

Drishti: the Sight

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**A REFEREED (PEER-REVIEWED) BI-ANNUAL NATIONAL RESEARCH
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE/ASSAMESE LITERATURE/FOLKLORE /CULTURE**

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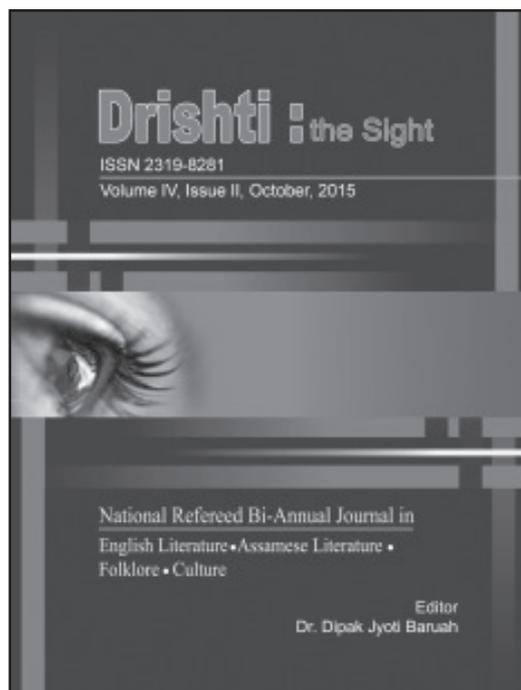
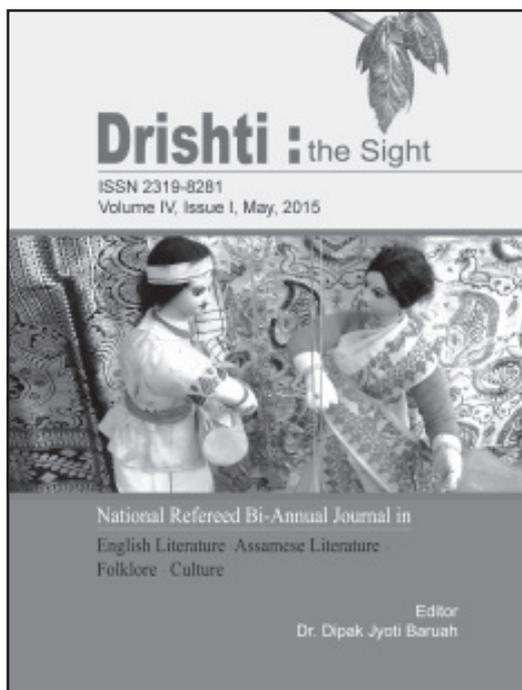
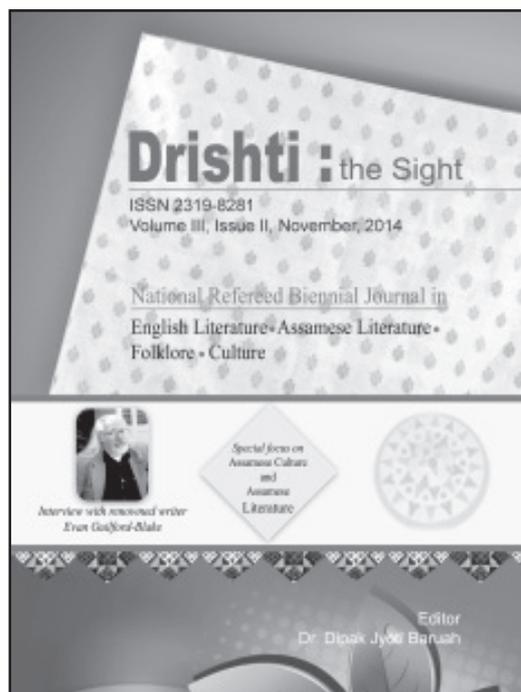
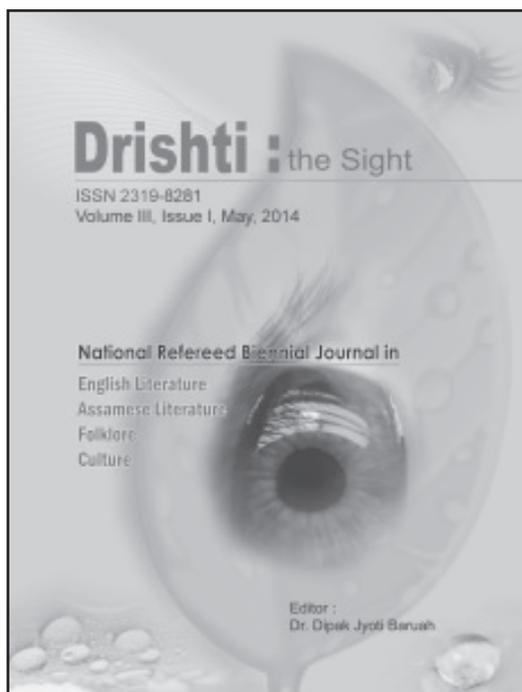
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EDITORIAL

The culture of film appreciation and the Indian viewers

In this age of the 'ubiquity of the Hollywood factor', a strong national movement for film appreciation has become all the more necessary. This may lead to a general awareness about what makes a film good and aesthetically pleasing. It may lead to the growth of good taste among the viewers.

For most of the viewers of the Bollywood movies, they generally look upon these films as means of momentary entertainment. It does not matter for them, if these films fail to create any permanent impression in their mind. They, as it were, see them and forget them then and there! However, of late, there is a slow awakening of a new alternative trend in the Bollywood, to make the viewers served with witty narratives having themes of sociological concerns by a few makers who attempt at touching the nerve with the young viewers so that they can identify with the characters and their problems and can mingle into the story-line instantaneously. A few films acted by Aamir Khan may be examples in this regard. Films of this nature have been successful to draw the minds of the viewers to keenly focus on contemporary subjects. Because they are able to struck a chord with the viewers, they (the viewers) automatically evaluate such films during gossips and table talks.

Among our audiences there are many who would long to see films that they could enjoy 'critically'. Whether someone sees a so called 'good film' with due interest or not, it will all depend upon the nature of the making of the film. There are umpteen numbers of such films that really touches a nerve. The observer's eye is with every audience and it all depends upon the ingenuity of the people who make a film to motivate the audiences to keenly observe the details in relation to the main theme.

Cinema in India is not still being taken at par with literature by the majority of the audience. There are not too many cultural interactions made through them. Even in the arena of higher education it has remained at the back burner. There may be a university solely devoted to the film study. More film studies departments should come up in our universities. The audio-visual media like the television too have not been playing an effective role in spreading film literacy. Film Societies too have remained by and large limited among a handful of elites.

In India, there are good films made and a section of them get awards too in the national and international fests. But how many of them are actually seen by the audiences? But a good artistic European and American film get viewers all over the globe. They are available on the internet for downloading and they have takers in every corner of the world.

It is difficult to say that with the increase in general literacy rate in India, there has been a commensurate change or improvement amongst the general film-going mass regarding their mindset, taste, film literacy and the way they evaluate and watch cinema. There is perhaps still dearth of well constructed films with captivating story-lines. Depiction of the reality with dynamic visual representations may be a way; promotion of such films in the print and the other media may also complement to the growth of a film culture.

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Orphans and Ostracized Outsiders : A Study of George Eliot's Isolated and Abandoned Heroines

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to analyse George Eliot's heroines as orphans and ostracized outsiders who are often victims of familial, social and sexual attitudes of the Victorian age. In her novels one can see that the novelist has given a demanding scrutiny to Victorian women who had to suffer isolation and exile because they were propelled by their desire and peculiar qualities of their mind beyond the restraints of their provincial culture. And it's precisely this confrontation faced by Eliot's heroines between self and society that launches my exploration.

Key Words: *ostracized, isolation, exile, confrontation, restraints.*

To be born a woman in the Victorian era was to enter a world of social, psychological and cultural incarceration unknown to a man. She was often a solitary voyager who journeyed through life in search of love and security. Victorian literature is full of accounts that grapple with and agonize over problems of solitary wandering and exile. Lacking a proper home which would provide them with succour in times of need, these vagrant women characters are often faced with moral, psychological, philosophical, physical and social states of exile and incarceration. Whether it is Florence Dombey, Little Dorrit, Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, Becky Sharp, Dinah Morris, Hetty Sorrel, Maggie Tulliver, Gwendolen Harleth or Tess, all fail to find domestic contentment and emotional succour and sometimes even have to face abuse, manipulation and

cruelty at the hands of their own family members.. They are often left ostracized, sequestered and sometimes even literally exiled from society because they were propelled by their desire and the peculiar qualities of their mind beyond the restraints of their provincial culture.

Although Victorian novelists like Charles Dickens, W.M. Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy have tried to deal with the moral, psychological, philosophical, economic and social states of exile and incarceration of the female protagonists, the perspectives have been different for each of them. George Eliot, with whom I shall exclusively deal in this paper had a different outlook than her predecessors. She is less likely to depict the social world as divided into starkly oppositional social classes (as Thackeray or Bronte did) than she is to create a variegated community in which the story centers on the fates of characters who disturb or violate the norms of belief or behaviour in the community. The isolation, incarceration and exile they face as a result of this often make her novels so strikingly different than what we see in the case of the earlier novelists. Even as she constantly celebrated the value of traditional community and traditional family structures, Eliot was realistic enough to portray the failures of community and family in acting as bulwark against exclusion and isolation. They are often ostracised, sequestered and sometimes even literally exiled from their homes because they dared to desire beyond the restrictive domains of their provincial culture. Despite experiencing exile and incarceration Bronte's Lucy

Snowe and Jane Eyre emerge triumphant and achieve 'as full and healthy a womanhood' but George Eliot with her tragic vision could perceive no such liberation from her heroines. She was deeply mistrustful of creating idealistic exceptions and utopian pictures. And despite her protagonists yearning to be someone or to do something, which reaches beyond the circumstance in which they find themselves, she is continually aware that her responsibility is to portray them in the "imperfect social state" (*Middlemarch*) in which they actually live. Hetty Sorrel (*Adam Bede*), Maggie Tulliver (*The Mill on the Floss*) and Gwendolen Harleth (*Daniel Deronda*) all aspire to rise beyond their restrictive horizons only to be faced with disillusionment, sterility and defeat.

In *Adam Bede*, published in 1859, George Eliot gave herself for the first time the wide canvas of the three - volume novel. It is the most pictorial of her works over which there has been a good deal of critical dispute in recent years.. Particularly interesting are the two female characters of the novel, which Eliot presents with great psychological insight. They are the solitary voyagers, each living in their separate worlds, isolated from their community.

The two voyagers are the orphans, Hetty Sorrel and Dinah Morris, the nieces of Mr. and Mrs. Poyser's respectively. If Dinah strives towards a selfless, spiritual identification with suffering humanity, alien to the very nature of the people of Hayslope, Hetty represents the opposite moral pole. She is the natural, instinctive self seeking in its own pleasure, the quintessence of the golden world of pastoral, nature in all its 'self engrossed loveliness'. In conventional Victorian terms, they represent nature and grace, Madonna and Magdalene, the Angel and the Demon.. But as polar opposites they also have a good deal in common, each avoiding the full complexity of life in the community, each prefer to remain isolated and each radically subversive of the status quo.

Dinah exists on the periphery of Hayslope life, only bringing her message of sin, suffering and redemption during brief visits or through her letters.

She must always return to the poor and needy of Stonyshire and it is through these repeated withdrawals that George Eliot suggests Dinah's alienations. She has been called to minister to others, not to have any joys or sorrows of her own. She has no roots and will make no plans for the future. She tells Seth when he proposes to her. "I desire to live and die without husband or children" (80). Such self- abnegation further segregates her from society..

Hetty, in contrast, appears to be fully in harmony with pastoral Hayslope. Hetty is completely natural in her amorality, and her career in the novel acts out the implications of this just as the community is unsympathetic to Dinah's preaching, so they drive Hetty away when she acts out her natural hedonism. Her self-made world takes on a new intensity with the appearance of Arthur Doninthe when she loses all sense of her physical self. And again it is Mrs. Poyser who delivers the harshest critique when she says that her heart is as hard as a pebble, not submerged like Dinah in thoughts of God, but in her private desires. She is a cherry with a hard stone inside it, and things take no more hold on her than if she was a dried pea. She has no roots in the community and is unconcerned about its day-to-day life, isolated from all appeals by a barrier of dreams - by the looks and arms of her Olympian God, Arthur.

Small wonder that Hetty's awakening has traumatic force. When she learns in a letter from Arthur of his determination to bring their affair to an end, all vitality is drained out of her. Deprived of all her dreams, Hetty feels terribly isolated, and expresses her hatred for Arthur for frustrating her desires. 'She hated the writer of that letter - hated him for the very reason that she hung upon him with all her love - all the girlish passion and vanity that made up her love' (380). Hetty can only think of the community response "as the sick and weary prisoner might think of the possible pillory" (382). Hetty's suffering is subsequently compounded by the knowledge that she is pregnant. Dread of disgrace and censure forces her to flee Loamshire, and in Hetty we confront, once again, the exiled

Victorian female protagonist in search of love and security. Abandoned, Impregnated, exile and finally imprisoned, Hetty suffers intense isolation which brings out her inner hardness of character. Her confession in the prison, a sufficiently damning account of herself, is no less damning of her community: "I daredn't go back home again I couldn't bare it, couldn't have bore to look at any body, for they'd have scorned me" (497). Though Dinah's loving sympathy comforts her there is little left in Hetty's life. The life she faces is that of exile and incarceration. Pardoned from execution, she is nevertheless transported to the colonies where she dies some years later.

Such a contest between "individual desire and moral responsibility" (Levine 9) which often led to isolation, incarceration and exile, is a recurring theme, in all of Eliot's novels. As the "Finale" of *Middlemarch* puts it, "There is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (789). The formal and theoretical justification for most of the Victorian novel derives from this sense that every individual life is shaped by connections with conditions outside it. But in twentieth-century criticism, this centrally nineteenth-century recognition of the ways in which every individual can only be understood in relation to the social complex and the larger movements of history has often evoked very negative responses. Feminist criticism, for example, has long complained that George Eliot never created a heroine like Marian Evans, that is, a woman who resisted the conventions of society and made a creative and original life for herself, even living outside of wedlock with moral confidence in her choice. Indeed, one finds a rejection in her fiction of the risk-taking, scandalous career of Marian Evans. The novels often revisit the crisis of Marian Evans. The examples are everywhere, in, for example, the ostracism and redemption of a Maggie Tulliver who almost elopes with an engaged man; the alienation of a misunderstood Silas Marner; the struggles of Romola, undervalued by her father, betrayed by her husband; the stunning self-repression and disillusion of Mrs. Transome, who, in *Felix Holt*, had thought to derive joy from the child she bears from

her illicit sexual relation with the lawyer Jermyn. The restraints of past obligations, family tradition, and social responsibility take precedence over ideal aspirations - in effect they are the novels' ideal aspirations. Resolution comes with assimilation to a community, and not with the kind of ostracism Marian Evans suffered from many years until, with the enormous respectability and prestige of George Eliot's novels behind her, she was accepted socially and, finally, entered a legitimate marriage.

