school? I had a letter from my brother today about it'" (59).

Gaffur, the taxi driver is a very minor character in *The Guide* but he has something very Indian in his personality. We Indians have the nature of giving unsolicited advice not just to our relatives but to our acquaintances when we find them deviating from the traditional morality and that too in a defensive manner. So did Gaffur when he found Raju advancing in his illicit affair with Rosie: Raju narrates, "Gaffur warned me when he got me alone for a moment outside the store, 'She is a married woman, remember' ... 'Go slow; that is all I can say' ... 'You are right. What is it to me? After all, that man is here, who has really married her. And I've my own wife to bother about' (88).

Velan is an important minor character in the novel. It is he who becomes instrumental in catapulting Raju, the ex-jail-bird, into a *swami*. It was again possible because Velan carried in him a very simple-minded Indian villager's nature and personality. Indian is a land of *sadhus*, *swamis*, *yogis* and all kind of religious people. In rural India a man who seems to have

renounced the world and utters one or two mystifying statements is taken to be a *sadhu*, *swami* or *yogi* by simple-minded villagers. The Indian rural folk are God-fearing and they always seek help from God (through anybody who appears to them as spiritual) for solving their innumerable problems. Their faith is unflinching though the thing they put their faith on may not be true or really spiritual. Velan took Raju to be a spiritual man or at least uncommon man when he first met him on the steps of the abandoned ancient temple. He put his faith on him and spoke to him of his problem. It is only in the Indian villager's nature to tell his problem to an unknown man even before introducing himself to him by name which was the case with Velan. Later he became the chief disciple of Raju, the *swami*. When Raju was telling him the story of Devaka but half-way through it he realized that he could not remember either its course or its purport and he lapsed into silence. Velan patiently waited for continuation without asking any questions. Noting this quality in Velan, Narayan says, "He was the stuff disciples are made of, an unfinished story or an incomplete moral never bothered him, it was all in the scheme of life" (19). And again when Raju, in his last bid to escape from his Bhasmasurian trap, narrated his life story to Velan, the latter did not dismiss him as a mere ex-convict. He still considered him to be a 'noble soul' and still addressed him "Swami" and said, 'I don't know why you tell me all this, Swami. It's very kind of you to address at such length your humble servant' (233). In Hindu religious tradition the quality of the believer matters more than the quality of the thing believed in, and it is accepted that every saint has a past and every sinner a future. This was the case with Velan. He perhaps thought that the sinful past of Raju was past and gone. The present Raju, the Swami had transcended that personality and had become a 'noble soul' (like Dasyu Ratnakar becoming *rishi* Valmiki?). Narayan could have created such a Velan only from Indian cultural milieu, from nowhere else.

Marco's character is enigmatic. In a way he is not orthodox by nature which is evident by choosing Rosie as his wife who did not have a legal father and whose caste was looked down upon by people in the contemporary society. In another way although he is engaged in research, and studies artistic sculptures and paintings carved in the rocks of caves he does not appreciate the dancing of Rosie. He calls her dancing

art 'street-acrobatics'. One finds it hard to understand why a man like Marco who is very interested in art in stone does not appreciate artistic pursuit of a living human being, his wife. Objectively, the reader cannot hate Marco as a husband or a man. He has provided every material comfort to his wife. He was also unsuspecting till the truth regarding Rosie's closeness to Raju dawned on him. All the negative impressions that the readers get about him are only through the remarks made by Raju on him. When a wife develops illegal relationship with a man, an Indian husband can never forgive it. At last it happens and Marco abandons Rosie and she takes the shelter of Raju. Maybe, the author's intention is to make Marco's character the symbol of that unseeable force which brings Raju and Rosie closer and which in turn leads Raju to his inescapable role he plays for others.

In Raju the writer creates a character who is obeying that law by which our natures are largely constituted by the expectations of others. Raju is a martyr instead of a con-man because he is incapable of wounding the feelings of the peasants who see him as a holy man. He cannot refuse the wishes of others for him. So he, in spite of himself, becomes the deserving of trust. The beginning of the novel swiftly sketches Raju's inability – not to play up to the role assigned to him by somebody else. It is Raju's fate to be the projection of other people's convictions. In his nature there is developed to the point of extremity what exists in all of us to some degree – the quality of suggestibility to the desires of others.

From one role to the other, Raju drifts like a piece of driftwood, without any conscious effort. The roles as if happen to him, he does not take conscious decision for assuming them. But when he has accepted a particular role he tries to play it perfectly. In two or three places the writer uses the word 'actor' for his protagonist. When Velan began telling his problem to Raju with the words, 'I have a problem, Sir' and Raju responded by saying pontifically, 'So has everyone', the novelist says, "He felt like an actor who was always expected to utter the right sentence" (14). Also when villagers assembled in the pillared hall of the temple to listen to him, "Raju felt like an actor who had come on stage," (50). And when villagers wanted a discourse from him, Raju realized, 'I have to play the part expected of me; there is no escape' (51). Whether it was as a shopkeeper, tourist guide, Rosie's lover,

business manager, jail-bird, Swami or finally, the saint Raju performed the role assigned to him with natural ease. When he was Rosie's dance manager the ignoramus Raju picked up a little terminology from her and put it to the best use. He narrates, "I described 'The Dancing Feet' and explained its significance word by word and almost performed the dance act myself "(177). He also made himself so harmonious with prison life that to appreciate him one should have gone to the central jail and watched him, he felt. Therefore it was almost misery to him to leave the jail. Lastly, in his avatar as the saviour of people to bring down rain, particularly during the last ten days of penance, Raju performed his role as a saint as perfectly as he could. He resolved, "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly? And he did it. In Shakespeare's character Jaques' words in *As You Like It* :

"All the world's a stage,  
And all men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages"  
(Act II, Scene vii).

We all play different roles in our life – some with happiness, some with sorrow, some with readiness and some grudgingly but Raju played all of his seven roles – shopkeeper, tourist guide, Rosie's lover, business manager, jail-bird, ascetic and saint with natural ease because he had inherent potentialities for all of them.

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# Teaching Native American Literature: Challenges and prospects

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Historically speaking, the Native American texts tie Indian people to the earth and its life through a spiritual kinship with the living and dead relatives of Native Americans. Coyote, raven, fox, hawk, turtle, rabbit and other animal characters in the stories are considered by many Native Americans to be their relatives. In the same way, the Plants are related to Indian people. Oak, maple, pine, cedar, fir, corn, squash, berries and roots are viewed as relatives. The Animal People and Plant People participated in a history before and after the arrival of humans, and this history was kept through the spoken word. There was a similar relationship with the geographical features of the earth. Telling a story and writing a story, even if they are the same story, remembered from generation to generation, are not the same way of preserving the story. The teller and the writer use different faculties of mind, and have different habits and disciplines of language, memory, tradition. Each has a different responsibility to the story, and to the listener or the page. The teller's relationship to the story and the listener, both at once, is direct. The writer wrestles with the page, with the story in solitude. The history of literature written in English by American Indians parallels the history of white migration across the continent. White exploration and settlement were followed by the arrival of missionaries who converted Indians to Christianity and educated them in religious schools.

It has been a common observation that the academic circles in the west still concede to the misconception that the western civilization is superior to other cultures probably for the reason that they have a greater command over the written language. The American intellectuals are of the opinion that topics in Native American literature should be made a part

of American literature syllabus for some genuine reasons: indigenous cultural knowledge is a vital part of the cultural ethos of the present day American society ; land, culture and community are intrinsically the binding elements of overall cultural connection to the natural landscape of the environment and the world as a whole ; the power of the indigenous voice comes from the cultural connection to the world and Native American literature is an expression of that. Many Native American writers strongly believe that the heart of Indigenous belief gives expression to songs, prayers, and stories that bring the peoples to learn where they came from, who they are, and their paths toward greater understanding. The voices of long ago and the voices of today's Native writers are crucial and an essential part of a curriculum that strives to understand and appreciate the rich literary and cultural heritage of America's first nations. To see Native American writers' books alongside other classic works is affirming and beneficial to all students.

For the Native Americans, literature is a forum for expressing the cultural ethos of a community. In her article, "When the First Voice You Hear is not Your Own," Jacqueline Jones Royster discusses cross-boundary discourse and her own need "to understand human differences as a complex reality" (611). She asserts that those who are members of a particular community should uphold the dignity of their own tribe. Despite the fact that ethnic and minority communities can speak for themselves, too often someone else speaks for or about them. Time and again, this has happened with Native American people. In the words of Barbara J. Kuipers:

Very few non-Native writers have bothered to acquire the knowledge to produce meaningful work

about our history, cultures and lives—although this ignorance does not stop them from doing the books, and getting published . . . . In fact, Indians are the only Americans whose history has been set down almost exclusively by those who are not members of the group about which they are writing (140).