But, in the end, what we most remember of her novels and indeed, the power of much of her writing lies in her representation of the profound failures of the middle-class society whose values she sought to revivify, and most particularly of the cost of self-restraint, unjust limitation imposed on remarkable characters, usually but not exclusively, women. The novels are shot through with images of disenchantment, imprisonment, exile and loss that survive for readers beyond the constraining plots in which the characters are tied. In *The Mill on the Floss*, particularly George Eliot means to show how society is blind to all subtleties in a woman. Maggie Tulliver, the protagonist is a headstrong young woman of great intelligence whose perceptive view of the world in which she lives find an echo in the adult provincial society of the English Midlands. Her strivings to do and be something more than her womanhood seems to allow her are doomed from the start by the biased nature of the environment. The stifling of her abilities and emotions by her family and friends is the real tragedy of the novel rather than the banal ending.

Eliot made no secret of the fact that the figure of Maggie Tulliver was autobiographical. Like Eliot's, Maggie's home surrounding act as fetters which deny the realization of higher aspirations. It is not difficult to identify the destructive forces at work in Maggie's environment. There is a disparity from the outset between her given nature and the rigid ideas held by her society and her family of what she ought to be. Not only are Maggie's aesthetic and intellectual faculties starved in the oppressively narrow medium of St. Ogg's,

they are regarded as inappropriate for a girl and hence contribute to Maggie's uncertainty about her worth. Not only is she a girl, and therefore an inferior being; she is also regarded as an inferior girl. In talents, manners and appearance, she is the opposite of what the Dodsons value in a female (Lucy embodies their ideal), and Mrs. Tulliver is engaged in a constant battle to transform her into an acceptable child. Her physical and mental make - up make her almost an outcast even before she actually becomes one. She is isolated from her community even at this age, yearning for love yet desperate to assert herself. Looking for affection, the young Maggie runs to the gypsies only to discover that the gypsies represent a pole outside the social life; a pole of those who except being outlaws and wanderers and Maggie could never consciously become a part of it. The adult Maggie undergoes a similar experience. A yearning for a fuller life tempts her to run away with Stephen who, she believes, can lead her to a better world. Realisation follows and she discovers that Stephen is not the knight she had imagined him to be; besides she will not obey passion in preference to duty and most importantly, she will not uproot herself from community. It is at this point that Eliot exposes the hypocrisy and double standard of the age when the good people of St. Oggs treat the unwed Maggie as an outcast. Pain is inescapable and she spends her days in isolation until, one day, she is washed away by the floods. Maggie Tulliver's loneliness and alienation throughout the novel can be seen as the consequences of history and environment when man and woman had fixed roles to play in society. As feminist critics like Deirdre David points out: "Her strength is in her intellect and in her aggressiveness and her weakness is in sex and gender: if she had been a man, if indeed, she were Tom rather than Maggie the intelligent would have a place and function in community" (220). Maggie would then, have been vital for society. But Maggie, because of her inherent contradictions is doomed to homelessness and is literally exiled from her childhood home and morally exiled from her community. Like Eliot's, Maggie's home surrounding act as fetters which deny the realization of higher aspiration. The stifling of

her abilities and emotions by her family and friends is the real tragedy of the novel rather than the melodramatic ending.

Daniel Deronda is the last of George Eliot's novels and while it is tempting to make the most of the final achievement in a great career, this really is a last novel, which can be called a remarkable conclusion. The story of *Daniel Deronda* is not only his story, but also that of Gwendolen Harleth. George Eliot has made an original and ironical link between a man of destiny, concerned with political life, problems of leadership and social order and value, and a very ordinary girl, whose immaturity and egoism show themselves in her total isolation, both in experience and in imagination, from the world of great causes. "Her (Gwendolen) story is one of the imprisonments within social forms" remarks Kate Flint (177). Gwendolen, quite early in her courtship remarks that "We women can't go in search of adventures..... We must stay where we grow"(171). She feels reduced to a mere speck in Deronda's wide - stretching purposes. Her fear of breadth is contrasted with the large visions of Daniel and Mordecai, and acts as a metaphor for her narrowness and smallness of life and experience. Her mother's two marriages have taught her that women cannot do, as they like, that they are the weak objects of male dominance that they are constantly laid low by childbirth and debilitated by improvident husbands who take to pawning the family jewel. Talking about the restricted life of women, she tells Rex that rather than be married she would prefer to go to the North Pole or ride steeplechases. But Grandcourt appears on the scene and represents himself as a manageable lover. and Gwendolen succumbs with the conscious and mistaken belief that she will be able to govern Grandcourt more effectively than her mother has managed her two husbands. She sells herself to Grandcourt for the sake not so much of her own energetic, witty and attractive self, but for the sake of her mother's financial security.

Eliot here indicates that isolation, imprisonment and exile are issues which confronted not only the unmarried Victorian women in their request for love

and security but continued even after their marriage. This was because marriage, in practice, was still a question of economics, which often left the wife, imprisoned. As Gwendolen soon discovers that Grandcourt has married her in order to “imprison” her, to revel in his gloating knowledge: she had been brought to accept him in spite of everything brought to kneel down like a horse: “you have married me and must be guided by my opinion”(653). He had, comments the narrator, “the courage and confidence that belong to domination and he was feeling perfectly satisfied that he held his wife with bit and bridle His words had the power of thumb screw and the cold touch of the rack”(737) Gwendolen soon discovers that marriage isolates her and imprisons her far more than her unmarried girlhood did. Finding herself more and more incarcerated, she desperately turns to Deronda for spiritual solace. But Deronda, too, feels helpless in face of Gwendolen’s dilemma, a dilemma which is representative in many ways of the materialism and moral vacuity of the culture he criticises . She has to realize at the end, her own worth, without relying on a mentor to give her direction and self-valuation- but there is no real indication she can do this.

Gwendolen’s life, at the end of the novel, is an image of sterility. She is not like Maggie Tulliver, whose problems are solved by death. She stands alone at the end of the novel, facing the question - mark of the future. The ending is not completely open. She is not only alone, propped by neither death, nor marriage, but has to start on a new set of expectations. She has found that what seemed like a possible happy ever - after was infact a new and painful beginning in which many of the things she had learnt would be lost, re - tested and rediscovered. Such moments of loneliness, disenchantment and loss, as Barbara Hardy describes them in *The Novels of George Eliot*, are a condition

of the realist novelist. They mark stages in the lives of her protagonists as they are “forced” as Hardy says, “from the center, to the periphery, from the dream of self which filled the world to reduced consciousness”(198). The pain often seems in excess of the desire, even for egoists like Gwendolen, for while the focus in George Eliot is likely to be on individual limits, she can describe with remarkable acuity the cruelties, injustices and banalities of the world that imposes those limits.

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Interrogating the Gender Question through an Ancient Character in Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*

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Abstract:

Yajnaseni (translated into English by Pradip Bhattacharya) is a famous novel written by the Jnanapith award winning Odia novelist: Pratibha Ray. The main character of the novel, Yajnaseni, is taken from the epic Mahabharata. She is a well-known Indian mythological heroine who is depicted as a dignified and obedient woman with all great virtues. Using the epic facts, the novelist presents Draupadi as a modern woman who unfolds the inner life of a woman and questions the patriarch social evils of contemporary society. Through the character of Draupadi, Ray presents the subservient image of woman in Indian society who is left to suffer and die at the mercy of the dominating male attitudes. Indian culture expects woman to be an epitome of sacrifice for the interests of a male dominated society. Ray tries to give voice to the silenced woman of our society by questioning the prominent gender issues. In spite of its mythological background, the issues raised in this novel appear quite similar to the present day gender issues that human society is facing in an era of globalization. Looking at Draupadi from a woman's point of view, Ray presents before the readers an appropriate image of an Indian woman. The picture of woman that emerges from Ray's presentation of Draupadi reassures us that the plight of woman has not significantly changed in spite of several high sounding slogans such as woman empowerment, equal rights to woman etc. in a globalised society. It is not only the case of Indian woman but it voices

the concerns of millions of woman around the world. They are vulnerable, deprived and victimized in our society. The novel can be considered as a representative work which successfully portrays the suppression and suffering of woman across culture.

Key words: Draupadi, gender issues, Indian culture, globalised society.

Gender is defined as a sexual identity especially in relation to society or culture. Men are conventionally seen in an active role in most of the places where as women are restricted to a limited role in most of the societies. The scenario has not much changed even in 21st century. The sense of gender helps to create identities, roles and relations of people in a society. An understanding of cultural context is very helpful to define these issues. Gender issues are central to the growth of a national culture. These issues mainly emphasize on things related to woman such as – equal rights to male and female, violence on women, rights to property, economic freedom and marginalization of women etc.

Realizing a gender-equal society is one of the key factors in the development of a globalised society, the present study attempts to bring to the fore the emerging gender issues by focusing on Pratibha Ray's famous Odia novel *Yajnaseni: The story of Draupadi* (translated into English by Pradip Bhattacharya). The novel *Yajnaseni* (1985), originally written in Odia by Pratibha Ray, a Jnanpith Awardee, is based on Draupadi, the enigmatic heroine of the epic Mahabharata. Pratibha Ray won Saral Award in 1989 and Moorti Devi award in 1991 for this famous novel. She is one of the most

widely read Odia novelists and short story writers. Through her writings she has revolutionized womanhood and redefined the role of women in the society. She has successfully depicted the trials and tribulations of Draupadi as an ordinary woman with a new approach whose story is often lost in the grand saga of the Mahabharata. The narration of Draupadi's ordeal appears contemporary and relevant to the present day gender issues that threaten the very existence and identity of woman in the society. Pratibha Ray's Draupadi declares that her story is *nothing other than the life story of any human being on this mortal world.* (Ray,4)

The novel begins with Draupadi's life ending on the foothills of Himalayas. She is left behind by her husbands – the five pandavs. Lying at the foothills, she writes a letter to her dear *Sakha* (friend) Lord Krishna. This narration of her story reveals a woman's inner ordeal and suffering in this world. Recalling her sufferings she questions the rules of this world and seeks answer for her pathetic condition as a woman.

What agonies did I not suffer for preserving dharma? I had thought that on the strength of my adherence to dharma and fidelity as a wife I would be able to accompany my husbands to heaven. Yet, I had but touched the golden dust of Himalaya's foothills when my feet slipped and I fell! Five husbands – but not one turned back even to look. Rather, Dharmaraj Yudhishtir, lord of righteousness, said to Bhim, "Do not turn back to look! Come forward!" (Ray,3)

By hearing the above words during the last moments of her life she is shattered and heart-broken. She curses the false relations that human beings maintain on this Earth.

...how false is this bond between husband and wife! Affection, love, sacrifice and surrender! If man suffers the consequences of his own deeds, then offering myself at the feet of five husbands for the sake of preserving Yudhishtir's dharma, why did I have to bear the burden of the whole world's mockery, sneers, innuendos, abuse, scorn and slander ? (Ray,3)

Draupadi has been subjected to serious insults during her life time. She believes that no woman has ever suffered such abuses and insults on this earth like her. Woman is always the natural choice when the question of sacrifice arises in any society. It is true in the case of Devi Sita in the age of Ramayan and it is again the same thing for Draupadi in the *Dwapara Yuga*. These women in our scriptures and purans are the symbols of sacrifice of womanhood. Sita was apparently put to repeated tests and had to bear unimaginable humiliation only for the establishment of dharma. She ultimately surrendered herself to the lap of mother earth to escape all these earthly agonies. Draupadi like Devi Sita has taken birth to establish dharma and destroy the evil powers. Her birth, like Devi Sita, is not any ordinary birth. She is born from the sacrificial fire of *Yajna*. Nobody ever thinks about the simple wishes, desires and affection that the ordinary woman within Draupadi wants to do. She is completely unknown to all these grand designs of her birth. It is her *Sakha* Lord Krishna who reminds her the grand plan of God for the protection of dharma on the earth. *...You were born to destroy your father's enemies. Not only your father's enemies but the world's evil-doers too.* (Ray, 24)

Draupadi, daughter of King Drupad, has compromised throughout her life for the sake of her father's honour and general good of the world. She is wise and well versed in all arts and she knows her duties and rights as a woman. In every phase of her life she has to give up her much-loved things of her life. Draupadi takes birth 'like a blue lotus-colored gem' from the sacrificial alter to avenge her father's insults and preserve dharma. Her father offers her hands to lord Krishna and Draupadi is thrilled by this. But Krishna suggests that Arjun, the third pandav, is the right person for Draupadi to marry and asks King Drupad to arrange a *Svayamvaraa*. Drupad is very happy by hearing this as Arjun was the person who imprisoned him as his guru Dronacharya wished this as *guru-dakshina* for his teaching. This was a great insult for Drupad. He can now easily fulfill his plan of revenge on Dronacharya by getting Arjun as his son-

in-law. But nobody bothers about Draupadi's desires.

Did I have no wish of my own? No desire? No carving? Simply because I was 'Yagnaseni'-born of the sacrificial fire? My birth, life and death-all were directed by someone else. Why had I come and why should I remain alive? Why should I die? What was their intention? I knew nothing. (Ray, 24)

The inner turmoil of Draupadi is not an example of an individual but it presents the problem of whole woman society. Thus she questions: *Should only woman be forced to be the medium for preserving dharma and annihilating evil throughout the ages? Is it woman who is the cause of creation and destruction?*. (8, Ray) Draupadi has no rights to take her own decisions but obey as an obedient daughter. She knows that she has to fulfill her father's wishes and her father will do whatever Lord Krishna directs him to do. Therefore she feels it as her *duty to honour Father's wishes. Leaving dharma aside, what meaning my life hold?*. (27, Ray) She feels herself quite insignificant in these lofty ideals of dharma. In spite of being a scholarly lady she can never fulfill her own desires and enjoy her life. She feels like a small child. *As an ignorant infant I should play with whatever toy my master placed in my hand, be happy, and go on living. Who am I to ask who would be my toy and why?*. (Ray, 24) Yajnaseni has been reminded time and again by her father that her life's goal is to preserve dharma and destruction of the Kauravs. *Yajnaseni! it is you who will avenge your father's insult.* (Ray, 8)

Finally Drupad decides to arrange the *Svayamvaraa* in Panchal. There is a mood of festivities in Panchal. The whole kingdom is decorated and many guests are arriving to take part in this. It is clear that the unique condition of the *Svayamvaraa* to win Draupadi's hand is too difficult for anybody to achieve except Arjun. Draupadi is sure that 'Krishna-sakha' Arjun's mastery in archery can do this. She is very happy. Draupadi expresses her readiness and waits anxiously for that auspicious day to marry Arjun but she is shocked by hearing the death news of the five

Pandavs. Dhruvadyumna, her brother, informs that the five pandavs along with their mother Kunti have died inside the burning house of lac. This news is a bolt from the blue for Draupadi. She is very much distressed for this twist of her life.