This underscores the need for Native Americans to speak for themselves, for teachers to invite these voices, and for the students to read and hear what they have to say. It is also important to recognize diversity among Native American nations by telling which tribe(s) a writer belongs to. The Native American students need cross-boundary knowledge, interaction and experiences to learn how to live in an interdependent world. Literature can help achieve such goals. Education should require that students read, recognise, and appreciate literary contributions not only of white Americans but also of other ethnic groups. Although the Native Americans are a small population, they have influenced and contributed much to the country. They embody an ancient history and they flourish today as unique ethnic groups. Indians inhabit every part of the United States and their voices resonate strongly and proudly. This diverse population represents many voices and experiences, and their power resonates in voices of knowledge and wisdom.

Esther G. Belin, American Indian writer of the Navajo community, tells about her 1990 university experience when she and other students raised concerns about diversity, expressing their wish for the power of voices in their schooling. Her statement also informs about the expansiveness of Native American identity and existence. She says:

My voice and the voices of other Natives on campus were not simply our own. We spoke the voices of our nations, our clan relations, our families. To tell or re-tell our story is not pleasant. And it is not short. It did not begin with the civil rights movement. It is not as simple as the word *genocide*. It is every voice collective. It is mixed-blood, cross-blood, full-blood, urban, rez, relocated, terminated, nonstatus, tribally enrolled, federally recognized, non-federally recognized, alcoholic, battered, uranium-infested (62).

Her eloquent statement reveals that there is no onsize-fits-all “Indian” or “Native American,” an

important point to understand for anyone choosing to teach Native American Literature. Many teachers may feel that using Native American voices is too complex, too controversial, too risky, too time-consuming, too political, too painful, and too many other things. It may seem easier to leave them out of the curriculum, stick with the literature textbook, concentrate on the big test, and stay in the comfort zone. If such attitudes are prevalent among language arts teachers, my hope is to change this way of thinking. Using Native American Literature is one means to help students think, ask questions, and make sense of the world. In addition, teachers can find and select diverse literature that has literary and social elements appropriate for teaching required standards.

Teaching Native American Literature requires that teachers do thoughtful homework. While there are some similarities among Native tribes, many differences exist and each tribal nation must be viewed as a separate and distinct. In teaching texts that derive from a Native American writer and community, teachers must provide enough contextual information—cultural, social, and historical— especially if not providing this impedes understanding and appreciation of the literary work. More importantly, it is essential if not providing this could perpetuate prejudice, stereotypes, and negative or racist feelings. Teachers who utilize this method of teaching should do so with a sense of purpose, preparedness, and respect. Native American Literature invites inquiry, and it sometimes carries limitations, risks and boundaries. Teachers must be prepared to answer, explore, and handle questions and issues that arise not only from the literature but from student voices and their responses and reactions. The encounters and experiences of Native Americans, both past and present, are not always pretty pictures. Sometimes, Native authors’ writing could be misinterpreted rather than understood because they write honestly about their experiences. Their voices evoke emotion while they express anger for being misunderstood, disrespected, oppressed, and colonized. They may speak of mistrust for non-natives who abuse their culture and language, exploit their talents and resources, imitate and abuse their sacred ceremonies, and they distrust people who generally look down upon them as inferior and invisible. Teachers must be

prepared to guide students in their awareness and understanding that there are contrasts in the American experience and literature reminds us of this. Not only do the Native American texts give students understanding of the past, it also teaches them about present-day interactions and relations. For works of literature from other tribes, however, students need some background information of that particular nation's historical, cultural, and contemporary status. Finding primary and/or supplementary materials to teach Native American Literature takes time, but it is a very effective way of disseminating knowledge to the students. Furthermore, this aspect of learning and searching gives purpose for various student activities, projects, and research—reasons for them to inquire, explore, discover (and uncover), and make sense of the literature they are reading.

Teaching with the oral tradition of the Native American literature should be an ongoing, natural activity, not a gimmick. Using Native American literature should not be only during November, the one month that America recalls Pilgrims and Indians. Lakota writer, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve speaks about this particular time of the year “when paper products are illustrated with cute happy Indians and smiling turkeys on disposable plates, napkins and cups.” She continues and asks a profound question: “Is this a comment on American Indians as also being disposable?” (299).

Teachers should keep in mind that much has been written by non-Natives about Native American people, some of which is acceptable, although good texts written by Native writers are preferable. Evaluation criteria, for the use of the teachers, were developed in the early 1970's and continue through more recent times. Barbara J. Kuipers's checklist is very helpful in evaluating Native American books. In her chapter, “Understanding the Evaluation Criteria for American Indian Literature,” she provides extensive and valuable information that utilizes the voices of various Native people to develop the criteria. Her work includes the input from eighty-seven Native American tribes representing all regions of the United States and comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators. At the top of her checklist is authorship. When selecting and evaluating Native literature, ask, who is the author? What is the author's Native background and affiliation?

From which Native community is the author speaking? Native writers will present a much richer and more accurate story than any other writer could, and they are less likely to use stereotypes. A. A. Hedge Coke, a mixed-heritage writer, says, “. . . The more rooted people are in their own community, the more likely their work will lead there” (114). However, the issue of Indian identity is complex and beyond the scope of my article. One does not have to look too far to find an example of Indian identity problems. A recent example is Nasdjiid, author of *The Blood Runs like a River Through My Dreams* who made national news when he was uncovered as a non native man posing as a Navajo author after writing and publishing for several years. Sherman Alexie, (Spokane / Couer d'Alene) expressed suspicion of this writer because of the book's similarities to one of his short stories. Alexie says, “I approached Nasdijj's publishers telling them his book not only was borderline plagiarism, but it also failed to mention specific tribal members, clans, ceremonies and locations, all of which are vital to the concept of Indian identity” (72). Teachers must find reliable background information on authors and make professional and ethical decisions about authorship and what material to use.

In addition to the authorship factor, another criterion is accuracy. Native people want to be depicted in accurate ways. Many a writer has profited from books that inaccurately portray Native Americans. Stereotypes and negative images still abound in many books. Some plots contain weird and unexplainable occurrences happening, perhaps revealing the authors' inaccurate notions and images of Native people. Other books include made-up tribal rituals that don't exist or indigenous customs and ceremonies that are trivialized, distorted, and inappropriate. These inaccuracies only exploit Indian people and perpetuate misunderstanding and disconnect among people.

A book can lack objectivity, an important evaluative consideration. An appropriate book should avoid stereotypes and prejudice. The language used should not be offensive. For example, if an author uses the word “savage” instead of “man” to describe a native male, or “squaw” instead of “woman,” then this book is not objective. Furthermore, if Indian people are portrayed “engaging only in negative actions and no

positive aspects are included or only weaknesses and no strengths are portrayed, the book has bias” (Kuipers 25). When only one side of an issue is presented—usually the dominant culture’s— objectivity is definitely lacking. Native Americans want to be depicted in authentic ways. Teachers must realize that Native American Literature exists as a literature and its purpose is to be read. Literature lives “out there” among people and voices call for readers. Contemporary Native American literature is comprised of subjects that are not “Indian writing” (the notion that Indian writers write only about Indian topics) and fit with universal themes studied in classrooms: poems of love and loss, studies about basketball, essays about family, and many other topics that can be used in classrooms .Native people should not be viewed as so “out of this world” that non-natives cannot relate to them. While they are human beings having a unique culture , language, lifestyle, and worldview ,they live in this world as global citizens and indigenous people. Their story is not a romanticized or stereotyped one as the movies often depict, nor is their story always a positive or a tragic one. Literature is powerful and can change lives. In her article, Laura Mellas speaks with Leslie Silko, a renowned Native American writer from Laguna Pueblo tribe who believes that literature can always transform. Silko insists:

“The way you change human beings and human behavior is through a change in consciousness and that can be effected only through literature, music, poetry—the arts”. (14)

These changes reflect the new ways of teaching language arts: a curriculum of inclusion rather than exclusion, a curriculum that utilizes and advocates for

the power of the indigenous groups. If we teach our youths about other cultures living with and among them, we help shape personalities, attitudes, and lives. As teachers, perhaps we could transform for better understanding and appreciation among people. Native American Literature can help this happen now and for the future.

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# The Picture Of the Hidden Republic in Shakespeare : Revisiting *The Merchant Of Venice*

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## **Abstract:**

*It has been the commonplace of literary criticism that Shakespearean plays picture the institution of monarchy rather than the republic as upheld by the modern political thinkers of the world . A careful reading of many of his plays convinces the readers that Shakespeare the playwright instinctively portrays the republican ideology in between the lines of his masterpieces. In *The Merchant of Venice*, monarchic and republican elements exist side by side. The duke in the play sets an example of Voltaire's enlightened despot who listens to the voice of conscience; here he resolves the conflict between Antonio, a Christian merchant, and Shylock the Jew, a moneylender who hate each other because of their differences in ideology. Portia the intelligent lady who argues in the guise of a male lawyer becomes the instrument in convincing the duke, the senators and conflicting parties. Thus, Shakespeare shows that the benevolent monarch is among the people rather above them because here the duke listens to Portia, a young lawyer and delivers judgment in accordance with her suggestion in the interest of state and subjects. The ideology of the republic is based upon the empowerment of the common people and the fundamental values of liberty , equality and fraternity. Portia the lady champions the cause of the common- the common citizens of the state. This paper analyzes the situations and dialogues in *The Merchant of Venice* in such a manner that **the picture of the hidden republic-the ideal republic not the banana republic becomes visible** .*

## I

Etymologically speaking, the word 'republic' is derived from Latin, 'res publica' which means public affairs. The republic is a form of government in which the participation of the common people in the governance of the country; direct or indirect, is of supreme importance; it is they who elect the head of the state . The ideology of the republic is based upon three catchwords; 'liberty', 'equality' and 'justice'. Subhash C. Kashyap while dealing with Republicanism in context of supreme constitutional values views that this constitutional value goes with other fundamental values : justice, liberty, equality , fraternity , individual dignity and unity and integrity of the nation (52). If we look up this word in wikipedia, the free encyclopedia it reads as follows - 'Republic' is a form of government in which the affairs of the state are a 'public matter' (Latin: 'res publica'), not the private concern of the rulers. Cicero translated the term "politeia" used by Aristotle as 'res publica' and it was translated by renaissance scholars as 'republic'. In the classical language Latin the term 'republic' is used in a general way to refer to any regime or in a specific way to governments which work for the public good. In this sense even if the monarchy prevailed during the time of Shakespeare the state upheld the republican spirit in the sense that it aimed at the maximum welfare of the state and granted utmost liberty to the citizens.

## II

The ideology of the republic is grounded in the empowerment of the common people. The people are a heterogeneous lot- the good and the bad, the

mercenary and the generous, the just and the mischievous. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the playwright presents the characters of various types, diametrically opposite in their manners and formation of habits who contribute to the ideology of the republic in different ways. Antonio, the merchant of Venice, is a paragon of virtues: nobility, generosity, friendliness and spirit of self-sacrifice. Shylock haunted by mercenary motive possesses a contrast to the character of the hero. He is a money-lender, a necessary evil in the society. Even if Antonio disapproves of his attitudes he has to depend upon him for loan in time of exigency. Portia, the heroine of the play is a witty, intelligent and sensible lady. She marries whom she adores- Bassanio, a gentle man who is a good friend. Thus the play unfolds the characters in such a dexterous way that the republican spirit of the Age is felt because each character has his own way –the liberty they enjoy signals the vantage point for a republic.

In the very first act scene-ii Shylock who emerges as the antagonist uses the word ‘publican’ in the context of Antonio. In the recent usages, ‘Publican’ is a manager who manages a pub but in those Elizabethan times the context in which Shylock uses the word publican has a reference to servant of the public. Shylock disapproves of Antonio’s public dealings:

How like a fawning publican he looks  
I hate him for he is a Christian;  
But more, for that in a low simplicity  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

(Act-1, Sce-iii line- 38-42)

In the passage above Shylock expresses an oppositional attitude as shown by Antonio the Christian merchant. The latter lends money with a low rate of interest, which displeases Shylock the moneylender. The spirit of opposition is the essence of republican ideology and Shakespeare presents it.

Antonio is barely in need of three thousand ducats (Italian coin) to be given to Bassanio his bosom friend who quotes the lady Portia the heroine of the play. Necessity compels him to approach Shylock for such a loan. In those days the system of **notary** was there in Venice. Notary is a public officer who attests. The system of attestation is a common practice in a

republic. Both the hero and his rival are governed by the rules of Venice. Hence they go to a notary to enter into an agreement. Shylock says to Antonio:

Go with me to a notary, seal me there  
Your single bond: and in a merry sport  
If you repay me not on such a day  
In such a place, such sum or sums as are  
Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

(Act-I, scene-iii, line- 133-140)

The bond reflects the cruel attitude of the moneylender on moral grounds. Such a bond is to be condemned but such a bond is signed because the spirit of the govt-the monarchical form, is grounded in republican principles which empower the citizens to have their own ways.

When Antonio fails to repay the debt incurred by him in time he is afraid of the laws of Venice. He says:

That duke cannot deny the course of law;  
For the commodity that strangers have  
With us in Venice, if it be denied  
Will much impeach the justice of the state;

(Act-iii, scene-iii, line-27-30)

The respect for the law of the state is very much republican in its conception; the duke of the state can’t alter it. Thus Shakespeare delineates the spirit of the republic in a monarchical form of govt.

The duke in the play is generous, gentle and moral in his approach to the matters that concern the public. He is very much aware of the stubbornness in a citizen, which impede the process of amicable settlement. When Shylock because of his inherent hatred for the Christian Antonio longs to cut a pound of flesh from his body for the execution of the bond the king appeals to Shylock to behave in a more humane way:

From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train’d  
To offices of tender courtesy  
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew

(Act-iv, sce-1, line-33-35)

In an ideal republic the citizens should be rational and flexible rather than stubborn and rigid in their attitudes. Hence, the duke expects his citizen Shylock

to show an attitude which will be appreciated by the public but Shylock is shrewd enough not to be influenced by the duke. He is guided by his own interest and hatred for the Christians. Hence, he pleads for the execution of the cruel bond. He argues that the **laws of Venice are to be respected rather than defied:**

I have possessed your grace of what I purpose;  
 And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn  
 To have the due and forfeit of my bond  
 If you deny it, let the danger light  
 Upon your character and your city's freedom.  
 You'll, ask me, why I rather choose to have  
 A weight of Carrion flesh than to receive  
 Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that;  
 But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd?

(Line-36-44)

In the above passage he argues in the name of his holy religion and laws of the state that the bond must be executed. He categorically states that it is his will and impulse.

Thus, *The Merchant of Venice* contains several elements which attest to the republican ideology. The duke does not interfere in the affairs of the public. He is not a bigot but bigotry is a trait in many citizens. The racial hatred- the hatred between the Jews and the Christians which is delineated with superb skill by the playwright indirectly contributes to literature on the republic.

### III

For the formation of the Republic the role of woman, the hand that rocks the cradle, can hardly be exaggerated. In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare presents the character of the heroine in such a way that she becomes the exemplar of republican spirit- the duke, the head of the state honours her decision. In the trial scene, Portia who argues for shake of justice wins the appreciation of all. When Shylock, in accordance with the bond demands a pound of flesh from near the heart of Antonio every body, the duke included, gets shocked but nobody can do anything to improve the situation. But Portia who is the embodiment of mercy and wit defends Antonio and wins the case. Indeed to motivate the complex individuals to act, wit is the sharpest instrument. Portia uses it. She boldly tells Shylock that he has a right over a pound of

flesh from the body of Antonio but not on a drop of blood. Portia says:

This bond doth give thee here no drop of blood  
 The words expressly are "a pound of flesh"  
 Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh  
 But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed  
 One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods  
 Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate  
 Unto the state of Venice.

(Act iv sc I lines 314-320)

Portia's interpretation of the bond puzzles all and shocks Shylock. Such an interpretation wins the appreciation of all. Gratiano exclaims- o upright judge! These utterances of Portia lend a new dimension to the activities of the characters. The passage has an anticlimactic effect. Now the case turns against the malicious designs of Shylock because Shylock cannot cut off a pound of flesh from the chest of Antonio without shedding blood. Portia reminds Shylock of another law of Venice:

It is enacted in the laws of Venice  
 If it be proved against any alien  
 That by direct or indirect attempts  
 He seeks the life of any citizen,  
 The party against the which he doth contrive  
 Shall seize one half his goods; the other half  
 Comes to the privy coffer of the state;  
 And the offender's life lies in the mercy  
 Of the duke only, against all other voice.

(Act -iv sc-I lines 358-364)

The laws of Venice have been framed in such a way that they serve the spirit of the republic. In a republican form of government, two things are assured- freedom and empowerment of people and welfare of the state. Portia rightly understands the spirit of the laws of Venice. She pleads that if an alien plans to take away the life of a citizen of Venice half of his property will go to the hands of the man he tries to kill and the other half to the private treasury of the state. Thus Shylock a foreigner to the land of Christians of Venice, a Jew who contrived to take away the life of Antonio a noble merchant need be punished. His property will be seized by the state. Now Portia appeals to the duke of Venice to be merciful towards Shylock the erring Jew.