First I was offered to Krishna. Krishna did not accept me and ordained that I was for his *Sakha*, Arjun. I did not feel any hesitation, for Arjun had been born of a portion of Krishna himself. In Arjun's body it was Krishna who was the life and soul. I had not surrendered myself to Arjun's body. It was before his character, his soul that I had offered myself. In other words, it was to Krishna that I had surrendered myself in a different way. I had thought that in getting Arjun I would find Krishna. But If someone other than Arjun succeeded in the test due to Father's relaxations, how could I taint my soul by wedding that person? (Ray, 33)

Draupadi wishes to stop the *Svayamvaraa* but Dhruvadyumna reminds the danger that may befall on Panchal if it is stopped. According to him this may insult the invited guests and they may attack Panchal for this dishonor. Therefore Draupadi prepares herself to accept a perpetual stern ascetic life of a virgin as it is not possible for any king or prince to fulfill the condition of the *Svayamvaraa* except Arjun. The *Svayamvaraa* day arrives and on that eventful day one after another suitors fail in hitting the target. Though Karna, the son of a charioteer Adhirath and Radha, lifts the bow and arrow to hit the target, he is suddenly stopped by Dhruvadyumna as he is not of high-born. Because of this Karna feels insulted and decides to take revenge for this insult. When all have failed, a Brahmin youth asks permission to try his luck. Initially there is some objection but the priests and wise men present there give their permission. He succeeds in hitting the target and wins Draupadi. But Draupadi expresses her inability to marry this Brahmin as she has already given her heart to Arjun. Here Dhruvadyumna reminds her about the preservation of dharma and the reason of her birth. Draupadi finally agrees thinking *the father's dharma is the daughter's dharma.* (Ray, 46) This young Brahmin along with his four brothers takes her to their

hut. At that time their mother is inside the hut and the elder brother announces: *Mother, today we have brought a priceless thing.* So the mother from inside orders: *My sons, whatever you have brought divide it amongst the five of you equally !* This answer of the mother creates a big problem for all. According to dharma whatever mother says must be obeyed but a woman can not marry to five men. But surprisingly it is finally decided that Yajnaseni will be the wife of all five Brahmins. Nobody bothers about the wish of Yajnaseni. She apprehends that she will be condemned for this decision in the coming ages. People will consider her as a 'despicable and stained character'. Nobody tries to understand the mental condition of Draupadi after this decision. The only consolation for Yajnaseni is that the five Brahmins are actually five Pandavs who are now living in the forest with their mother Kunti after the incident of burning of the house of lac. She is happy by becoming the queen of these five great warriors.

Looking at the dilemma of Yajnaseni we realize the eternal subjugation of woman in a patriarch society in all ages. She is never asked to express her views regarding a decision that is taken involving her. It was true for the women during the Ramayan and the Mahabharat ages. And it is also true if we look at the plight of the women in many parts of the world, especially in Indian society. It includes women who are highly educated and economically independent. Yajnaseni's character in the Mahabharat reminds us the cases of many helpless women who have no option but to adhere to the dictates of the society. Moral lessons are injected into the blood of a woman so that she is compelled to obey the rules of the society. There is always a discrimination between a male and a female in the society while bestowing powers on them. Male children always get preferential benefits as compared to the females. A woman is often taught to learn how to behave surrender and sacrifice for a larger interest. That is clearly reflected through the character of Yajnaseni. She is used as a catalyst by the divine power, Lord Krishna as its agent, to wipe out all the wicked Kshatriyas.

After the marriage with five Pandavs, Yajnaseni returns to Hastinapur and Pandavs get a separate part *Indraprasta* to rule. Though Yajnaseni is happy with the change of fortune by becoming the queen of *Indraprasta*, she has to live a life with five husbands which is quite unimaginable for a woman. She has to lead a balanced life with all impartiality according to dharma. In spite of her marriage with five pandavs Yajnaseni is more attracted towards Arjun. She pours out her emotions as an ordinary woman who always seeks love and affection from her husband. But Arjun is not reciprocating the same feeling towards Yajnaseni. First Yajnaseni is forced to marry five mendicant brahmins and now she has been shared by five pandavs. Finally it is decided that pandavs will get Yajnaseni as their wife for one year each in rolling basis starting from elder Yudhishtir. It seems that nobody considers Yajnaseni a human being while taking this decision. She is treated like a commodity who is equally divided into five parts. Even learned man like Vyasadev, Krishna, Kunti and Yudhishtir do not find it anything wrong. Each of them very cleverly justifies this as dharma. Thus Yajnaseni is the very epitome of sacrifice and she is forced to adjust inspite of undergoing severe psychological trauma. She cannot protest for anything as it may break the unity among the pandavs. Moreover Yajnaseni is expected to live with one pandav as a wife for a year and act as a sister or like a mother with other pandavs. This role change is really painful and shameful for Yajnaseni. Besides this she has to adjust to each pandav's interest and nature. Nobody cares to understand Yajnaseni, even not Arjun.

In a male dominated society a female is not only a victim of her own family members but she is also targeted by outsiders. This happens in the case of Yajnaseni. Karna, who does not know his real parents, has abused, humiliated and insulted Draupadi as if she is responsible for his insults in the *Svayamvara*. It is well known that the conditions laid down to win Draupadi's hands are beyond her wish. These are stipulated by her father. She has also been targeted by Duryodhan and his brothers who have always abused her in different occasions with lustful eyes and offensive

languages. She is even blamed by Arjun for her polyandrous marriage. One day Arjun suddenly enters into the private room of Yudhishtir and Yajnaseni to bring his bow and arrows. Though it is not deliberate, it has broken the condition of marriage. Therefore he goes on exile into the forest as punishment. This exile of Arjun is more to torment Yajnaseni than to observe dharma. He deliberately wants to give pain to her by staying away from her as he knows that she loves him more than any other pandavs. This is a typical male attitude that we even observe in our present society. Arjun also marries several princesses like Ulupi, Arya, Chitrangada and Subhadra but nobody blames him for his marriage to more than one woman. Similarly, Krishna, who is considered as the best in the whole Aryabrata, marries thousands of women. But none blames Krishna as he is a male. It is also true that these marriages of Arjun and Krishna have political reasons. It has only strengthened their side for the future Kurushkhetra battle. Ironically Krishna is considered as a savior and Arjun a great man for these deeds. Where as Draupadi faces social stigma for her marriage with five pandavs and is considered the root cause of the great battle.

Yajnaseni is always treated in an undignified manner. The most serious and turning point in Yajnaseni life is the incident in the Kuru Sabha where a dice game is arranged. Duryadhan cannot tolerate the prosperity of Yudhishtir. He knows that Yudhishtir is very fond of dice game and so he invites Yudhishtir to play dice game at Hastinapur Sabha. In spite of Krishna's warning Yudhishtir accepts it. Yudhishtir loses everything – his property, brothers and even his wife Yajnaseni. Here it is clear that females are always considered as play things by their husbands in all ages. Yudhishtir never seeks her consent before losing her in the dice game. In Indian society a woman is always expected to obey her husband's decision and she has no role in taking any decision. Thus she asks the following questions to the society.

Was woman merely man's movable or immovable property? Was I part of Yudhishtir's movable or immovable property, male and female slaves, horses

and elephants? Being a woman did I not have right even over myself, my own self? If they had rights over his body of mine, did it mean they could do as they wished with me? (Ray,235)

Yudhishtir loses everything – his four brothers, wealth, state, power and even queen Yajnaseni. Now Duryadhana orders Yajnaseni to come to the assembly hall and Duhshashan goes to bring her. Actually Yajnaseni is menstruating those days and she is staying in a private mansion in Hastinapur. A woman should not be seen by any males during her menstrual periods but Duhshasan, without obeying those rules, goes into the private room of Yajnaseni. Duhshasan uses very abusive languages which is very much painful for Yajnaseni. She runs in all directions to escape from the lustful arms of Duhshasan but everyone's apartment is closed. Finally Duhshasan overpowers her and brings her by dragging. Yajnaseni narrates this physically assault on her in the following words :

Duhshasan put out his powerful hairy hand and catching hold of my long thick curly hair pulled hard. Helpless, I lost my balance. As the wild buffalo drags some broken creeper along, similarly Duhshasan dragged me to the assembly-hall. With great difficulty I tried to cover my breasts with my single garment. The end of it had slipped off my head. Face, neck, arms were all bare. The hair in disarray. Out of Kindness they had covered my bare back from the sight of spectators. Like a creeper trembling in a storm, I was shivering with fear and shame. (Ray, 235-236)

Yajnaseni, the queen of five pandavs, pleads for mercy: *Let me remain alone in private. I am single-garmented, menstruating.....*(Ray,237) Nobody in the assembly hall stops Duhshasan's barbaric act. All the elders – guru Drona, Kripacharya, grandfather Bhisma, Dhruatastra, are silent. Karna's remarks are very insulting for Yajnaseni. He calls Yajnaseni character less. He justifies this kind of treatment of Duhshasan by questioning her chastity. He says: *Even the gods have prescribed one husband for a woman. But by accepting five husbands she has discarded her modesty, shame and womanhood. Moreover, she has*

profound intimacy with her husband's bosom Sakha, Govind! (Ray, 240). Karna asks Duhshasan to strip her in the assembly hall. Yajnaseni cries for help but the pandavs can not do anything as they are slaves to Duryadhan. Duhshasan begins pulling Yajnaseni's garment. It is the most horrifying and shameful act in the whole human society when a helpless woman is being stripped and valiant males are looking at the sorry figure with lust. All the supporters of Duryadhan are watching this drama. It is very strange that people like Bhishma, Dronacharya, Bidur, Krupacharya and Dhritarastra can not stop it. Yajnaseni warns with rage and shame that *such outrage of womanhood will never be wiped out in history (Ray, 242).* Yajnaseni, at the end, prays lord Krishna for help. Meanwhile Duhshasan pulls her cloth with more and more force. Suddenly Yajnaseni sees the sudharshan discus spinning in Krishna's hand and layer after layer of cloth comes out from it which covers her body. At last Duhshasan is tired and leaves Yajnaseni. Even after this Duryodhan makes obscene gestures by uncovering his thing and slapping it.

Yajnaseni is a victim of both physical and mental torture in her life. This incident has changed the path of history. She takes a vow that her remaining days will be spent to fight against injustice, adharma and sin. Declaring a woman both a creator as well as a destroyer, she declares that she will tie up her hair only after washing her hair in Duhshasan's blood. The pandavs resolve to take revenge on the Kauravs. Finally they kill all the kauravs in the war of Kurukhestra including Karna, Bhishma, Drona and many other warriors. Dharma is established. But Yajnaseni has to pay a big price for this. But many blame Yajnaseni for all the death and destruction of the battle of Mahabharat forgetting the main reason behind this. When we analyse the reasons of this battle we realize that the root of Mahabharat battle lies somewhere beyond Yajnaseni's insult. After her 'supreme insult' in Kaurav's assembly hall Yajnaseni becomes a stoic. She feels that *...the greatest outrage in my life has already occurred. Now all the sorrow and want that will come will be minor ones (Ray, 248).* When Harita,

wife of Drona, requests Yajnaseni to forgive her husband, Yajnaseni says :

... sakhi, who am I to forgive guru Drona ? I am just woman. In the eyes of scholars and wise men a woman has no status of her own. Honour and insult, character, nobility etc. — nothing is hers. This has been proved by my insult in the Kuru court. (Ray, 258-259)

These feelings of Yajnaseni truly reflect the position of a woman in a society. Calling a woman '*amrita-full, nourisher, Annapoorna*' she reiterates the sacrifice of a woman for the welfare of others in the society. Though woman is humiliated time and again she never forgets her role in the society. This is observed in many families in our country. They are submissive, sacrificing and caring in nature. Even though they themselves don't get the luxuries of life, they always think about their family members. Here in this novel, we observe the same feeling in Yajnaseni who is worried about her five children and Abhimanyu who are left with Subhadra during her twelve years of exile into the forest with the five pandavs after the fateful day of her life. Similarly Yajnaseni never hesitates to serve food to anybody during this exile period with the help of the *Akshaya* vessel even though she remains hungry till the end of the day.

Besides these noble thoughts, Yajnaseni's story also raises a few pertinent issues which will be very important for the future. After the outrage of her modesty by the Kauravs, she urges her *Sakha* Krishna for exemplary punishment for these people. She apprehends that if such steps are not taken:

then the history of Bharat will be filled with shameful accounts of atrocities against woman.....if the Duhshasans and Duryadhans do not receive the fruits of their sins, then in future the fate of woman is shrouded in the darkest gloom....In the future this problem would remain unresolved for women. (Ray, 251)

Yajnaseni, like chaste Sita, could have disappeared into the depths of the earth to hide her shame, but she does not do like that. Pratibha Ray's Yajnaseni advocates that the wicked persons

responsible for her supreme insult must be punished. Though she is herself a symbol of tolerance, she urges every woman not to tolerate injustice with bowed head. Therefore she says *if the husband adopts the wrong path and wife remains quiet, then everyone will suffer. The portion of sin in the world will increase. Innocent people will suffer the consequences of that sin.* (Ray, 251). Besides Yajnaseni there are other women characters mentioned in the novel like Amba, Ambika, Ambalika, Kunti, Madri, Gandhari, Subhadra and Satyabati whose stories also raise several gender issues which are relevant for the present day society. They have endured insult and mental dilemma like Yajnaseni in their life. For example Parasar Rishi raped Satyabati but it is Satyabati who has to endure scorn and mockery of the society for her past. Similarly Ambika and Ambalika have been forced to beget children by another man other than their husband. Satyabati justifies and calls this dharma to preserve the dynasty Kunti also bows to her husband's command to give birth sons by various gods and she was ridiculed by many for this act throughout her life.

Conclusion:

According to Rajeswari Sundar Raja, Ray's Yajnaseni is a feminist as *she questions what happens to her, tragic in that she is doomed to confusion, solitude and ineffectual protest. She is claimed across historical distance but then surrendered to history.* (155) The gender issues raised in this novel through the character of Yajnaseni are quite pertinent to the 21st century globalised society as these issues are quite related to the problems that the women face

in our society. In the name of culture and tradition women in different parts of the world are subjugated to many inhuman acts. They don't get any support from the society as it is treated natural for a woman to endure suffering and injustice. Ironically we silently witness injustice and gender discrimination in the 21st century though we belong to a modern society. Women are victimized in the name of religion, politics and social rules. Yajnaseni has been deprived of many pleasures in her life in spite of her royal status and she is considered as a social stigma for her polyandrous marriage. Yajnaseni's story is not restricted to a particular age but it is found in every age. During her last moments she does not wish either *moksha* or going to *Swarga* but rebirth in the coming ages. Thus we see similar outrage of modesty of Yajnasenis in the contemporary society but there are no Lord Krishna's to protect them. They are tortured both inside and outside their home. In a male dominated society only a few raise their voice against these insults and assaults on woman.