Thus in the play *The Merchant of Venice* Portia

plays the lead role. It is she who saves the life of the noble merchant of Venice, Antonio. When she fails to convince the hard-hearted Jew like Shylock to refrain from killing Antonio through an appeal she forces him by her intelligent interpretation of the bond as well as the laws of Venice. It is the duke who listens to her and tries to execute what she says. In this sense, the duke occupies a subordinate position before Portia the witty and the noble lady of the state. Thus, Shakespeare makes it clear that for the good governance of the state the role of women: witty and compassionate can hardly be overemphasized.

#### IV

A careful perusal of Shakespearean plays convinces a perceptive reader that Shakespeare perceived hazards inherent in both- one man rule, as in Monarchy and Dictatorship and in the rule of many, as in the Republic or Oligarchy: he was trying ceaselessly to work out a political order which would combine the virtues of the both the systems and be freed from their shortcomings. Considered in this light *The Merchant of Venice* presents the picture of Dukedom and hidden Republic.

The plot of the play is woven around three important scenes: **Bond scene, Casket scene and Trial scene.** The Bond scene pictures a horrible bond: Shylock the Jew lends money to Antonio the Christian not on the basis of the exorbitant rate of interest but on a condition to cut off a pound of flesh from the heart of Antonio if the latter refused to make payment in time. Such a bond reflects that in the dukedom presented by Shakespeare in *The Merchant Of Venice* liberty is granted to the people diametrically opposite in nature to go ahead with their business. This is truly the republican spirit. The republican ideology is most suitable for the govt. in which people's will, aspiration, conspiratorial attitude are brought into light. The Casket scene is also a trial scene for the lovers who wish to win the hand of fair Portia in marriage. This scene contains such elements which reflect the ideology of ideal Republic because in the casket scene the man who is fit to marry Portia risks a lot for the sake of marriage. In the Trial scene justice is administered to Antonio who is good and noble and punishment is meted out to Shylock who is the incarnation of evil designs. Thus the playwright delineates the conditions for the

ideal republic: punishment for the wrong doers and reward for the good.

In an ideal Republic justice is always tempered with mercy; in the play the heroine pleads for justice grounded in mercy – a humanitarian consideration that lends beauty to the religion and republicanism:

When mercy seasons Justice, Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice by thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the cause of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation.

(Act IV Sc I L-202-205)

Portia here appeals to the religious sentiment in the Jew. She states that it is difficult to attain salvation if one does not have the quality of mercy. Thus, the value of mercy is spelt out in the context of might, justice and salvation. Infact mercy is the quality, which every citizen of the state should cultivate for the formation of the ideal Republic. But it is a difficult trait. Hence Shylock is not moved by the appeal of Portia to show it.

To conclude, republicanism can be considered as the doctrine of the common masses having the urge and the capability to manage the affairs of the state. Law, order, democracy, equality, liberty, sense of justice are the pillars on which the ideal republic rests. *The Merchant of Venice* is a realistic play in which the complexity of human psyche and situations is pictured with dexterous skill, a commonplace picture in any modern republic of the world. As a city Venice is cosmopolitan meant for republican idealism. In a Republic the supreme power vested in the people is harnessed by the leaders. In *The Merchant of Venice* Portia is the leader – the woman leader who can turn the course of the play. Thus Shakespeare's vision of the Republic is glorious and his concern for common man, genuine and his estimation of woman's role in a Republic, significant – a fact which needs to be highlighted in any discourse on the Republic.

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# The Politics of Cultural Colonization, colonialism and the Act of Resistance : A Reading of the South African Writer Bessie Head's Story "Heaven is not Closed"

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The word "colonization" implies the process of taking control of an area or country that is not one's own, especially using force. The process is not limited to a particular arena. It operates at all levels, from political to cultural. To quote Pramod K. Nayar, "Colonialism cannot be seen merely as a political or economic 'condition': it was a powerful cultural and epistemological conquest of the native populations."

The beginnings of colonialism can be traced back to the fourteenth century when Roman citizens settled in a hostile or newly conquered country. However ruling was not the priority of such colonialism. The colonies were set up by different communities seeking a better life. But during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, colonialism put on a new face as it sought to destroy the native populations. Nayar comments, "Colonization was invariably the violence perpetrated upon the natives by the European settlers" and that "this aspect of colonialism comes in for attention from postcolonial literature and theory."

Bessie Head's story shows the process of cultural colonization in an African community as a consequence of colonialism and the resistance put forth by the same. Referred to as 'the dark continent' by the colonizers, Africa in fact has rich traditions and rituals, culture and heritage, which is evident from the works of African writers. The concept of the 'dark continent' is a colonial construct in order to establish its power on the continent. The colonizers justified their act of cultural colonization as their duty to 'civilize' the natives who are 'uncivilized' and 'savage.' Cultural colonization has deeper roots as it not only controls but also affects the psyche of the people. Culture implies our whole way of living – our food habits, way of dressing up, living, education, way of thinking, religion and rituals.

'Heaven is not Closed' underlines the impact of colonial rule on the culture of the natives. But Bessie Head also chooses to bring in a voice of resistance against this cultural colonization. The story set in a Setswana community chiefly depicts the Christianization of the Blacks that took place in Africa with the arrival of the 'white' colonizers. The beginning of the story informs the readers of Galethebege's failure to devote her life wholeheartedly to God because "one catastrophe after another occurred to deflect her from this path" and that "it was only in the last five years of her life, after her husband, Ralokae died, that she was able to devote her mind to her calling." The statement overtly leaves the readers with the notion that Galethebege was a true "Christian" for whom the Gospel was her whole life unlike her husband who was an "unbeliever" as the old man Modise tells his children and grandchildren over their evening meal on the evening of Galethebege's death.

As Modise relates Galethebege's early life before she got married to Ralokae was a quiet and worshipful one as she was always on her way to church and she could be found with her head buried on the Bible in her hours of leisure. Galethebege's life evidently shows the impact of cultural colonization on the natives. That the politics of cultural colonization is at work is evident when Modise says that it was a fashion for all Black people to embrace the Gospel and that for some it was a mark of 'civilization.' This kind of colonization is still in existence in different parts of the world.

In one hand we have people like Galethebege for whom Gospel was the life; on the other hand there are others like Ralokae who sees to this act of colonization as a politics of subjugating the Blacks. Bessie Head intends to show through the character of Ralokae that this act of 'civilizing' was considered by

a section of the natives as a way of effacing their rich cultural heritage. The story is in fact a protest against the cultural colonization that took place in Africa. This act of protest can be assumed to be what postcolonial literature often addresses by the term 'decolonization.' As Nayar states, "Decolonization is marked by a re-affirmation of one's cultural values and systems. While the colonial master had rejected and destroyed native culture and superimposed the European one, decolonization seeks a retrieval of the forgotten rhythms of life." In the story we find Ralokae adhering to his native custom till the end. Even he marries Galethebege who is a Christian according to the Setswana custom. He rejected Christianity because he believed there was "something wrong with the people who had brought the word of the Gospel" and that he could not withstand that "their love was enslaving black people."

Cultural colonization penetrates deeply into a human's psyche. This is evident from Galethebege's state of mind when Ralokae expressed his desire of making her his wife. Ralokae's proposal left her at the same time startled, pleased and hesitant; hesitant because Ralokae was an unbeliever and that "he had not once set foot in church." Though reluctant initially, Galethebege had to give up to his hell-bent wish in the end. The readers find the politics of cultural colonization at its work when Galethebege wanted to be married in church according to Christian custom. It is seen that even after Ralokae expressed his desire to marry her according to the native custom Galethebege approaches the missionary to acquire his blessings for the marriage. This is a clear manifestation of the deep impression that cultural colonization makes on a person's mind.

The author critiques the very religion which engages in the so called act of 'civilizing' the 'savages' because in this act of civilizing, it tends to leave the native culture in tatters and this is what could be seen in Galethebege's case. Though she becomes the wife of Ralokae according to the Setswana custom which results in her expulsion from the church, it is seen that she could never forsake the Christian custom of praying to God and often Ralokae found her praying in a corner of the house. After Ralokae's death Galethebege's "pent-up and suppressed love for God burst forth" and she could be found talking only of Him day and night and which probably leaves the readers with the impression that Galethebege hardly practised the old

Setswana customs after her husband's death. This subtly reveals the violence and destructive nature of colonialism. In this context Pramod K. Nayar's view that "the impact of colonialism has been so profound that the effects will probably never wear off" holds significance.

How colonialism subverted the established local traditions by rejecting them as superstitions and how it coerced the native to embrace the white master's culture is obvious from the strategy the missionary adopts. On hearing from Gelethebege that her husband wanted to marry her according to the native custom and not the Christian way, he made her clear that "heaven is closed to the unbeliever..." In this context Ralokae is the unbeliever for the missionary because he is a "pagan" and conforms to a different set of beliefs. But the most interesting fact is that Ralokae honoured the old customs and that confirms his loyalty to it. This again ensures the readers of the politics of cultural colonization at its work.

The politics of cultural colonization has become the topic that is often dealt with in the works of different postcolonial writers. Writers like Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, Arrow of God and Wole Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horsemen* presents a clear picture regarding the politics of cultural colonization and its impact on the culture and mind of the natives. They have also taken trouble to present the concern of the section disturbed by such colonization and the kind of resistance put forward by them. As Ralokae in Bessie Head's story is troubled by the Christianization of his tribe, likewise Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* is disturbed by the impending destruction of his native customs. Ralokae adhered to his Setswana customs all through his life. Olunde in *Death and the King's Horsemen* forsakes his English education and preserves his tradition by committing the ritual suicide. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that resistance and concern have not been able to decimate colonialism which still prevails in the facade of neo-colonialism.

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# Sam Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime* and the Melody of Power

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## **Abstract:**

*Sam Shepard is an eminent American dramatist. He is not satisfied with presenting life as it is. He tries to elevate his dramatic situations to a level of universal conflict. He uses the images of American popular culture to talk about the politics of power at different social levels. A good example may be given from one of his major plays, *The Tooth of Crime*. An old pop star, Hoss, is challenged and finally dethroned by the emerging young pop star, Crow. This small event is given multidimensionality as well as universal significance by presenting in a way which validates the concept of the survival of the fittest. Here he uses power as a motif and music as a medium. The music and the lyrics in the play are used to reinforce the stylistic battle of the two singers belonging to two different worlds. This paper is an attempt to present Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime* in light of music and the individual's quest for power.*

## Key- Words:

*Harmonically, melodically, rhythmically, protagonist, stylistic, motif, popular culture, perpetuate, yearning, mythical, vulgarity, authenticity, numero uno.*

*The Tooth of Crime* is Shepard's ultimate Rock 'n' Roll play. It is a play where Shepard presents the struggle for power and domination with the background of music. It is his 'Star Wars' that presents his vision of stars, styles and death. In this play, Shepard creates a texture of language and music to present the power struggle between two rock artists. In *The Tooth of Crime*, music plays a more integral part than in any of his other works. The music in the play tries to define

and differentiate the stylistic battle of the two contenders in the rock world. Harmonically, melodically and rhythmically it re-establishes the battle of the two opposite singers.

In *The Tooth of Crime*, Hoss, the protagonist is a top rock star. When the play begins Hoss is presented as the reigning rock star with all pomp and power. He is followed and advised by a group of fans, Becky, Jack and Cheyenne. But Hoss is gradually getting unsure of his position. He becomes aware of the weakening of his power, and fears that at any time he may be challenged by a new-comer. It so happens that Crow, an upcoming, dashing rock star comes to challenge Hoss. The battle between Hoss and Crow is presented in a symbolic way in the play. At the end Hoss is defeated and shoots himself. The fall of Hoss is the fall of the older generation giving place to the dynamism of the new order. Hoss represents the prevalent traditions of rock music. Crow, on the other hand, comes from the upcoming generation of rock music. The battle between Hoss and Crow is a battle between two styles and two generations. Hoss struggles to retain his own existence and perpetuate his own norms, old tradition and status. At the end, Crow, the upcoming star, becomes the winner. Hoss loses his power and position. Crow wins the style match because he is capable of adopting different roles easily. Crow, the newcomer can change his self and style in an opportunistic manner. His nature is opposed to the singular self-image that confines Hoss. The rigid originality of Hoss had to bend before the flexibility of Crow. In Act II of the play, the confrontation of Hoss and Crow is set-up like a boxing match, words are used as weapons. At the end, after his humiliation in the hands of the young Crow, Hoss shoots the referee

and then commits suicide as a result of his fall from grace.

The opening stage-direction of *The Tooth of Crime* focuses on a huge chair, which acts as a symbol of power. The stage direction reads:

A bare stage except for an evil looking black chair with silver studs and a very high back, something like an Egyptian Pharaoh's throne but simple, centre stage (Shepard 1980:64).

Hoss enters into the stage as the ruling rock-star. Hoss enters in black rocker gear with silver studs and 'black kid gloves'. He comes to the stage with a microphone. Shepard has presented Hoss as a fighter, who fights to maintain his power and position. He expects a threat at any time to his reigning position. In Act-1, Hoss is presented as a tense man waiting for his attacker. The stage direction reads, "Hoss picks up the rifles and handles them like a pro, cocking them and looking down the barrel through the scope, checking out the chambers on the pistols and running his hands over them as though they are alive" (*ibidem*:65). People saw in him a "true genius killer.-A killer to end them all. A killer's killer" (*ibidem*:68). It seems that Hoss is ready on his toes to readily face any possible threat to his position. In order to enjoy an uninterrupted flow of power he has to be a killer. Hoss's astrologer, the star-man anticipates an uncertain future for him. He advises Hoss to be accurate and steady in his steps. Hoss seems to be a cold-blooded professional hit man. His yearning for power has made him violent. With a dominating spirit Hoss cries:

O.K; O.K. I'm just getting' hungry that's all. I need a kill. I haven't had a kill for months now. You know what that is like. I gotta kill. It's my whole life. If I don't kill I get crazy. I start eating away at myself. It's not good. I was born to kill (*ibidem*:68).

Hoss either refers to himself as a killer or threatens to kill a person many more times in the First Act. He has earned the right to it in the "evil-looking black chair with silver studs" that crowns the stage because he is *numero uno*.

Hoss, the reigning rock star is somehow chained by his own code of conduct. He is sensible and follows certain rules. These rules permit him to fight in order to save his throne from being occupied

by a new-comer like Crow. He fights for it till his end. But he is somehow paralysed by his own image. On the other hand, the upcoming stars have no code, no history and no sense of mission. They are rough and amoral. They are "Gipsy killers", up-to-date and fit for the present generation. Hoss comments on these stars belonging to the up-coming generation as:

they have got time on their side. Can't you see that. The youth's goin' to'em. The kids are flocking to Gypsy kills. It's a market opening up, Jack. I got a feeling. I know they're on their way in and we're going out. We're gettin' old, Jack (*ibidem*:72).

But Hoss keeps on fighting. He struggles to maintain the status by gathering confidence. He is a true fighter who knows how to face his adversaries who attack him. He talks to himself:

Come on, come On, confidence, men, confidence. Don't go on the skids now Keep it together. Tighten down. Talk it out. Quit jumpin' at shadows. They got you goose bumped and they ain't even present . Put yourself in their place. They got nothin'. You got it all. All the chips. Come on dice! Come on dice! That's it. Roll'em sweet. The sweet machine. Candy in the gas tank. Floor it. Now you got the wheel. Take it. Take it (*ibidem*:74).

Hoss has become an industry standard in himself. He is admirable because he acknowledges the musical and mythical roots of rock 'n' roll. By contrast, the new comers are completely divorced from the codes and principles. They identify with new images which are divorced from past roots of human obligation. Hoss finds it very difficult to maintain' his status while fighting against the amoral new generation. Hoss, the spokesman of the out-going era, laments the breakdown of the code, the tragic loss of tradition. He soliloquizes:

I can't believe it. Things have changed that much. They don't even apprentice no more. Just mark for the big one. No respect no more. When I was that age I'd sell my leathers to get a crack at a good teacher. I would. And I had some a'the best. There's no sense of tradition in the game no more. Ther's no game... can't they see where they're going! without a code it's just a crime. No art involved. No technique, finesse. No sense of mastery. The touch is gone (*ibidem*:78).

*The Tooth of Crime* is partly about the

inevitable instability of success, and partly about the challenge to, and replacement of, the older generation by a comparatively younger one. Shepard's main concern in all his plays has been the disappearance of the myths on which American character and spirit are founded. Sticking to his own image and style, Hoss feels cramped and threatened. Hoss feels that he is imprisoned inside his own code of conduct. He aspires for his liberation from the bondage, to break away from that image which is eating into him. Hoss feels that his success as a rock star has made him a prisoner in his own "pad". Looking at his pathetic status he comments, "Look at the Doc. A slave. An educated slave. Look at me. A trained slave. We're all so pathetic, it is downright pathetic" (*ibidem* 67).

Crow, the new star is every inch a cold killer. He does not come under any moral code or principle. He has built up his image divorced from past roots, and is ruthless and amoral. Crow has no code, no history and no sense of mission. His desire for the throne of power has made him violent. He wants to drive away Hoss to establish his own rule. Regarding the creation of the character of Crow, Shepard says:

The character of Crow in *The Tooth of Crime* came from a yearning toward violence. A totally lethal human with no way or reason for tracing how he got that way. He just appeared. He spit words that became his weapons.... He is simply following his most savage instincts. He speaks in an unheard of tongue. He needed a victim, so I gave him one (Shepard 1977:57).