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Discovering Bharat through Poetry: Tagore, Naidu and Yogananda

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Abstract:

The Sanskrit word: ' Bharat' is composed of two morphemes: 'Bha' and 'Rata'. Bha means 'talent' Rata means 'engagement' or involvement . Thus the word connotes the search for the talents – the talented persons who can make the country glorious and the world a beautiful place to live in . On this planet earth it is the Indians who are more preoccupied with the notion of spirit than their western counterparts. The distinguished Indians are explorers in the realm of spirituality. The westerners are materialists – here lies the superiority of Indians over their western counterparts. It is the enlightened Indians who can see to the heart of things . It is they who can perceive 'a motion and a spirit' that impels through all things. In this paper the poetry of three enlightened persons are analyzed in order to paint the picture of India – a picture so glorious that the readers of poetry will develop passion for the Mother India. Of the three poets chosen for discussion Tagore is a mystic; Yogananda is a seer and Sarojini is the Nightingale of the India. Tagore is a versatile genius; Yoganand's adventures within the consciousness is commendable; Sarojini's study of Indian myths and dexterity in using musical diction are praiseworthy. This paper will highlight issues in context of India which are multidimensional: internationalism ,universal brotherhood , the blood of the martyrs, the sacred ink of the scholars, the glorification of the mother and the mother land and above all the quest for 'shanti'(the experience of peace that is

beyond understanding).

Keywords: *Consciousness, Spirituality, Enlightenment, Peace, Internationalism*

Bharat that is India, the motherland of many an enlightened being , has arrested the attention of the foreigners over the centuries . The reasons are as clear as crystal. Sarojini Naidu holds that it contains 'priceless treasures'. Tagore views that in such a country the minds of the citizens will be so broad that they will enjoy heavenly bliss and freedom from dogmatism, selfishness, meanness and superstitions. Yogananda Paramhansa grows lyrical when he expresses his profound love for India, the country of his birth. All the three personalities who love India passionately agree on a point that India shall be the *Guru*(the teacher) of the world . The perceptions of these three great Indians correspond to the views of Raja Rao:

India is not a country, it is a perspective; it is not a climate but a mood in the play of the Absolute- it is not the Indian who makes India but "India" makes the Indian, and this India is in all. Their poetry on India is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions –the feelings of love, gratitude and reverence for the motherland. (17-18)

Just to discover *Bharat* three poems are chosen: *Where The Mind Is Without Fear* by Rabindra Nath Tagore, *My India* by Swami Yogananda and *The Gift of India* by Sarojini Naidu. *Where The Mind Is Without Fear* is a patriotic lyric incorporated into

Geetanjali, Tagore's masterpiece. In this lyric Tagore sheds light upon the India of his dreams. He says in such a country knowledge should be free from bias, untruth and fanaticism. He disapproves of boundaries erected by humans on the ground of caste, religion, creed, regionalism and so on. He holds that the humans should strive for perfection in thoughts and deeds. He is of the opinion that 'reason' is just like a clear stream. The stream flows, so does the rational thinking. He is dead against superstitions, dogmas and outdated practices. He is a theist having strong faith in the powers of the God. He is of the opinion that it is God who can expand the thinking horizon of the humans. He deeply regrets that Indians under the British rule became timid and they lost the dynamism of life. Hence he prays to God to awaken the country men from this slumber of Ignorance and laziness. The entire lyric is characterized by the feelings of love, the spirit of enquiry and dispassionate attitude towards life, world and man-made canons. The whole poem is a celebration – the celebration of freedom, courage, progressive thinking and castigation of what destroys the smooth flow of life. Tagore emerges as a visionary, a rationalist, a mystic, a perfectionist and what not. His prayer to the Lord of the universe to make India a glorious nation is felt in between the lines. The poet uses metaphors like 'stream', 'walls', 'desert' which are quite suggestive and evocative in the context. The whole poem is a complex sentence in which he uses 'where' seven times. 'Where' has a reference to India.

In the lyric *My India* Swami Yogananda waxes eloquent on the glory of India. Like Tagore he reacts against man's 'fancy frozen boundaries'. In a word, he reacts against the nefarious designs of the power-drunk politicians to create separate states in the name of religion or region or language. He holds India as the mother of all religions and sages. The sages are the people who are in quest of timeless existence, undiluted truth and enlightenment. It is the seers who attach little importance to material splendour or sensual delight. It is they who realize harmony in existence. The words that Matthew Arnold uses in context of culture: 'sweetness' and 'light' are experienced by

these Indian seers. Yogananda gets enchanted by the scenic beauty of India where the Ganges flows, the sages meditate at the foot of the Himalayas and the average Indians dream of God, the governor of the universe. What is so striking in the poem *My India* is the poet's perception of India being the *Guru* (the teacher or the leader) of the world. Yogananda pictures India not as a piece of land but as an idea. India stands for expansiveness, spiritual powers, a decent culture and above all a way of life that is marked by supra-sensorial perceptions; the beauty and bounty of nature beggars description. Thus Yogananda's voices and visions correspond to those of Tagore.

Sarojini Naidu's poem *The Gift Of India* embodies ideas which are similar to those of Tagore and Yogananda. She is also an apostle of truth, peace and non-violence. Her poem has a reference to the struggle for freedom. She glorifies the martyrs. The poem breathes the air of patriotism. She reveals her own feelings of grief, despair and anguish. The source of her agony is the subjugation of her countrymen. She views that India contains priceless treasures. This expression is subject to multiple interpretation. India has lured the foreigners for her natural and mineral resources. The foreigners came and left the country leaving Indians to rule over their land. The story of India's Independence is the story of tears, toil, blood and sweat. Hence Naidu the freedom fighter pays homage to those brave Indians who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their mother land.

If we compare the poetry of Tagore, Naidu and Yogananda we would view that all the three are patriots. Tagore's dream of India corresponds to that of Yogananda and Naidu. Tagore dreams of India where there will be peace and bliss, reign of reason and sounding death knell to dogmatic beliefs, superstitious practices, narrow vision of the world and so on. Yogananda is a spiritual master. His vision of India is glorious and love for it is profound. Hence in the opening line of the lyric he holds:

*Better than Heaven or Arcadia
I love thee, O my India!*

Yogananda loves India more than heaven , the place of liberation . Tagore uses this word ‘heaven’ in a different context :

*Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake.*

Tagore prays to God to improve the situations prevailing in India under British rule so that Indians will have the taste of freedom and bliss . Thus Yogananda accepts India despite the British rule and holds that it better than heaven or Arcadia but Tagore prays to the Almighty to convert it to heaven . Thus one point is clear -Yogananda looks at India as the spirit of the universe . It is India which can be the beckon light of freedom and hope but Tagore looks at India from the standpoint of politics . Thus Yogananda is a greater spiritual master or mystic than Tagore . Both Tagore and Yogananda advocate internationalism and world community but the language they use differs. Tagore visualizes a place:

*Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;*

Thus Tagore uses the metaphor ‘walls’ just to describe regionalism, provincialism, nationalism and religious fanaticism. He uses the ‘epithet narrow’ just to depict the nefarious designs of the politicians who have lust for power . Thus Tagore is concerned with politics and society – society that is torn by ‘isms’, dogmatic beliefs and superstitious practices. Yogananda on the other hand visualizes India as the manifestation of world’s culture and outlook. He writes :

*I behold the borderland of
My India Expanding into the World.*

Yogananda visualizes the expansion of borderland of India . Such kind of expansion is not the territorial expansion of the country but the impact of Indian scriptures upon the mind of the people of the world . Yogananda has firm faith in Indian philosophy , religion , value system and so on . In this context we do remember a popular proverb that ‘one can take an Indian out of India, but one cannot take India out of an Indian’. It is so because India is not merely a nation

with a specific location on the map of the globe but an emotion mapped on to one’s cognitive and perceptive self. This perception is the secret to the realization of the glory of Bharat that is India.

Sarojini Naidu , the Nightingale of India , instinctively shares the perceptions of Yogananda and Tagore. In her lyric ‘I’ is the spirit of India . India voices her feelings :

*Lo ! I have flung to the East and the West
Priceless treasures torn from my breast,
And yielded the sons of my stricken womb
To the drum-beats of the duty, the sabers of
doom.*

The ‘price less treasures’ refers to the wisdom that Indian scriptures or religious texts embody . It has also a reference to the treasures under the earth : natural and mineral resources . Naidu laments that the Indians under British rule have invited the doom . They have lost their valour to make themselves independent.

In our analysis on the patriotic songs of the three poets: Tagore , Yogananda and Naidu it becomes clear that all of them glorify India – the seat of ancient culture and religion . Two of them: Tagore and Naidu intend to awaken the Indians from the slumber of ignorance , inertia and false notions . Here they correspond to ideology enunciated by All India Chinmaya Yuva Kendra . In the foreword to *Awakening Indians to India* Brah Govind Chaitanya writes :

*To awaken our men and women is the first
step towards progress . We must realize that
we as Indians are not deprived of
intelligence or glory of the country. Simply
we are not aware of our greatness which is
the cause of all troubles. Progress comes
from confidence which is rooted in the pride
born out of knowledge. Gurudev Swami
Chinmayananda made us realize this fact.*

In the above passage B.G. Chaitanya discovers the roots of progress. In order to be a progressive country the leaders of the nation should awaken the

citizens . Awakening means opening out one's eyes and mind to a realm of greater, that is, transcendental reality . The awakening to the grandeur of mother India is to awaken the Indians to its greatness . Hence both Tagore and Naidu have tried to awaken the Indians to their dreams – the dreams of a prosperous India . They are deeply concerned with socio-political and cultural aspects of Indian's life . But Yogananda's case is a bit different . He is out and out a seeker – the seeker of spiritual wealth. He is an enlightened being because of his spiritual advancement . Here his views that his poetry on India embodies correspond to those of Swami Chinmayananda :

The world has made a pilgrimage to this country . Even on the International Platform India has its place because of our hoary spiritual wealth. Rediscover this inheritance and evolve yourself. Do not imitate others . You must have your self-respect . If we have an army of men and women who know what culture and philosophy are – who have started living it and have come to the determined attitude that whatever – even if the worst should happen – 'We shall not budge from these convictions'-then overnight we shall find a change over in our situation.

Yogananda is primarily a seer, then a poet . Hence his is a kind of poetry that is spiritual but Sarojini

Naidu and Tagore are more concerned with socio-political and cultural aspects of Indian civilization . Hence in their poetry we do observe India's glorious cultural heritage and also its decadence during the period of foreign rule . But Yogananda doesn't picture the decadence of Indian civilization or culture in the way the other two poets do.

To conclude , the poets are unacknowledged legislators or leaders of the world . Tagore , Naidu and Yogananda are patriots from the core of their hearts . They love India passionately . Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of their patriotic feelings . All of them have made adventures in the realm of spirituality. The distinction between the three poets is clear . Naidu is preoccupied with the thoughts of India's freedom . Tagore is a superb artist ; in his poetry he raises the problems that Indians face, in an artistic way . Yogananda has churned the teachings of *the Vedas* ,and *the Upanisads* and has come out with the conviction that it is India which can impart lessons to the west.

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Gothic Resonance in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

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Abstract:

*Gothic fiction, sometimes referred to as gothic horror is the genre of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance. Gothic narratives often explore notions of fractured identities and a sense of dislocation, typically subverting the accepted social order where often the an enhancement of a dual identity is played against the sinister manifestations of the performances. The paper tries to explore the relation between Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to the gothic elements of literature which hovers throughout the text despite of its being purely science-fiction.*

Key Words: Victorian, Gothic, Double, Deformity, Duality.

The Victorian era was a period marked by immense progress and tremendous achievement. Industry was booming, the economy was flourishing and gradually society was changing. With the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, the whole belief-system of the people changed and a conflict between science and religion started. This evolutionary theory rewrote history and challenged their concepts of religion, morality and social status. This eventually affected the literatures of the times and several new genres began to emerge. Owing to the development of

science, the art of fiction distinguished itself by the rise of science-fiction. But this emergence of science-fiction did not do away with the romantic or fantastic genres. One of the important genres of the fantastic is the 'gothic'. Gothic fiction, sometimes referred to as gothic horror is the genre of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance. Gothic narratives often explore notions of fractured identities and a sense of dislocation, but rising capitalism and the abstraction of wealth from physical property were amongst the biggest anxieties of the time, turning tangible insecurity. Gothic narratives typically subvert and complicate the conventional perceptions of the 'social order' by problematizing the supposedly clear distinction between the 'proper' respectable self and its anti-thesis. In this paper, I would try to relate Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to the gothic elements of literature which hovers throughout the text despite of its being purely science-fiction.

Originally written as a fable of Victorian anxieties, Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has been distorted into a myth of good-evil antithesis, a simplistic dichotomy rather than an imaginative exploration of social and moral dualism. Stevenson builds his story on elements of suspense that imply a shocking, deadly outcome. Through a perversion of science, Dr. Henry Jekyll, a variation on the mad scientist stereotype, concocts a chemical salt to free the bestial elements of his personality. Jekyll represents

the curious man of science, his double and foil Mr. Edward Hyde, whose name implies the act of hiding and the hide that covers a beast, acts out the primitive, murderous, stalking urges of the monster. After a series of experiments on himself, the seriously fragmented Dr. Henry Jekyll speaks of himself both as “I” and as “Jekyll”. His descent into evil appears to have wrenched his original self from its psychological moorings and turned him at intervals into a brute. In a gothic text, the appearance of the doppelganger possesses great significance because of its cultural codifications of being an alter-ego or antithetical character to the literary protagonist- an evil twin, so to speak. Though, the ‘twin-effect’ of the doppelganger suggests physical features identical to that of the self, this is not always the case in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, where Jekyll in the misguided dream of splitting the self into its good and evil halves to remove evil nature of humans, creates Hyde-Jekyll doppelganger in personality, though physically contrary in appearance, where Jekyll is “a large, well-made, smooth-faced man... with every mark capacity and kindness...” (26, *Stevenson*), Hyde is “pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation; he had a displeasing smile...” (23, *Stevenson*) Translated from its original German ‘Doppelganger’ literally means ‘double’ (Doppel) and ‘walker’ (ganger). In the literary vernacular, it has come to refer to the double of a person, usually in relation to great evil. As a spiritual or ghostly counterpart of a living person, the doppelganger is a shadow of the self that accompanies every human. Hyde is Jekyll’s ‘shadow’, a personification of the repressed evil nature that all human possess, but Stevenson seems to deal with this aspect overtly through the characters of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The evil deeds committed by Mr. Hyde arouse a great amount of terror among the readers as well as the characters within. Hyde’s trampling of a small girl leaving her screaming symbolizes the extent

of cruelty in Mr. Hyde. Violence is an aspect of gothic literature which has a very obvious presence in the novel in Mr. Hyde’s activities. The murder of Sir Danver Carew’s and its description suggests a sense of terror, as stated below:

Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds, and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment,

With an ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot, and hailing down a

Storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped

Upon the roadway....(30, *Stevenson*)

This description of the murder by Hyde suggests the utter evil and cruelty inherent in him, the way he killed Danver Carew is suggestive of an anger which has found an outlet with much force. With this comes the sense of criminality prevalent in the Victorian era. Stevenson’s commentary on the violence and the materialistic dwellings of the people of the age finds a proper voice here.

Besides these cruelties of Mr. Hyde, the very sight of Hyde’s countenance and body structure repels the onlooker to a great extent. Mr. Hyde as being a part of Dr. Jekyll is physically formed just as a part only. As Mr. Enfield described Utterson what sort of a man Hyde is:

He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance, something displeasing; something downright detestable... He must be deformed somewhere, he gives a strong feeling of deformity...(15, *Stevenson*)

Deformity, again, is another characteristic of a gothic novel. The society that is so secretive, where Hyde embodies that secrecy, highlights how the gothic aims to uncover the disguise for deformity or disgracefulness in society. Through deformity, the gothic novel interrogate society and its failure to recognize its

inherent shortcomings, as can be seen by how the monster and Hyde are foils for many other characters in their respective novels, so as to bring about a greater level of self-reflexivity in a world where all negative aspects are projected into the “other”. The horror of transformation from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde unnerves the readers. In the last chapter of the novel ‘Henry Jekyll’s Full-Statement of the Case’, Jekyll’s narration of all what has happened to him and what he feels while transforming into Mr. Hyde. As soon as he drank the potion, “[t]he most racking pangs succeeded, a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and the horror...of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death...”(72, *Stevenson*) .Moreover, Hyde’s ape-like structure and deformity is best described in Dr. Jekyll’s comparison of the hands of himself and Mr. Hyde, “... the hands of Henry Jekyll is professional in shape and size, it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough...was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, and thickly shaped with a swart growth of hair...”(77, *Stevenson*). Hyde’s physical deformity reflects his moral deformity.

As an enhancement of character duality, Stevenson places his protagonist in an aggressively sinister gothic setting at a home laboratory and former dissecting theatre protected from prying eyes by a foggy cupola, closed windows, heavy doors and a courtyard, staying apart from the handsome respectable home of Dr. Jekyll, the troglodytic Hyde resides to the rear of the block in a windowless residence behind a discoloured wall lacking bell and knocker, a suitable dwelling for a man with evocative name of Hyde. The scientist acquires a flat for Hyde in Soho. The area is known for lowlife, pubs, cabarets, cheap catteries and brothels “with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers...like a district of some city in a nightmare” (22-23, *Stevenson*).

The establishment of the boundary between the self and the other is important in gothic fiction. Boundaries create distinction, but they are also

repressive in nature. Society lays down certain norms that individuals cannot transgress or risk being termed the ‘other’. People attempting to stay within these boundaries naturally have to repress ant desires that may transgress there socially placed boundaries. It can be argued that Dr. Jekyll’s creation of Mr. Hyde is an attempt to remain respectable at all times, as defined by the societal boundaries. But, boundaries can be blurred as we see in this text, Jekyll goes to bed as himself and wakes up as Hyde suggests that not only are boundaries problematic, it can also be easily blurred. Entrapment, again, can be termed as a gothic necessity; it may be physical or psychological entrapment. It can be more generally attributed to a character’s sense of helplessness, or a feeling that one is caught up in some sinister plan or destiny over which one has no control as Dr. Jekyll falls in the trap of Mr. Hyde and could not get over it leading to another gothic feature of death, infact, unnatural death as of suicide, in case of Dr. Jekyll. In fact, Dr. Jekyll’s name itself suggest self-killing as in French, Jekyll literally means ‘Je’ - ‘I’ and ‘Kyl’ - ‘Kill’. Apart from these, Hyde’s activities only during the night with dreary weather covered with fog, dreams of Utterson and also the letters are parts of gothic fiction which as a whole contributes to the gothic resonance of the novel.

Stevenson’s gothic crime story, reaches its climax when the over-confident Jekyll realizes that he has no control over Hyde, who emerges uncensored in Regents Park. Hyde drubs an old man to death and harms a child who is selling matches; the later act is a symbol of darkness in the soul that costs Jekyll his life and reputation. Critics have formulated psychological interpretation of the duality as a study of Victorian principles- the individual’s outward respectability and the hidden chaos and violence within. However, lastly, we see that, Stevenson ends his novel with the mystery being unresolved with the death of Dr. Jekyll as well as of course Mr. Hyde, before Utterson and Poole could reach the laboratory. It maintains the mysticism

of the gothic in the story as it literally remains a mystery and also socially as Stevenson does not seem to provide any solution to the problems of good-evil and self-other dichotomy which he has raised in the novel and leaves it in the hands of the readers to interpret and find one's own solution to it.

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Comicality of Being Comic : Portrayal of Third Gender in Select Bollywood Movies

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Abstract:

Over the last few years, Hindi movie panorama has changed quite a lot. Hindi films' subject matter and treatment have constantly evolved, reflecting changes in social and political concerns. With an increasing attempts to share the global stage and in a bid to create an identity and establish itself as a tool of social reform Bollywood have started experimenting with new concepts and showcasing the trends of contemporary society. Hindi films play a crucial role in conveying such issues of the society which otherwise would have never come to the notice of people. Such an issue is the issue of third gender. Sexual minorities are slowly finding space in Bollywood themes. Sexual orientation is a gamut that varies in degree, diversity and intensity. Sexual orientation reflects the proclivity towards the same gender, other gender or both genders. While Bollywood is open enough to experiment varieties of themes, homosexuality is generally considered to be an off-limits subject by both film makers as well as Indian audience. This is a clear indication of the fact that now- a - days also people of third gender are not accepted unequivocally in the main stream of society. However in the last decade of the twentieth century lesbians, bisexuals and gay men have become more visible in the fabric of Bollywood movies. In recent years marginalized third gender who were once an object of mockery have started being more and more assertive- be it in social front

or celluloid screens. Though some films tried to break the taboo and perception about this third gender by portraying them in the movies but ultimately have ended up making a mockery of the sensitive issue. The mainstream Bollywood movies invariably show a travesty of homosexuals or LGBT characters and most surprisingly Indian audience too expect such characters to bring comic relief. But the alternate cinemas have given as much respect as the normal lead roles and portrayed them in an ethically correct manner. This paper basically compares the portrayal of sexual minorities in earlier Bollywood movies and current movies. This paper aims at exploring the nature of depiction of third gender issue in Indian Films and how our films have treated these characters over years.

Key words: Third Gender, Bollywood Movies, comical, sexual minorities, portrayal

Sexual orientation is a gamut that varies in degree, diversity and intensity. Sexual orientation reflects the proclivity towards the same gender, other gender or both genders. Third gender can be described as a category of people who neither fall under gender binarism straight way. However, a fifth letter is increasingly making its way into the line-up: Q. letter Q indicates those who ascertain themselves as queer. People use the term queer because it's not specific to sexual orientation or to gender identity but is more of an umbrella term that can encompass a lot of people recorded since 1996. Whether or not LGBT people openly admit their suppressed identity may be subject

to the environment they live whether it is an intimidating or an open one , as well as the status of LGBT rights where one lives. Before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, there was no common non defamatory vocabulary for non-heterosexuality; in 1860 though the word “third gender” entered into mainstream usage in the United States but never gained wide approval until 1950. The first widely used term, homosexual, was considered to be a pejorative term and eventually was replaced by the word homophile in the 1960s, and consequently gay in the 1970s. Further the phrase “gay and lesbian” became more widespread. Though they constitute a significant percentage of world population yet they are often ostracised and are deprived of social identity and rights of equality. According to a survey made by UCLA School, 3.8 percent Americans ascertain them as LGBT. The institute also found that bisexuals constitute 1.8 percent of population, 1.7 percent as gay or lesbian, transgendered adults form 0.35 of the population. In Britain 5 percent of populations identify themselves as gay. An estimate of LGBT community in India estimates around 2.5 million of which 7.5percent are HIV positive. (14 March 2012, BBC News India)

Problems faced by third gender

Though the Universal Declaration for Human Rights does not clearly include third gender in its declaration but it certainly states that everyone is approved to all the rights and freedoms laid down in this Declaration without otherness of any kind. Despite these encouraging realities, they are differentiated against in the labour market, in schools and in hospitals, maltreated and repudiated by their own families. They face myriad problems starting from receiving physical abuses to social alienations and most surprisingly in some 76 countries, across the globe, there many instances where an individuals’ sexual orientation or gender identity can lead them to face execution, imprisonment, torments, fierceness or discrimination. The range of exploitation is limitless and it breaches the fundamental doctrines of international human rights law. Further, in at least five countries, there is also death penalty for being that special creation of God

over which they have absolutely no control.

A place like India where sexual orientation is still a taboo subject people having sexual orientation other than heterosexuality like homosexuals, lesbians, gays, trans genders etc. are not at all approved by the society. So for fear of being treated as castaways they generally do not come out with their real identity. However, the impact of sexual revolution is felt in India. It is quite visible in Bollywood movies, as they have always tried to convey present-day issues of the society and have paved path for social reformation. Such an issue is the issue of third gender, which is now rapidly drawing response of the Bollywood Industry.

THIRD GENDER IN INDIAN FILMS

Bollywood in India has been working as the cultural storehouse of Indian society. From its inception it has been mirroring lives of the Indians at home and NRIs, staying in various foreign countries. While Bollywood is constantly striving hard to come up with challenging theme with the changing cultural setting of India, in matter of portrayal of third gender, Bollywood is still adopting the age old stereotypical mode as the portrayal of same sex is still considered to be a taboo subject in Indian context. In the last twenty years the frequency of visibility of third gender in movies is worth citing. While the film making on gay issue in West was observed century ago, India opens its account in the cinematic history in and around nineties with the release of the movie *Sadak in 1991*.

Sadak(1991)

Mahesh Bhatt’s directed movie *Sadak* came as a revolution in the portrayal of third gender, asin this movie the third gender is being brought to the centre from the periphery. Mahesh Bhatt deviates from the unrelenting trend of Hindi cinema. The usually masculine villain of Hindi cinema was changed into a villainous eunuch (‘Hijra’). The film came to the notice of the audience due to this unfamiliar and dramatic projection of the villain. The character of the villain as a eunuch is something which was quite shocking to the Indian audience. Maharani would do everything to keep the girls of her brothel under her control. She

would not spare anyone who opposed her trafficking empire. Be it her crude gestures, shaving while wearing a saree or her heavy bangles with which she threatened Sanjay Dutt, she was certainly scary. The depiction of the eunuch villain as cruel and anti-heterosexual is a way of vindicating the age-old satirical portrayal of the third sex. No doubt the character of Maharani as a eunuch and role of the villain together arouse a deep rooted abhorrence and annoyance towards the third sex but certainly a change was at the doorstep of Bollywood. For the first time people belonging to third gender community who have a shunned existence and were victims of Heterosexuals are projected as the leading role in the movie.

Bomgay (1996)

Bomgay is a 1996 Indian short film directed by Riyad Vinci Wadia and Jangu Sethna. The film stars Kushal Punjabi and Rahul Bose. This short film of 12 minutes is the first film known to focus on cloaked and twisted nature of the gay identity in urban India. This movie clearly depicts the struggle of the gay community to establish identity. The film was not released in India as the director of the film believed that it may not get certificate from Censor Board.

Fire (1996)

Deepa Mehta's third feature film, Fire, is a delicate, tender story about two women Sita and Radha who come together to fulfil their passions not out of choice but due to the lack of acknowledgement from their spouses while caught in the bounds of tradition, a joint family, a somewhat tyrannical mother-in-law with a bell and a bed in the central location of the house, and self-consumed husbands. Though Deepa Mehta's alien concept was quite shocking and appalling for the Indian audience, but for the first time a movie with lesbianism theme turned out to be thought provoking.

Tamanna (1997)

Hijras have been a regular part of the Hindi film canvas but in very few movies they are being treated with sensitivity. Tamanna is such a movie. In this movie Mahesh Bhatt sets the story around an eunuch played by Paresh Rawal who found a baby

girl abandoned in a garbage dump and raised that girl, provided her good education. She eventually got to know and is shocked initially but realizes all that is done for her. This movie aptly showed how LGBT community in the society are ostracised and are forced to lead an isolated life.

Fashion

Here Bhandarkar rightly paints the character of a gay fashion designer (Samir Soni), who under societal pressure ended up marrying his college friend and planned to adopt a child.

Shabnam Mausi (2005)

This movie is noteworthy because here instead of depicting transgender with loud make up, maniac clapping and crude gesticulations, for the first time they have been given a significant role in the movie. This movie inspires a lot of eunuchs in India to participate in mainstream activities giving up their traditional roles as dancers, prostitutes and beggars living on the peripheries of Indian society.

Gulabi Aaina (The Pink Mirror,2006)

This Bollywood film expansively focuses on Indian transsexuals with the entire story gyrating around two transsexuals and a gay teenager's attempts to seduce a man – Samir (Rufy Baqal). The film reconnoitres the taboo subject of transsexuals in India which is still much miscalculated and scorned.

68 pages (2007)

This film directed and Written by Sridhar Rangayan, explores the life of an Indian gay and a transsexual bar dancer. Through this movie the director gives an understanding of their stories of agony and anxiety, mortification and denial – not only by the society, but even by their kith and kin. While the movie unveils paltriness of the system but at the same time the movie also acts as an instrument of social restoration. The film has screened at 12 international film festivals and over a 110 screenings across India and other countries and won the Silver Remi award at Worldfest-Houston 2008

***I Am* (2010)**

The title '*I Am*' explores the idea of the crisis of identity of the protagonists against backdrop of the Indian culture and heritage and the consequent efforts to locate them on the celluloid screen. This is the first gay movie to win National Award at the 59th National Film Awards. *I Am* received mainly positive reviews from critics. These awards and positive reviews by critics definitely is a true sign of triumph not only for the director individually but also for the entire community of gay film makers and gay theme. *The Times of India* called it "an important and intelligent film"⁽¹⁾ The film was financed by donations from more than 400 different people around the world, many of whom donated through social networking. Onir explores each facet of the title through four individual stories which sensitively touch upon different social concerns. The story *Omar* depicts on how gays are abused and used in the country where homosexuality is considered a taboo. A corporate guy's (Rahul Bose) consensual sexual experience with an aspiring actor (Arjun Mathur) gets him into trouble when an opportunist-and-sadistic cop (Abhimanyu Singh) catches them in the act and blackmails him. Overall, the four stories are sensibly written and Onir has directed the film with the required level of maturity that its theme and treatment demands.

Though sexual orientation have been a regular part of the Bollywood canvas but in most of the case people of third gender have been portrayed as a comical character with stereotypical images of the community like brassy make up, maniac clapping, crude gestures. it is during twenties that these kind of movies gained momentum and started portraying

homosexuality in a more serious and sincere context. While the movies like *Girl friend*(2004), *Honeymoon Travels*(2007), *Fashion*(2008), *Dostana*(2008) Girl Friend though tried to bring this issue but ultimately could not give justice to the gay concerns, a few movies like *Shabnam Mausi*, *I am*, *Pink Mirror*, *68 Pages* have tried to portray them as dignified character sketches rightly essaying their stories without fussing over them and have successfully created more awareness on gay issues, their problems, the challenges they encounter, the crisis of identity they come across in their day today life among the audience. At the same time films should also recommend possible way out to their problems. Stories should be constructed in such a manner that our society starts accepting them as they are. Films should represent sexual minorities in arealistic and sincere way so that our society, instead of mocking at them comes frontward and stand for their grounds.