Crow is clearly the young man, the son, bent on walking down the hall to kill or to remove the old man, the father. In that context Crow naturally connects himself with characters from Shepard's other plays, like the young man in *Operation Sidewinder*, Wesley in *Curse of the Starving Class*, Vince in *Buried Child*, Lee in *True West*. All these characters venture forth on mythic journeys and are engaged in violent conflicts with the autocratic and oppressive father figures. Crow comes as an authoritative figure trying to trample down Hoss, the representative of the older generation. The stage direction in Act II of *The Tooth of Crime* introduces Crow as violent figure. It reads:

He holds a short piece silver chain in his hands and twirls it constantly, tossing it from hand to hand. He chews a stick of gum with violent chomps. He

exudes violent arrogance and cruises the stage with true contempt. Sometimes he stops to examine the guns on the floor, or check out the knives and the dummy. Finally he winds up sitting in Hoss's chair (Shepard 1980:89).

This shows that there is going to be a violent battle for supremacy in the rock world. Hoss is the present star of the rock world, while Crow is coming up to challenge and replace him. Hoss's principled self has to give place to the moral nakedness and vulgarity of Crow. Certainly, cultures change, and the needs of people for particular types or legends or myths change also. But Shepard keenly observes that in the materialistic culture people desecrate the past and seem unable to replace the old legends with any appropriate new ones. In *The Tooth of Crime*, the struggle of Hoss and Crow is presented as ethical conflict in a Morality play. The defeat of Hoss at the end symbolizes the death of Rock 'n' Roll and its innocence, purity, and spontaneity. Hoss's emotional technique is pitted against Crow's roughness. It is style versus style. Hoss's authenticity is positioned against Crow's cheap image making. Hoss is fated to lose to the man of the future, Crow who is a master adopter. Crow wins the style match because he is capable of adopting different roles with high speed and ease. Crow's flexibility is opposed to the stiff-image that confines Hoss. The originality of Hoss has to surrender before the fluidity of Crow. After losing the style match Hoss killed the referee out of disgust and frustration. When he makes one last desperate attempt to survive, he pleads with Crow to teach him his style. But he is unable to learn as he cannot change his own style. Hoss ends up in dignity as he commits suicide by putting a gun in his mouth. Towards the end Hoss says

I'm born marker Crow Bait. That's more than you'll ever be. Now stand back and watch some true style. A mark of a lifetime. A true gesture that won't never cheat on itself. 'Cause it's the last of it's kind. It can't be taught or copied or stolen or sold. It's mine. An original. It's my life and my death in one clean shot (*ibidem*:111).

Speaking like this Hoss puts the gun in his mouth and pulls the trigger. This is the result of Hoss's fall from grace and his inability to compromise with the cruel reality. He vacates the position to be occupied by

Crow.

In *The Tooth of Crime* the struggle for power and position between Hoss and Crow has been presented in a symbolic way with the help of music. Here music plays a more integral part than in any of his other plays. The music in the play helps to define and differentiate the separate styles of the contenders. The stylistic battle of the two rock stars has been presented in a musical way. For example, Hoss's song in Act I is suggestive of his instinct as an original killer. Music starts and he sings

I am a cold killer Mama  
I got blood on my jeans  
got a scorpion star hanging over me  
got snakes in my pockets  
And a razor in my boot  
You better watch it don't get you....  
Now watch me slide into power glide  
Super-charged down the line  
There ain't no way for you to hide  
From the killer's eye...(ibidem:70).

Hoss has taken up the killer's position as there is a threat to his status. The new-comer Crow comes with full self-confidence. He knows himself well and he is aware of the changing times. He believes his own self as it is apparent from his song in Act II:

Crow....  
But I believe in my mask  
The man I made up is me  
And I believe in my dance  
And my destiny  
I could've gone the route of beggin'  
For my life  
Crawlin' on my hands and knees  
But there aren't no Gods or saviors who'll Give you  
flesh and blood.  
But I believe in my mask - The man  
I made up is me  
And I believe in my dance-And my destiny  
(ibidem:94-95).

In the play Shepard uses words in a musical way. The dialogue comes as the flow of a song. In rock 'n' roll, music lies in the spoken words, in the form of the speech. In Round I of the battle, Shepard loads the language with musical hyper-sensitivity. The dialogue

rises and falls as per the sound of the rock beat. The words used by Hoss and Crow during the battle are properly selected and arranged to bring a particular musical impact. Shepard's intention becomes clear from the stage-direction.

The band starts slow, low-keyed lead guitar and bass music, it should be a lurking evil sound like the 'Sister Morphine' cut on 'Sticky Fingers'. Hoss and Crow begin to move to the music, not really dancing but feeling the power in the movements through the music. They each pick-up microphones. They begin their assaults just talking to words in rhythmic patterns, sometimes going with the music, sometimes counter-pointing it (ibidem:97).

In Round I of the battle, Shepard invests the language with musical quality that is, the diction and rhythms are attuned to the sound of the rock beat.

Crow:

Pants down. The moon show. Ass out the window. Pelt lash. Whip lash. Side slash to the kid with a lisp. The dumb kid. The loser. The runt. The mutt. The shame kid. Kid on his belly. Belly to the blacktop. Slide on the rooftop. Slide through the parking lot. Slide kid. Shame kid. Slide. Slide. Hoss:

Never catch me with beer in my hand. Never caught me with my pecker out. Never get caught. Never once. Never, never. Fast on the hoof. Fast on the roof. Fast through the still night. Faster than the headlight. Fast to the move" (ibidem:97).

The repetition of words and sounds, of perfect and imperfect rhymes, makes the passage musical like a song. Their lines also indicate that Crow is in an attacking move and Hoss is bent on defending himself. The words and sentences used in these dialogues are very expressive. One observes the words are used in a rhythmic and alliterative manner to have a musical affect. Characters hurl words at each other as if they were notes from a guitar. In these lines there is an intimate relationship between music and spoken word. In the Round I of the battle between Hoss and Crow, one can find more examples of musical use of language.

Crow:

Coughing in the corner, Win' from pneumonia.  
Can't play after dinner. Lonely in a 'bedroom. Dying'

for attention. Starts to hit the small time. Knockins over pay phones. Rollin' over Beethoven. Rocking pneumonia. Beboppin' to the Fat man. Drivin' to the small talk. Gotta make his big mark. Take a crack at the teacher. Find him in the can can. There his doin' time time. Lossinl like a wino. Got losin' on his mind. Got losin' all the time (*ibidem*:98).

Here the words are repeated as if in a chorus. These lines are so arranged that they fall into the measured stream of melody.

At the end of *The Tooth of Crime* Hoss is defeated by Crow. He commits suicide to maintain his state of grace. Crow becomes the ruling star. He has established his own rule. All the power has gone into his hands. The power shift has been made complete as a bigger wind is blown. This is Crow's time. The keys of the car has been handed over to Crow by Cheyenne in a symbolic gesture. With a smile Crow sings about the ultimate reality:

Crow:

Keep me rollin' down

Keep me rollinl down

Keep me in my state a' grace

Just keep me rollin' down (*ibidem*:113).

The use of music in Shepard's plays has several

primary functions. It establishes an emotional mood and tone which allows everybody to concentrate on the thematic centre of the work. In *The Tooth of Crime* the power struggle between two rock stars has been presented through the lyric and the music of language. The dramatist provides enough comments on the action and the situation of the play through the medium of music. By using the medium of music Shepard defines a quintessentially American way of life in *The Tooth of Crime*. The play presents a society where crude power is high lighted, and where styles change at the high speed of an arm's race. The music and the lyrics in the play are used to reinforce the stylistic battle of the two singers belonging to two different worlds. The Victor, Crow's songs are potentially chilling. One can see in him the power, the force of ego turning ruthless and mechanical in a world without grace or true light.

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# Gandhism and Multiculturalism in India

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## **Abstract**

*Gandhiji is a phenomenon in the history of mankind because he is the embodiment of certain human values which no culture of any region or nation can afford to ignore. Simplicity and sublimity in life style, nobility in thinking, global outlook, concern for others, humanistic perspective and ceaseless quest for truth are some of the unique qualities he represents. Since time immemorial India has emerged as a multicultural country. Multiculturalism in India is not an accident but a historical fact. India has been subjected to various foreign invasions and conquests; hence, Indian culture has assimilated the best of cultures of many races. Gandhiji, the humanist had appreciation of both the cultures : the native and the foreign. In the twenty first century when the power-drunk politicians, in the name of promotion of regional cultures want to divide the country a critical analysis of Gandhian philosophy is a must . In this article a humble attempt is made to throw light upon Gandhian principles and his concepts like 'Swaraj', 'Ramarajya', 'Sarvodaya', 'religious tolerance' and 'welfare of the disadvantaged groups' which contribute to the sustenance of multiculturalism in India.*

India is a multi-cultural state in which maintenance of unity in the midst of diversity is the pertinent issue. Multiculturalism as defined in *Macmillan English Dictionary* is, "the belief and practice of giving equal importance to each or different cultures in a society". The respect for 'the other'-specifically the practitioners of other cultures is not an easy issue in the twenty-first century when people have been self-centered, materialistic and ego-centric. In such a crucial time to preserve the integrity of Indian nation and quintessence of Indian culture is the main issue before the leaders of the country. Gandhiji, the father of Indian nation, was well-aware of the complexity of human psyche, imperfection of human nature and the problems that the multicultural country like India is to face. Hence he advocated certain principles which need to be followed

in order to preserve the sanctity of multiculturalism in India.