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Politics of Sexuality: Kamala Das's *An Introduction*

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Kate Millett in her doctoral dissertation-turned feminist Classic *Sexual Politics* spells out the politics of sexuality in a manner that provokes thought and merits mentioning in context of the analysis of Kamala Das's *An Introduction* which narrates marginalization of woman in a patriarchal set-up. Millett writes:

Sexual politics obtains consent through the "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status. As to status, a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. The first item, temperament, involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category ("masculine" and "feminine"), based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force, and efficiency in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, "virtue" and ineffectuality in the female.

(Source: *Sexual Politics*(1969) publ. Granada publishing. The Second Chapter, Theory of Sexual politics reproduced)

Sex in any feminist discourse gets associated with status; the male occupies the higher status; the female, the inferior status. The dominance of the male over the female constitutes the politics of sexuality. The feminists criticize the patriarchal system in which

woman is considered to be the second sex and man, the first. In the poem *An Introduction* Kamala Das delineates sexual politics in appropriate, suggestive, colloquial poetic diction. At times she uses metaphors just to reflect on the subjugation of the female in a patriarchal culture. The poem opens with :

I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, ... beginning with
Nehru. (P.26).

The poem opens with reference to the politics and the name of a distinguished politician Nehru who was a household word after independence. Das indicates that man by nature is a political being if politics is associated with power- the spirit of dominance . Das immediately switches over to the interfering nature of the male. As a woman she has the right to use the language she likes but the patriarchal set-up intervenes when she chooses to use a prestigious International language like English:

...Don't write in English, they said,
English is not your mother-tongue.

Like a politician who is dominant and assertive
Das retorts:

Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? (ibid)

Das gives justifications for her language. She talks in a tone which is adamant. Her argument is persuasive like that of a seasoned politician. The feminist in her waxes eloquent:

The language I speak
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
 All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
 Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
 It is as human as I am human, don't
 You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
 Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
 Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
 Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
 Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
 Is aware. (ibid.)

The language in which the poet expresses her feelings reflects her political mind-set if the means employed by the politician are determined by convincing arguments. Truly V.C. Harris in the Introduction to *The Old PlayHouse and Other Poems* writes that Kamala Das the speaker can be very very political in a different sense(P.XIX). Reading the above passage Harris further remarks:

...it takes away the apologetic, or defensive, tone of much of the "defence" of Indian Writing in English we were acquainted with till then; on the other, it introduces a new vitality and vigor, not to say integrity, indeed defiance, into the entire discourse. Yes, this is how the newly emerging post-Independence subject attempts to rework, redefine and relocate the language and dis course of the colonial master.(P.XX)

Harris's observation is worth- analyzing in context of neo-colonization. The prefix 'neo' is indicative of new and revived form. If by colonization we mean two classes-the ruler and the ruled, the dominant and the meek Kamala Das here is talking about is using the language of the colonizer in a different form by the colonized. Thus she is advocating the liberty of the colonized. In a patriarchal society the male occupies the status of the colonizer and the female, the colonized. Such kind of argument as Das makes reverses the order in a way she pleads for liberty-the liberty of the subordinate, the subjugated

and the marginalized.

Kamala Das depicts the sad plight of the woman in a patriarchal culture. At the out-set she talks about girl child; then she focuses on her growth specially physical growth. From the description which is quite vivid and pictorial it becomes clear that Das attaches importance to the body of the woman. In fact the body of the woman is a beautiful creation of the invisible Almighty. Das is very much frank and uninhibited in the portrayal of the feminine body, even the body below the waist:

I was child, and later they
 Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
 Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
 (ibid.)

Das is also careful about the emotional needs of woman. A woman can't live without love. Byron is right when he holds that love may be the pastime of man but it is woman's whole existence. Das's perception of woman's need is that of Byron. She writes:

When
 I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
 For, (ibid)

Das delineates the dominance of male over female in the society. In the following passage she uses 'he' twice –one in context of the guardian may be the father and another in context of the spouse. She has inherent hatred for patriarchal culture which is grounded in the dominance of male and control over female. She writes:

he drew a youth of sixteen into the
 Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me
 But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
 The weight of my breasts and womb crushed
 me. I shrank
 Pitifully.(P.26-27)

The above passage sheds light upon phallocentrism. It also points to the source of the battle of sexes. Das points out that her husband was inexperienced

in understanding the feminine psyche. Her marriage was arranged by the males. She didn't have any voice in the matters of marriage. Here she is not Das speaking but the voice of woman is speaking through her. Das's experience is traumatic because in the core of heart she does not accept the dominance of the male over the female especially in regard to sexual pleasure. There is hint about pregnancy. Only when a woman conceives baby her breasts and womb get swollen. Das pictures the conception of the baby not in a joyful mood. Here baby is an accident. Thus the poet uses the word 'pitifully' in context of her health: physical, mental and emotional. The word 'beat' used twice in the passage acquires significance. The husband here does not beat the wife in the literal sense but the latter gets beaten because her feminine ego gets hurt. Thus the poet instinctively rebels against the institution of marriage and pleads for, indirectly, sex education specially of man. If a man is incompetent to satisfy his woman it is because he does not have the knowledge about feminine mystique or what Das calls 'the endless female hungers'.

Das shows the nature of rebellion in a discontent woman. A woman grows rebellious against the patriarchal system when her voice is not taken into account in a family. Here she tries to look and behave like a man. The process of masculinization of woman starts with the changing of outward physical appearance but this is a dangerous trend because it ignores what makes women the embodiment of womanly virtues. The poet writes:

Then.....I wore a shirt and my
 Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and
 ignored
 My womanliness. (P.27)

Indeed Das is speaking how things go wrong in a male-dominated society. She is bringing out the politics of sexuality in a dexterous manner. When a woman becomes careless of social norms prevailing in a patriarchal society the members of the opposite sex, that is, males issue instructions. The following passage replete with imperative constructions focuses

on this aspect of subordination of woman in patriarchal culture:

Dress in sarees, be girl
 Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
 Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,
 Belong, cried the categorizers.(ibid.)

The above passage focuses on what the male members of the society want the members of their opposite sex to do. In a patriarchal society it is the woman who will adjust with her man; she is not allowed to dominate if at all she wants to dominate. She can dominate over the servants because it is the servants who occupy the lowest position in a family. More so a woman is permitted to do some mechanical work. She is not privileged to have experiences or share knowledge that will make her powerful in a family or social structure. The word 'categorizers' is not without much significance. Ours is not a classless society. The female of the species belongs to the lower section. The expression 'oh' points to the pathetic situation. The poet also issues negative instructions. The following passages are splendid because the issue of woman's liberty is of much concern for the feminists. The poet describes the don'ts prescribed for the woman in the male-dominated society:

Don't sit
 On walls or peep in through our lace-draped
 windows.
 Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or better
 Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
 Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending
 games.
 Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
 Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
 Jilted in love.... (ibid.)

The lines above are illuminating in context of a backward conservative society. The poet uses the medical term 'schizophrenia' which refers to 'breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion and behaviour, leading to faulty perception, inappropriate actions and feelings, withdrawal from reality and personal relationship into fantasy and

delusion and a sense of mental fragmentation’ (The New Oxford Dictionary of English:1662). Thus Das delineates how the politics of sexuality tells upon woman’s health. A ‘nympho’ is a woman whose sexual urge is very high because it is neither fulfilled nor sublimated. The suppression of sexual urges because of restriction prevailing in a male orthodox society causes disorder and disharmony. Here Das is an eye opener for a progressive society. Her verse is to be read in the light of politics that is power game-the game of dominance and subordination. In such a society naturalness in a woman vanishes to a great extent and she becomes pretentious. In the life of a woman romance ends and torture begins. Thus Das voices the negative outlook, the narrow attitude, and wrong perceptions of woman in a society which prescribes the undue authority of the male over the female. She sheds light upon the narcissistic love of the male. In the matters of love in a conservative set-up ‘I’ is more important than ‘you’. All humans are selfish. Annihilation of self or dissolution of ego is not that easy. Every man wants a woman because it is the woman’s body that lures him. On the contrary a woman longs for undiluted love. Here is a splendid passage:

I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love. (ibid)

The lines above reflect the desires of man and woman in a kind of physical relationship. The poet further clarifies her stand:

In him...the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me...the ocean’s tireless
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and
everyone,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself
If in this world, he is tightly packed like the
Sword in its sheath.(ibid.)

The metaphorical expression ‘sword in a sheath’ is quite suggestive. Sword however sharp it may be, if kept inside the sheath, is of no use. The

utility of sword is felt only when it is used. If it is tightly packed its utility can not be known. Similarly if a man or a woman is not free and frank about her physical and emotional needs love can not be experienced. Das in her essay *I Have Lived Beautifully* confesses that her marriage was doomed to fail right from the beginning(Jayadip Sarkar:15). Sarkar quotes her reactions published in the *Debonair*,III, No.5(May 15,1975),41:

My husband was immersed in his office-work, and after work there was the dinner, followed by sex. Where was there any time left for him to want to see the sea or the dark buffaloes of the slopes?(ibid).

In the passage above Das focuses on the phenomenon of nature or creature-sea or dark buffaloes which can be interpreted literally and metaphorically. The ‘sea’ is mysterious with its charm and buffaloes are sexual athletes. In the above passage Das comments about her husband’s incapacity, lack of interest to satisfy the sexual needs of hers. As a result, she behaves in a different way:

It is I who drink lonely
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange
towns,

It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

(P.27)

The passage above is magnificent. The reader might guess extra-marital relations of the speaker from the close reading of the lines because there are references to the hotels of the strange towns. The passage is replete with monosyllabic words because it is they which lend beauty and lyricism to the verse. The notion of ‘saint’ and ‘sinner’ can be linked with taboos on sexuality prevailing in the society. Extra-marital relationship or the sexual relationship which is not permitted by the society can cause shame. Thus here Das is focusing on the power of instinctive sexual

pleasure and societal taboos on sexuality and prohibition of sexual act outside marriage. Das has insisted upon reciprocity in the matters of love.

To conclude, *An Introduction* is a poem which highlights on various aspects of sexual politics. Politics is a game in which one always intends to have power. Love exists in a reciprocal situation-baring of hearts but politics is based upon manipulation. In this lyric Das the feminist has delineated the manipulative behaviour of males in sexual matters. She has also highlighted 'do's' and 'don'ts' prescribed for women in a patriarchal set-up. She has also hinted the frustration in a wife if her husband does not satisfy her sexually. She has also pictured the circumstances and tendency in a woman to be promiscuous. Das is hundred percent right when she repeats the word 'I' in order to reinforce the idea that in human relationship, specially in sexual matters 'I' has been more important

that 'you' –a trend which is pathetic but very much human. Hence the concluding line of the poem reads 'I too call myself I'. It means as a human- a sensitive human being, she is focusing on self- her own self and the root of politics -be it sexual politics which gets centred around 'I'. Without 'I' the sense of 'I', no politics-the game of domination and subordination, is conceived.

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Goddess, Women and Their Space in Ruplekha Devi's *Onyotro Birola Devi*

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Abstract:

The paper attempts to present a critical representation of the colonial and post-colonial patriarchal society of Kamakhya, in general, and Ruplekha Devi's novel, Onyotro Birola Devi, in particular. The idea of the woman as a Goddess in Hindu mythology has been looked into, while exploring the politics behind its formation at a particular point in time in history. A contradictory image of the woman in real in the then society has also been recuperated, thus drawing its contradictory nature. This contradiction between the woman as the Goddess and the woman in substance has been looked through the framework of the novel. Thus, the analysis is illustrated with excerpts from Devi's novel, to bring forth the concerned idea to its readers. A special emphasis is given on an interesting exploration of a space outside the patriarchal normative social structure. The constraints of words and space render impossible a vast research of this novel in this paper itself. Thus, the idea behind the paper is to kindle the desire and curiosity in the minds of the reader to further explore this measureless yet intriguing novel of Ruplekha Devi.

***Keywords:** Goddess, sexuality and fertility, Brahmanical patriarchal structure, creation of men's projections, marginalised, Sisyphus' chores, Dionysian rituals, the Fool, kitchen, backyard, mirage, machete, knowledges, marital rape.*

A mundane day at work, the surprise comes in the form of a thin book. The cover page reads, Onyotro Birola Devi (অন্যত্র বিৰলা দেৱী) in Oxomiya. Once the

reader delves deeper into it, s/he is carried into a vibrant world of the colonial and post-colonial society of the Kamakhya Temple, on the Nilachal Hills. Short yet crisp, Ruplekha Devi's novel offers an amazing read to its readers. Although the novel showcases a myriad of issues of the then Kamakhya society, this paper is an attempt to give a particular critical analysis of the image of the Goddess in that society, the role and situation of the women in reality and an exploration of an interesting space outside the normative patriarchal structure.

Devi's novel portrays a Hindu Brahmin patriarchal joint family of colonial and post-colonial Kamakhya society. The family and the society revolve around the Kamakhya Maa or the Mother Goddess Kamakhya. The priests of the female deity are male Brahmin. It is popularly believed that the Goddess of Kamakhya is a manifestation of the Sati. When Sati's vulva fell on the Hills of Nilachal, Kamakhya Peetha was established here. Basically, this religious place celebrates female sexuality and fertility. The novel however, portrays a rather contradicting society, where the female deity is being worshipped inside the sanctum sanctorum by only the males. On the other hand, the rigid Brahmanical patriarchal structure seldom allows any agency to the women in reality. Rita M. Gross in her article "Hindu Female Deities as a Resource for the Contemporary Rediscovery of the Goddess" says that "the Goddess seems to be as much the creation of men's projections and a recipient of male devotions"¹ but, she says, "Use of feminine symbolism does not guarantee anything about the role and status of women"². According to Gross, Hindu religion, although

consisting of several gods and goddesses, is actually defined by the existence of the primary deities- Vishnu and Shiva. And the female deity is merely the “shadowy third”. This further legitimizes the idea of the woman as the subordinate.³

The Mother Goddess in the novel is portrayed as an image of one with long open hair shining in the sunlight, beautiful face, the entire world a slave to her.

“কামাখ্যে মাইৰ চুলিকোচা কোঁ-কা-লো-তে পৰে
তেল দিলি চি-কি-মি-কিৰ দোত পে-খাম ধৰে।”⁴

(Goddess Kamakhya’s locks, her waist it touches
When oiled, a shining show in the sun, it makes.)

“কামাখ্যা গোসানী নীলাচল বাসিনী

কৈলাসে তোমাৰ বাস এ

চেলা চুল ধৰি ৰাখা ঠাকুৰাণী

সমস্ত তোমাৰ দাস এ...”⁵

(Dweller of the Blue Mountain, Kamakhya
Goddess

In Kailash, you reside

You spread your hair, O Noblewoman

The world, a slave at your side.)

Although the Mother Goddess of Kamakhya is a manifestation of the female deity Durga, popularly considered as the war goddess in Hindu mythology, the novel does not portray her in a similar manner. Rather, she is portrayed as the manifestation of the “mother of all”. However, her body physical is also described every now and then. The otherwise marginalised women in the society described in the novel, are ironically compared with the Goddess in terms of beauty, the latter (an idea) with more liberty than the former (the substance). However, both of them are objectified by men in particular. It is the men (and the children) who pray to her,

“শিশু আৰু পুৰুষবোৰে জয়ধ্বনি দিলে, “কামাখ্যা
মাই কি জয়।”⁶

(The children and the men cried out, “Victory to
Mother Goddess Kamakhya.”)

Devi’s novel paints a picture of a joint family of
the Bordeuris in particular- a large house, with a larger

number of Sisyphus’ chores to be done by the women to take care of the house, and their men and children. Festivals like Ambubasi Mela as described in the novel, dominated by the worship of the female deity by the male priests, is made possible by the work done behind the screen by the women of the household in feeding and taking care of the innumerable Jajman Jatris.

“বুঢ়া বৰদেউৰিৰ ঘৰো যজমান যাত্ৰীৰে ভৰি পৰিছে।
ইমান মানুহৰ বন্ধা-বঢ়া, খোৱা-বোৱা, সকলো বস্তু বাহানিৰ
যোগাৰ ধৰা সহজ কথা নহয়। জ্ঞানদা, পদ্মা, শূৱালকুছেনীৰ
যাত্ৰীৰ সেৱা সুশ্ৰৱণা কৰি দেহাত তত নোহোৱা হৈছে।”⁷

(The house of the Old Bordeuri was crowded
with “Jajman Jatris” (Client Visitors). It is not an easy
matter to the need of so many people- from food to
lodging. Gyanoda, Podda, Suwalkucheni- all have
wasted themselves by taking care of them.)

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, in her article, “Is the
Hindu Goddess a Feminist?” states that women’s status
in India is “ambiguous”- “the ideological promotion of
powerful female models does not contribute to ordinary
women’s well-being.”⁸ There is hierarchy marked
clearly within the family as well. The patriarch of the
family is Ambika Burhi, an acting head in the absence
of her dead husband. When looked through the
Foucauldian framework, she is the capillary of the
dominant Brahmanical patriarchal power, who polices
her daughters-in-law. Ambika burhi, who herself had
once played the stereotyped role of the dutiful wife
and daughter-in-law, now devotes her time in praying,
while her daughters-in-law *must* work incessantly day
and night in the kitchen.

Another instance in this context is Shibani’s
pregnancy. She is pregnant while her husband is abroad
for his higher studies. Shibani’s only companion is an
old woman, Lethou burhi, a “lower caste” who takes
care of her. But when Shibani suffers from pain a few
days before her childbirth, Ambika burhi blames Shibani
for her “carelessness” and scolds her. It is Lethou, the
marginalised character, who questions the patriarch and
challenges her role. However, the description of Lethou
as the old lonely woman who lives alone and keeps on
cracking jokes, i. e. her image as the “Fool” probably

legitimises her contest with the woman patriarch as a part of her “jokes” which is not to be taken seriously.

The question that arises, do the women then have a space of their own in the then society?

The kitchen is a space for the women, in particular, appearing like a mirage. It is a space where the women have to fulfil their “duties” of the normative. The novel categorises the women of the household while working in the kitchen under a single umbrella, within which they lose their individuality. However, this space also provides the women some kind of illusory solace, where they talk, discuss and laugh together.

While Bidyadhor plans to go to Calcutta for his studies, his wife, Shibani has already lost her name and identity and responds to the name *শুৱালকু ছেনী* (Suwalkucheni) instead. Shibani’s image is so connected to the kitchen that her physicality is described not in terms of her “beauty” but by the patriarchal work within it.

“ঘাম আৰু কিনকিনীয়া বৰষুণত তাইৰ ডাঠ সুতাৰ শাৰীখন তিতি গাত আট মাৰি ধৰিছে। হালধি, ছাই আৰু তেল মছলাৰ বং লগ লাগি কাপোৰখনৰ কিছুমান ঠাইত বিচিত্ৰ দাগৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে। তাইৰ গাৰ পৰা বান্ধনিশালৰ পৰিচিত গোলকটো আহি আহিছে। তেল আৰু বৰষুণ পানী লগ হৈ মূৰৰ চুলিখিনি একেবাৰে চেপেটা কৰি পেলাইছে। কপালৰ ওপৰত ঘূৰ খাই থকা চুলি দুই-এডাল ওপৰত উৰি অহা ছাইৰ কণিকা কিছুমান লাগি ধৰিছে। মুখ-চকু সোমাই গৈছে।”⁹

(Her sari made of coarse cotton sticks to her body drenched as it was in sweat and drizzle. A variety of stains created by ash, oil and spices marked the cloth. The familiar smell of the kitchen emanated from her body. Oil and rain water together flattened the hair on her head. Some unruly locks of hair on her head caught some particles of flying ash. She looks haggard)

Devi’s novel showcases a story within which a reader may try to find spaces for women, the kitchen, as discussed above, being one of them. However, the kitchen, as already mentioned, is probably a mirage, an illusion of temporary agency which passes into evanescence once the woman sets her foot out of it. Apart from the kitchen, the other space that may mean as a bower solely for the women is the backyard of

the household. This space seems to exist simultaneously with the normative, but outside its boundaries. The novel opens with Obhoya’s marriage. It is the morning of the day of her marriage. She wakes up, the necklace she was made to wear the day before for the marriage ceremony, clutching her neck and torturing her- a very symbolic image of her body and soul clutched within the marital constraints of the then society. The ceremonial finger ring she wears gets stuck to her clothes, signifying a marital bond which is problematic. She is a sacrificial offering (to the female deity!) dangling on the machete of the institution of marriage.

“ইস, পাথৰ খটোৱা সোণাৰ গলপাতাধৰ তাইৰ পাৰাচৰেই হেন গলটোত দাও এখন বান্ধি থোৱাৰ নিচিনা হৈছি।”¹⁰

(Fie, the precious stone-studded necklace looks like a machete dangling from her pigeon like neck.)

She gasps for fresh air, opens the door and leaves for the backyard. The backyard is an untamed jungle, a brook flowing punctuated by stones and pebbles and staircases. A very contrary image is drawn when an otherwise subjugated Obhoya jumps over the pebbles and stones, her braids dancing with her. The image portrays her free spirit and body, without the limits set by the dominant patriarchal social structure, the body trying to flout the authoritarian norms, at times, the feet almost slipping off. (“মাজে মাজে ভৰি পিছলি যোৱাৰ উপক্ৰম হৈছে।”)¹¹

This space also posits as a realm of female bonding, between both the sisters, Xurobala and Gyanoda. Otherwise married to two brothers, both these sisters in spite of their connection cannot keep their relationship because of familial patriarchal rivalries. They meet in the jungle in the backyard, bartering flowers and sweets, emblematic of their love for each other. Xurobala is attacked by a group of monkeys. She takes repose within this space. The monkeys pull her clothes as well. She stays silent, scared of them, tolerating while tears run down her cheeks. Devi’s novel probably portrays a symbolic encounter of the sexually dominating man over the oppressed woman. Bound by the shackles of the normative, the woman is a mere

silent observer of her own destruction. In the case of Xurobala, a woman (Gyanoda) comes to her rescue. Both linger in each other's embrace. This space can thus be seen as a Dionysian space. (Greek mythology suggests that the female followers of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility, went together in a group, deep into the forests once in a month. They practised revelry and rituals, away from the normative structure of patriarchy. This space provided the women a momentary space and agency.)

The most important possibility that happens within this space is the relationship between Umakanto and the Malini. It is a sexual union between two different castes. The Malini is denied any kind of agency in the novel, she is nameless. She is only known by her community's occupation. Except once, she is not given any voice as well. She is expressed only through Uma's eyes. She is the "Other", who is portrayed either as a mad woman or as an otherworldly woman, thus associating with her a horizon of mystery. She is feared by the Brahmin men and women. Even Uma is scared of her in the beginning. Later, Mohan, a small child cries when sees her. When looked through the Foucauldian framework of the nexus between power and knowledge, the Malini's voice is that of the "Other", the marginalised, in a dominant Brahmanical and patriarchal social structure. Thus, the dominant power structure suppresses the marginalised forms of knowledges. So the Malini is rendered mad.

The relationship between Uma and the Malini is not only made possible in an "unusual" space outside the dominant boundaries, the time of the fruition of the relationship is early morning, almost dawn, a very "unusual" time as well. The very sexual union between both of them is described happening inside a cave on a rainy morning, surrounded by the gurgling sounds of the waves and the thundering of the clouds. The picture painted could either be a romantic one or it could also precede a horror story! Sex with the "Other" *has* to produce the horror. Now, a glance at Shibani's physical description,

“তেনেই পাতল কাপোৰখনেৰে তাইৰ যৌৱনপুষ্ট

দেহাটো প্রকট হৈ পৰিছে।”¹²

(Through the utterly thin cloth, her body with all the sensuality was exposed.)

“...তাইৰ খোলা চুলিখিনি সন্মুখ ফাললৈ নামি আহিল তাইৰ একেবাৰে উদং পিঠিখন উমাৰ চকুৰ আগত উন্মুক্ত হৈ পৰিল।”¹³

(Her open hair cascaded to the front and her naked back was fully exposed to Uma's eyes.)

Her spirit is free too, away from any kind of fears. She is not contained within the normative, like a ball of cloud floating in the sky.

Problematic gender hierarchy is also seen in the folk songs of the then society, as portrayed in Devis' novel. One of them goes,

“... চিকুন কন্যা নাপায় বাপু ফুৰে বনে বনে...”¹⁴

(Having found no lovely bride, the lad roams about in the woods.)

Are the ways of a man, who indulge in extramarital affairs¹⁵, legitimised because his wife is not “beautiful”? The dominant power structure would define “beautiful” as someone who is sexually fertile and full. Uma knows the Malini before his wife Sashiprabha comes to his home. The first night of their marriage, he does look at Sashiprabha, may be with the expectation that she would be “beautiful”. But, finding Sashiprabha to be a thin, fragile woman, who looks “very ordinary” (“একেবাৰে সাধাৰণ চেহেৰা”)¹⁶, he averts himself from her. Although a relationship against the Brahmanical structure, the novel takes away the blame from the man's part on the pretext that within the house, his wife is “dry”, and outside the house, the “Other” entices him through her rather “sexual appeals”.

The dominant power structure does not, rather could not allow the success of the inter-caste relationship within its boundaries. So, Uma commits suicide, the Malini dies during childbirth and Sashiprabha is emotionally and physically shattered. Three lives can be lost but a marginalised relationship cannot be brought within the boundaries of the normative! (Pun intended) Uma dies because he chooses the “Other”. The Malini

by the very virtue of being the “Other” dies. Sashiprabha is doubly marginalised, both by a patriarchal as well as a casteist society. A parentless young girl, Sashi leaves for her in-laws’ family at a very young age. At her in-laws, she “fulfils” her duties of a stereotypical obedient daughter-in-law. She is denied any emotional and physical bliss by her husband. When she starts being assertive about her sexual desires, he rapes her. A victim of marital rape, Sashi silently questions the very idea of sex within marriage as a process of procreation, rather than an act of love.

“এয়া মৰমৰ আধিক্য বিলাস নে সম্ভান উৎপাদনৰ এটা প্ৰক্ৰিয়া মাথোঁ।”¹⁷

(Was it a luxuriously excessive show of love or just a process of procreation?)

Within the casteist society, however, it is she, the “rightful” wife, who has to follow all the ruthless rituals and practices of a Brahmin widow.

“শুধবগা ভূনি এখন পিন্ধাই শুবালকুছেনীৰ গাত এবালি পানী ঢালি দিয়া হ’ল .. এই মৰ জাৰত দোভাগ বাতি তিতা কাপোৰ এখন পিন্ধি তাই থকথককৈ কপি আছে।”¹⁸

(A bucketful of water was poured over Suwalkucheni after she had been dressed in a snow white ‘bhuni’. In the chilly winter, at midnight, she was shivering in that tiny cloth.)

The closure of Devi’s novel is problematised by the very idea that this doubly marginalised Sashi who does not get an ounce of marital happiness, is portrayed as a happy satisfied mother when the male child from the sexual union between her husband and the Malini is kept in her arms. That the child is male, and that it is the progeny of Uma and the Bordeuri family, surpasses all other factors of casteist prejudices. The Brahmin family adopts the child. Sashi, who is devastated by her husband’s extra-marital affair, is also shown to have found her peace with the child. And interestingly, Sashi’s “sacrificing” of the concerns for herself for the “greater interests” of the family of her in-laws, is portrayed as a “godly” act. She becomes the Mother Goddess-child at her breasts, tears in her eyes, and smile on her face.

□ □

Notes:

1. Gross, Rita M., “Hindu Female Deities as a Resource for the Contemporary Rediscovery of the Goddess”, Oxford University Press, 1978, Pg 272.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid*, Pg 273.
4. Devi, Ruplekha, Onyotro Birola Devi, Chandra Prakash: Guwahati, 2014, Pg 15.
5. *ibid*, Pg 22.
6. *ibid.*
7. *ibid*, Pg 66.
8. Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder, “Is the Hindu Goddess a Feminist?”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1998, Pg 3.
9. *ibid*, Pg 27.
10. *ibid*, Pg 2.
11. *ibid*, Pg 3.
12. *ibid*, Pg 39.
13. *ibid*, Pg 40.
14. *ibid*, Pg 7.
15. The extra marital affairs have been symbolised as “roaming in the woods”, thus considering that these sexual relationships outside the normative heterosexual marital bond *have* to be “wild”.
16. Devi, Ruplekha, Onyotro Birola Devi, Chandra Prakash: Guwahati, 2014, Pg 55.
17. *ibid*, Pg 127.
18. *ibid*, Pg 138.

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Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* : The Making of a New Culture

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Never before we had been introduced to the Creole-Indian Culture which distinctively refers to the cultural identity of the Indian settlers in Trinidad, until we got to read the bulk of literature produced by the great Caribbean yet Black-British writer V.S. Naipaul. For Naipaul : "Trinidad was too unimportant and we could never be convinced of reading the history of a place which was, as everyone said, only a dot on the map of the world." [Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, P-36]

The Caribbean Indian history began after the emancipation of the Black in 1834, after the abolition of slavery and Negro workers' refusal to work in the estates. In regards to the major products of the island, viz. sugar, vanilla and cocoa, the shortage of labour posed as a major threat to the economy. The only solution to the new-born crisis was to import workers. The importation of labors took place from Medira, China and India under a five year contract, initially. The importation continued till 1917 and during the period about 143,939 Indian immigrants settled in Trinidad. This new kind of Indian settlers came to be known as East-Indians in Trinidad. These workers proved to be most adaptable to the climatic condition of Trinidad. To these people who in India had to live amidst poverty, the new occupation came as a rare opportunity to get rid of the condition of their lives. The Indians were mainly agriculturists and the climatic condition of Trinidad being by and large similar to that of India, suited them the best. Thus many of them later refused to go

back to India even after the exhaustion of the contract. However, with the decline of the sugarcane industry, a large number of the workers withdrew from the estate by the end of the century.