This paper attempts at analyzing the problems and crises of multiculturalism and finds solution to them through the ways of living that Gandhiji, the father of nation, has advocated.

From time immemorial, India has emerged as a multicultural country . The people of different religions, languages, regions, dialects, castes and creeds inhabit it . At present, it has more than 1650 mother-tongues belonging to five different language families, that is Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Indo-European, Semito-Hermitic and Tibeto-Burman. The constitution of India recognizes 22 languages. In the curricula of school and colleges it has also introduced a three language formula : mother tongue (a regional language ) Hindi (a national language ), English(a international language). Such an introduction of three language formula has helped in the promotion of multiculturalism. Language is culture specific. If in a particular region an Indian learns three languages – regional, national and international he develops a fascination for diverse cultures – local, national and global – here lies the source for strengthening multiculturalism.

Homi K. Bhaba presents the conflict or crisis in a multicultural country in the following words :

In my writings , I've been arguing against the multiculturalist notion that you can put together harmoniously any number of cultures in a pretty mosaic. You cannot just solder together different cultural tradition to produce some brave new cultural identity. The current phase of economic and social history makes you aware of cultural difference not at the celebratory level of diversity but always at the point of conflict or crisis. (qtd. in Huddart 2007: 124).

The problem that Bhaba pictures cannot be ignored . Gandhism embodies the solution . Gandhi used to pose himself first as a man (global citizen), then as the citizen of India and finally as a man of Gujarat .Hence

Gandhism is rooted in the culture of humanism rather than that in a specific regional culture. The problems related to culture identity and difference can be minimized if the people resort to tolerance. Gandhiji was the incarnation of tolerance. He tolerated his enemies like the British but did not appreciate the attitude of British. Hence he could bring independence to India through non-violent methods. Gandhiji's view was that humanity is at the center and culture is meant for the promotion of welfare of all human beings. He was not a fanatic like Hitler. Hence his ideology suits multiculturalism in India.

**Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** describes multiculturalism as an umbrella term to characterise the moral and political claims of a wide range of disadvantaged groups.' Gandhiji was a champion of disadvantaged groups of India : the untouchables (Harijans), the low caste people, the primitive tribes, the women and so on. Gandhiji has fought for the uplift of the disadvantaged people of India which is clearly evident from his writing in *Young India* (1.5.30):

The Swaraj of my ...our ...dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons not yet of moneyed men. Swaraj is to be for all including the former, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the *starving toiling million*. (qtd. in Roy : 76 )

Gandhiji's advocacy of *Swaraj* was promoting the cause of the riff-raff of the society. It was also favouring the elites –the cream of the society. Thus it was conducive for the mingling of the cultures : the culture of the rich as well as the poor, the culture of the influential as well as of the downtrodden.

In 1925 he wrote something in context of Swaraj in *Young India* which is favourable for the growth of multiculturalism :

...Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by the few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it abused. In other words : *Swaraj* is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

Gandhiji's political philosophy – the concept of *Swaraj* admits cultural diversity and maintenance of unity in the midst of diversity. In no way it promotes dictatorship which goes against the principles of multiculturalism. In Gandhiji's concept of *Swaraj* the native has as much liberty as the immigrant does have ; the man has as much freedom as woman. Such a state of affairs strengthens the roots of multiculturalism.

Gandhiji's concept of religion corroborates to multicultural perspective. In his article *Gandhi, Religion*

and *Multiculturalism : An Appraisal*, Siby K. Joseph quotes Gandhiji's views from *Hind Swaraj*:

Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter if we take different roads as long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals.

([http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi\\_religion.html](http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi_religion.html))

Indeed Gandhiji respects the individuality in a person of any religion – be he Hindu or Muslim or Christian or Parse. He used to dine with the people of any social status. Indeed he upheld the quintessence of Hinduism. In *Young India* on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1927 he wrote something which defends his stance of multiculturalism :

..In spite of being a staunch Hindu, I find room in my faith for Christian, Islamic and Zoroastrian teaching; mine is a broad faith that does not oppose Christians-not even a Plymouth brother- not even the most fanatical Mussalman. It is a faith based on broadest possible toleration. I refuse to abuse a man for his fanatical deeds because I try to see them from his point of view..It is a somewhat embarrassing position, I know- but to others, not to me!.

The above words of Gandhiji speak eloquently in favour of the existence of diverse religions and diverse cultures. Fanaticism is the enemy of multiculturalism. Gandhiji practised tolerance for all religions and advocated to give up fanaticism of all sorts. Thus he was paving the way for multiculturalism to flourish in a country like India.

Spirituality is the essence of religion. Gandhi was basically an advocate of spiritual practices. He was the exponent of the concept of the spiritualization of politics but not the reverse - the politicization of spirituality. In 1929 he made statements in context of *Ramarajya* which are worth analyzing in context of multiculturalism :

I warn my Mussalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the words 'Ramaraj'. By Ramaraj I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by Ramaraj Divine Raj, the kingdom of God. For me Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one of the truth and rightness. Whether Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of Ramaraj undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure. (*Young India* : 305)

The above passage sheds light upon Gandhiji's

concept of *Ramarajya* (the Utopian ideal). Ideal conduct of each citizen – be he a Hindu or Muslim or Christian which is a must for materializing the concept of *Ramarajya*. It is a necessary condition for the sustenance of multiculturalism . Democracy can thrive in a multicultural country like India if the citizens tolerate the cultures and traditions of each section of heterogeneous population. Gandhiji's worship of Rama, the ideal ruler and ideal man, is not without justifications necessary for the emotional integration of people in a multicultural nation like India.

The book *India of My Dreams* compiled by R. K.Prabhu contains Gandhiji's views on the concept of *the Sarvodaya State* which supports the cause of multiculturalism in India :

The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul , but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence ...What I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a state is. Voluntary organization there must be . (p. 412)

Gandhiji was emphasizing persuasion rather than force as a method to be adopted for the progress of the nation. Hence he was focusing on the role of voluntary organizations. Indeed it is the voluntary organizations which can play significant roles in the maintenance of unity, harmony and peace in a multicultural state like India . Such organizations can sort out cultural differences between different tribes, religions and so on.

As regards the sustenance of multiculturalism in India Gandhiji's views published in *Young India* dated 1<sup>st</sup> September 1921 are worth analyzing. Gandhi views:

It stands for synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life, and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by spirit of the soil. This synthesis will naturally be of the Swadeshi type, where each culture is assured its legitimate place, and not of the American pattern, where one dominant culture absorbs the rest, and where the aim is not towards harmony, but towards an artificial and forced unity.

Gandhiji expresses high opinion about multiculturalism in India. He views that there is proper synthesis of cultures in India. Indians are better attuned to multiculturalism than the Americans. He holds that harmony is the essence of Indian culture which is the amalgamation of several cultures. Gandhiji's views are corroborated by Prof. V. K. Gokak who writes in his famous book *India and World Culture* :

For it is here, on Indian soil, that the pattern of the world culture of tomorrow is on the anvil for being fashioned in all its unity and complexity. (Cover Page.)

Multiculturalism in India highlights the essence of global culture because such a culture represents the best that has been said, thought and done in many parts of the globe. Gandhiji the father of the Indian Nation is the embodiment of the essence of diverse cultures if a particular culture is meant to represent a particular life style . It is he who reconciles the universal with the local and the temporal with the eternal. It is he who thinks globally but acts locally. Who does not know that Gandhiji, a conservative *Vaisnava*, used to pay as much attention to his goat as to the Governor of Great Britain. He had profound love for all the creatures, humans irrespective of their social status – here lies the uniqueness of a cultured Indian .

To conclude, at present, multiculturalism in any country of the world-America, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom and above all India, is not without shortcomings. In many parts of the globe agitations are launched for recognition of ethnic identity and accommodation of cultural differences- India is not free from it. For the progress of a multicultural state, specially India, the adherence to Gandhian ideology and philosophy is necessary because no other political thinker has voiced about the need of sinking the cultural differences as Gandhi has done.

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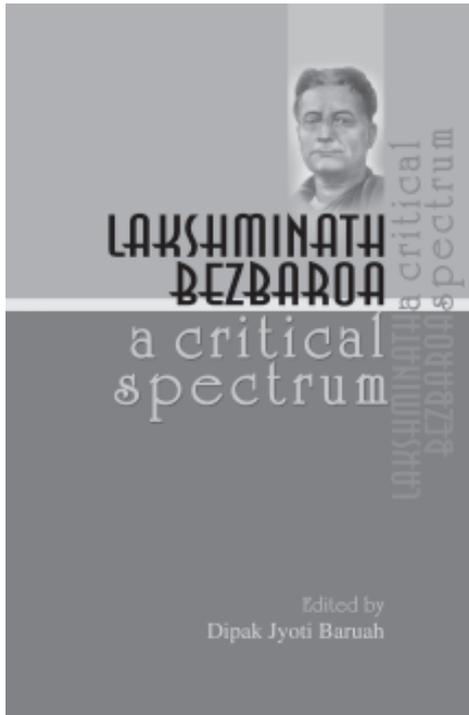
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*LAKSHMINATH BEZBAROA : a critical spectrum* is a unique collection of fifteen essays-the reading of which makes an humble scholar bow down before a gigantic literary figure of Assam. Substituting the language of a famous English poet a reader cannot help echoing that the knowledge of the life of Bezbaroa can make our lives sublime. It will be an understatement if we simply view that Bezbaroa modernized Assamese literature. In fact his writing is so powerful and revolutionary that he can be looked upon as one of the architects of modern Assam. The editor's attempt to collect relevant materials on Bezbaroa, the writer and the man and above all the growth of his mind and multidimensional authorship, on the occasion of one hundred fiftieth of his birth anniversary, is quite commendable. In between the lines of the essays that this book contains Bezbaroa emerges as the embodiment of Assamese consciousness and that compels a reader to know what 'Assamese' is.

The cover page of the book is highly illuminating and revealing.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa on whom the book is

## A FITTING TRIBUTE TO AN ARCHITECT OF MODERN ASSAMESE LITERATURE

**Kalikinkar Pattanayak**

written gets written in capital letters but the other part of the title 'a critical spectrum' gets printed in small letters. It suggests a vital truth that the creative writer is above the critics – whatever be the nature of criticism it is inadequate to reveal the grandeur of creative work. The photograph of Bezbaroa is on the top. From the photograph Bezbaroa's personality can be assessed. The facial expression reveals a high degree of seriousness – a kind of seriousness that Matthew Arnold was looking for : the promotion of culture and elimination of anarchy; cultivation of 'sweetness' and effulgence of 'light'. Such kind of a cover design reveals the truth that the creative writer is like God - the creator of a fictional world : 'lovely', 'dark' and 'deep', by wielding his mighty pen.

To a perceptive reader, the fifteen essays in the book constitute fifteen sections- each section exploring a new fact about Bezbaroa who loved passionately his mother tongue that is Assamese and Assamese culture ; he was a silent rebel against the cultural imperialism of the British. Dr. Baruah, the editor of the book has highlighted the salient features of each article in a nutshell in his prefatory notes. The notes are so brief and suggestive that to read them is to understand and appreciate the gist of the book about Bezbaroa's art and craft as revealed by zealous critics. They have tried to explore the beauty and mystery of the artistic creations of Bezbaroa.

No book is worth buying unless it contains

some memorable lines. The book under review has many a memorable lines –both in Assamese and English, which enlighten the reader about the vision of life. Here is a conversation between a flower girl and a flowering shrub from Bezbaroa’s folk tale *Ejani Malini aru Ejopa Phul* (A gardener–girl and a flowering shrub) :

*Flower Girl : O’ flower, flower*

*Why don’t you bloom ?*

*Flowering shrub : The cow has devoured all the shoots*

*So how can I bloom ? ..... (qtd. by Dr. Kailash Bhattacharya, p-84)*

These lines linger in memory because the message is important – the budding talents of a person cannot bloom if the circumstances are hostile. Thus in Bezbaroa’s lyrics message is as much important as lyricism; here lies the secret of his appeal.

Bezbaroa has voiced against the ills that plague the society; one such ill is patriarchal system. The criticism of the patriarchal system is virulent in the short story “Laliti Kakati”. In her letter Laliti boldly declares

you have deserted me; I too have every right to reject you as unworthy ... “Miss” Laliti Kakati does not accept that a woman has no better things to do in this world except getting married to serve her husband, give birth to children and bring them up (B R III: 249). (qtd. in Madan Sarma, p- 37)

None but a feminist can write such lines. Bezbaroa has been a feminist long before feminism gained ground. Nalini – the ghostly skull of the story *Laokhola* is another immortal creation of Bezbaroa where she raises pertinent questions about the status of women :

Lord , O lord ! The trials of a woman’s life. The men are always ready to add to their woes...What kind of patriarchal logic is that ! What justice! You are a selfish lot...Fie! What sort of scripture is yours ?You are like this ! Such is your world ! Who is the owner of this world ? I believe here is no other owner except the self-centred males. (qtd. and translated by Mushrifa Ibrahim, p- 55)

Translation is fine. Genuine questions are raised by a woman protagonist. Doubtless, the story is

powerful because the attitude of the protagonist is iconoclastic. A feminist reading of this story will place Bezbaroa among the best of modern writers.

Bezbaroa is a writer with a purpose. He is against religious fanaticism. In the essay *Glimpses of The Inner Courtyard : Women in The Short Stories of Lakshminath Bezbaroa* Mushrifa Ibrahim translates some of the heart-touching lines from Bezbaroa’s story *Nistarini Devi ba Fatema Bibi*: people hate each other in the name of religion .The Hindu Muslim divide has taken the country to hell. Everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah, my lord. (qtd. and translated by Ibrahim, p- 56)

Here Bezbaroa advocates religious tolerance. In the core of his heart he perceives the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men. Hence he does not appreciate any kind of war or clash in the name of religion.

To translate Bezbaroa into English is not that easy. Bezbaroa is a practitioner of Assamese and a keen observer of Indian way of life. Here is a passage translated by Madan Sarma from his story *Dhowankhowa*:

‘*Dangaria*’s hands have been embellished by the *hookah* made of silver, legs by slippers made of jackfruit wood with a round top-like holder made of ivory for gripping with big toes and a garland obtained from Puri-Jagannath round his neck.(p-27)

In the above passage there are several expressions which cannot be understood without reference to Indian and Assamese culture. *Dangoria* in Assamese means a man of position and social prestige. It is a marker of respect. The mention of the Lord of universe ‘Puri-Jagannath’ has an explicit reference to Odisha. The slippers made of jack-fruit wood are worn by Indian *Sadhus* . Thus a translator of Bezbaroa is sure to keep in mind Indian culture and Indian English. Many words are untranslatable and, therefore, they are to be italicized.

Bezbaroa is such a distinguished literary figure that he deserves comparison with Shakespeare. In the article *Bezbaroa and Shakespeare* Pona Mahanta compares some lines from Bezbaroa’s play *Belimar* with those of *King Lear* in order to focus on the state of anarchy in the country :

*Dukhik dukh di rang pai prajaak kare gheen  
Seighar raja seikhan deshar aayus keidin?  
(Act -I,sc. v)*

(When the poor are injured and the people hated,  
how long will that country or the people live ?)

Bezbaroa pictures the conditions for the state of anarchy in the country: the conditions are poverty and above all hatred of the poor. The playwright makes it clear that when there is no cordial relation between the ruler and the ruled the monarchy degenerates into anarchy. A humanistic perspective indeed! Shakespeare presents the same situation in a different language in *King Lear* :

*When priests are more in word than matter,  
When brewers mar their malt with water,  
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,  
...Then shall the realm of Albion  
Come to great confusion.  
( Art 3.sc.Ii, II, 80-90)*

*Albion* is the ancient name of Great Britain which is used, now –a-days poetically for Britain. Shakespeare understands the psychology of the common people. He attributes hypocrisy (the gap between word and action) to be the prime cause of anarchy. The contrast between two literary figures reveals that when Bezbaroa has a larger heart, Shakespeare, a sharper mind.

A book is worth-buying and worth-reading if it raises pertinent questions about the vital issues of life. It is a worthy endeavour on the part of Dr. Barua , the editor, to invite and publish brain storming essays on literary life of Dr. Bezbaroa – a fitting tribute to an architect of modern Assam. None can deny that modernity is a revolutionary consciousness which a great literary artist can create in a particular milieu. Bezbaroa did it- a galaxy of scholars admit it. Doubtless, this book will be a valued addition to the stock of books in any college or university library.

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