The Indians came to Trinidad at a time when the native society of Trinidad was not too much influential in exerting/putting any cultural pressure upon the new settlers. The Indians – that is- without much difficulty could cultivate their own social, community and cultural life.

Since a majority of the Indians eventually preferred to settle in Trinidad in spite of their term of indentureship being over, in due course of time, a major reduction of stringent laws was effected which facilitated ownership of crown lands by the Indians. In this way, a permanent Indian peasant community was established in Trinidad. To the credit of the Indians, their contribution to the agricultural activity of the island strengthened its economy, but what is significant is the firm foundation laid for a solid landowning Indian community complete with its own social institution that enabled them to play a significant role in the plural society of Trinidad. [Breton 180- 184]

This was indeed a beginning, a beginning of a new culture, a sub-culture, identified as the 'Trinidad-Indian culture'. In India they had undergone poverty, misery, famine –things, which never allowed them to understand the unique cultural richness of their country. When they had migrated to their new habitat, they

brought with them mundane items like beds, brass vessels, musical instruments, images of Gods, holy books, sandalwood sticks, astrological almanacs along with their bitter memories of hunger, poverty and crises which they had to experience. Although the influence of the native culture upon them had been very fragile, it was impossible for them to avoid the local Creole flavor (which slowly mixed into the half-remembered, ossified culture the Indians brought with them).

Uma Parmeswaran in her *Writing the Diaspora* has identified four phases of the issue of modification and adaptation that took place in four different phases: the first is nostalgia for their homeland along with a feeling of fear being in a strange land. The second is their adjusting to the new environment, a process which has little to help them in any creative output. The third is the immigrants' involvement with the ethno-cultural issues. The fourth can be represented by the word: "arrival" - their participating in the larger world of politics and national issues.[Parmeswaran P-305]

A House for Mr. Biswas is the fictional representation of Naipaul's father Seepersad Naipaul, the struggling journalist vis-à-vis his quest for a house of his own, his urge to create a space for himself, in a country which they are told is not the country of their ancestors. The story however, in its larger perspective, is not just about a single individual but the story of an entire community and its struggle to emerge as a distinctive socio-cultural group, to grow as a sub-culture in the large Caribbean landscape. *A House for Mr. Biswas* also relates the success story of the Indians in Trinidad. It more particularly shows how in the first half of the twentieth century the Trinidad Hindus slowly began to come out of the cocoon of the typical Hindu identity to get mixed with other communities of the place for finding out their place in the multiethnic, multicultural nation space.[Kar Angshuman, "V.S.Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas: Interacting Workplace and Nation-space"]

A House for Mr. Biswas, opens with the

narrators informing the readers in the prologue about the death of Mr. Biswas- a 46 years old, journalist of Sikkim Street, St. James, Port of Spain. The novel is a complete biography of Mohun Biswas- 'an unlucky boy with six fingers in Sikkim Street, St James, Port of Spain' from the day of his birth till the time of his death. His parents Raghu and Bipti are two earnest followers of Hindu culture. The Pundit's warning of keeping the child away from water in any natural form, the baby's rituals of the 9th day, burial of the baby's naval string near the cowshed, Raghu's death and burial, Bipti's widowhood- details upon details, the novel gives a clear description of an Indian village which stands out with all its distinctive shades belying all the 'strangeness', which the Indians resided in. A new cultural identity was still in its formative state then. Raghu, in his death, though a Hindu, was not cremated, but buried. It was not because there was any pressure coming from the local community, but because cremation had been forbidden in Trinidad by the government at that time.

The Hanuman House with a huge concrete statue of the monkey-god protruding over the balustrated roof "stood like an alien white fortress" [P-81], in the High Street, at Arwacas, was representing the Hindu orthodoxy prevailing among the inhabitants. The novel also depicts the gradual cultural degeneration of the Tulsi household with the passage of time. Mrs. Tulsi, who is the undisputable empress of her little Tulsi empire, with her long skirt and silver anklets, bangles and rings, epitomizes the Hindu Indian cultural identity. She tries to establish herself as the preserver of the traditional values. The life-size statues of Hanuman in the doors of the Tulsi store, the huge statue of Hanuman on the roof, the sanctified gravity of the prayer-room, the statues of numerous Gods in the drawing room, the austerity of the daily *puja*- details about all this contribute effectively in the making of a particular image of the Tulsis: as the torch-bearers of the traditional Hindu Indian culture. For Mohun Biswas, the Tulsis represent a hollow cultural identity; - neither

fully Creole, nor Indian, neither fully Hindu nor Christian. Mohun Biswas was given the offer by the Tulsis to become a Tulsi son-in-law, for his sheer good blood (Mohun was a Brahmin by birth). However, the elder son of the family, Shekhar, who performed the daily ritual of *puja* in the prayer room taking an early bath and wearing a clean *dhoti*, also went to a Roman Catholic college without any inhibition. Not just that, he even charmed himself by wearing a crucifix upon his chest: “A figure of awe, laden with crucifix, sacred thread and beads, a mysterious sachet, a number of curious armlets, consecrated coins and lime in each trouser pocket.” [A House for Mr. Biswas, P-128] Parallel to the austerity of the daily *puja* stands the celebration of the Christmas in The Hanuman House. Christmas is the only festival observed with gaiety by the Tulsi household. Like every year, after an years waiting, the Tulsi children’s excitement ends in discontentment after discovering balloons, apples, tin whistles, tiny rubber dolls, which they usually receive from Santa Clause, every year and which they easily identify as unsold items of the Tulsi store. The novel brilliantly shows how there is degeneration and gradual erosion of the traditional values in the Tulsi family with the passage of time. Pundit Tulsi’s family even comes to accept Dorothy, a Christian convert Indian girl who is married to the elder son, Shekhar in the name of “good blood”. Naipaul refers to the change in his *Literary Occasions*: “Soon India could be seen to be no more than a habit, a self-imposed psychological restraint wearing thinner with the years: At the first blast from the new world – the second World War, the coming of Americans to the Island – India fell away, and a new people seemed all at once to have been created. The colonial, of whatever society, is a product of revolution, and the revolution takes place in the mind. [Naipaul, *Literary Occasions*, P-43]

In the gradually changing Indian identity, certain things lingered as relics of a half-remembered, fractured cultural identity: brass vessels, images of numerous

Hindu gods, temples, names, food-habits, although gradually changing with the change of time. The names of Raghu, Bipti, Mohun, Dehuti, Shama, Shekhar, Anand, Savi and Myna have come to be replaced by Dorothy, Meera, Leela and Lena. The Tulsi household initially followed a food habit that was primarily Indian: Rice, Roti, Lentils, curried beans, bread, biscuits and the gradual shift in food habits is noticed in occasional indulgence to oyster, salmon and tinned food. Home-made bread had been the menu for breakfast along with fried tomatoes and dried pancakes. Christmas was incomplete without Suniti’s cake made with a fraudulent local Cherry brandy and Chinta’s ice-cream. Mrs Tulsi’s privileged sons had prunes and milk for brain which Shama repeated with Anand in Port of Spain. The curious mixture of cultures in every aspect of the life of the Indian settlers is highlighted upon throughout the novel.

Language is one of the most important factors of any cultural identity. The Indians in Trinidad communicated with each other with a mixture of smatterings of Hindi and English. The local people spoke mainly English, so it was difficult for the Indians who did not know English to cope up with them. The Tulsis too mostly communicated in a mixed language of Hindi and English. Naipaul in mentioning about the non-English speaking class of Indians in the novel also refers to the assembly of some old men, who gather round in the Hanuman house with their heads covered in scarves to have ganja in clay *cheelums*. These people could take pleasure mainly in talking about going back to India, but was also at the same time afraid to leave the familiar temporary comfort. Mr. Biswas spoke in English in the Hanuman house on principle. Even though other person interacted in Hindi, Mr. Biswas kept himself strictly to English only. But during the stormy night when he and Anand were alone in the *Green Vale*, the fear of the dark stormy night made him utter the name lord *Rama* and made Anand sing Hindi hymns over and over again. Mrs. Tulsi - the epitome of Indian culture

was called “*Mai*”, the grand children however took pleasure in calling her “granny.” Shama was called “Ma” and Mohun was called “pa” by the children. Hindi magazines and Hindi film songs were still a part of the Tulsi scenario. Reading of the *Ramayana*, reading news paper and playing of cards were mostly drawing-room affairs which continued side by side. *Ramayana* and news papers can be read comfortably while playing cards. But there is the holy man like Hari, who spends most of his time only in reading holy books. The Tulsis used Hindi as a delicacy, a secret privilege they relished privately. During the time of communal cooking on Sundays, when all the sisters gather and cook below the house: “They spoke no Hindi, used the grossest English dialect and the coarsest expressions and vied with one another in doing menial jobs and getting jobs and getting themselves dirty. In this way they sealed the family bond for the day.”[*A House for Mr. Biswas*. P-579] Owad, Mrs.Tulsi’s younger son sings Hindi songs in the bathroom while taking bath to show how untainted he is by the Western culture: “This was a part of his virtue: it showed how untainted he had been by England and flattered everyone. For the virtue with which everyone had endowed him in his absence was now found in the smallest things: Anand remembered one sister saying that Owad had brought back from England the shoes and shirts and underclothes he had taken from Trinidad.”[*A House for Mr. Biswas*,P- 585]

The Tulsis were clad in a peculiar attire of long skirt, blouse and a veil on the head. Men’s dresses were generally the dress of an estate worker: trouser, shirt and topi, mostly in khaki. In special occasions men however preferred dhoti, jacket and turban. The Tulsis liked to be little extravagant in special “mourning dresses” in black white and mauve. The young girls are seen in stiff satin dresses on special occasions. The shift is however noticeable with the shift of time. Shekhar’s Prysbetarian wife Dorothy earns the respectable position of being a Tulsi *Bahu*, with her short frock. Mohun who came to the Tulsi house with

his khaki shirt and trouser was seen in special suits for special occasions: “Mr. Biswas was dressed as for holiday: tieless, with Saturday’s shirt bearing the impress of Saturday’s tie, his coat over his arm and his book in his hand”[*A House for Mr. Biswas*, P- 530]

The major part of the cultural deterioration is shown after the family’s shift to Port of Spain. “The organization of the city fascinated Mr.Biswas. The street lamps going on at the same time, the streets swept in the middle of the night, the rubbish collected by the scavenging carts early in the morning; the furtive, macabre sounds of the night soil remover; the newsboys, really men; the bread van, the milk that came, not from cows, but in rum bottles stopped with brown paper.”[*A House for Mr. Biswas*, P- 328]The children were sent to Sunday school to learn hymn and they were overwhelmed by the sudden outburst of extravaganza offered to them in the life of Port of Spain. The beautifully painted house which stood in high pillars, with baskets of ferns hanging in the veranda, the morris reclining chair, the parents’ changing position, cola and real ice-cream all contributed to a formation of a new culture which has nothing Indian to be identified in it. However, from time to time the visits of the representatives of the Tulsi family brought in some amount of cultural fever to Port of Spain. “In the week before Owad’s departure the house filled up with sisters, husbands, children and those of Mrs.Tulsi’s retainers who remained faithful. The women came in their brightest clothes and best jewellery and, though only twenty miles from their villages, looked exotic. Heedless of stares, they stared; and made comments in Hindi, usually loud, unusually ribald, because in the city Hindi was a secret language, and they were in holiday mood. A tent covered the back of the yard where Anand and Owad had sometime played cricket. Fire-holes had been dug on the pitch itself, and over these food was always being cooked in large black cauldrons specially brought from Hanuman House. The visitors had come with musical instruments. They played and sang late into

the night, and neighbours, too fascinated to object, peeped through holes in the corrugated iron fences.”[*A House for Mr. Biswas*, P-379]

Naipaul, in the process of his presenting this complete process of evolution, not only hints at the formation of a new sub-cultural entity, but makes it obvious by the conscious understanding of the community to emerge as a separate social group in the world picture. Their deliberate effort to draw the sharp line of contrast with their original ancestors probes the pointer to the circumference they created for themselves in the social-cultural history of the world. The novel highlights another phase of the changes after Owad’s final return from England. Things changed to a great extent in Trinidad by that time. Communal cooking stopped, but communal lives continued; Tulsi sisters visits too continued. Owad’s new impressions over Indians through his experiences of meeting Indians from India in England and his effort to draw a distinct line of difference between an Indian from India and an Indian from Trinidad most effectively represents the fact about sprouting of a new cultural entity based upon a sub-cultural identity which could be tagged as ‘the Trinidad-Indian’. “Owad disliked all Indians from India. They were a disgrace to Trinidad Indians; they were arrogant, sly and lecherous; they pronounced English in a peculiar way; they were slow and unintelligent and were given degrees only out of charity; they were unreliable with money; in England they went around with nurses and other women of the lower classes and were frequently involved in scandals; they cooked Indian food badly(the only true Indian meals Owad had in England were the meals he had cooked himself); their Hindi was strange(Owad had repeatedly caught them out in solecisms); their rituals debased; the moment they got to England they ate meat and drank to prove their modernity.” [*A House for Mr. Biswas*,P-570] They proudly announce about their new identity although there are people who still glorified the land of their ancestors, speaks in Hindi with the veil tied on

the head as a mark of their foreignness, yet when an opportunity of going back to India comes, they refuse to leave the temporary familiarity.

For V.S.Naipaul, the India that he created in his mind existed just in a few number of things: in string beds, no longer in use, plaited straw mats, in innumerable brass vessels, in wooden printing blocks, in books, in drums and ruined harmoniums, in brightly colored pictures of deities on pink lotus or radiant against Himalayan snow and all kinds things needed in the *puja* room like, brass plates, sandalwood stick, the smooth pebbles and images, slender-handled spoon etc. The paraphernalia that decided the Indianness of the Trinidad Indian, existed only in a number of goods, or vestiges of them, mostly unused. *A House for Mr. Biswas* undoubtedly represents the Hindu Indian orthodoxy in Trinidad with the half-forgotten cultures Pundit Tulsi brought with him from the land of his ancestors and the gradual metamorphosis of an entire community with the passage of time. The process of erosion of the traditional cultural values that got mixed up with the diverse cultural origin of the place is constructed through the different phases of development in the novel. If the novel sets out to make Mrs Tulsi the embodiment of the Hindu Indian culture, it also shows how she sends her son Shekhar to a Roman Catholic college and allows him to wear a crucifix as an exotic charm; she also welcomes Dorothy who is a Christian, as a daughter-in-law, keeps a crucifix in her room in the last days of her life, sends Shushila to lit candle in the Roman Catholic church and arranges to clean pundit Tulsi’s grave on All Saint’s Day. Naipaul thus makes a realistic view about the intermixing of racial elements from other communities with the traditional Hindu Indian culture. For example, Ramchand and Dehuti lived with Negroes, Anand’s friend is a Chinese boy, a Jewish doctor comes to see Mrs Tulsi when she is sick and the person on whom Mrs. Tulsi depended mostly was a Negro woman Miss Blackie. Besides these there are numerous references in the novel which clearly

introduce us to a culture which stands out distinctively as a unique entity, half-known, yet unknown, so near yet far away, although apart of us, disjointed like the naval string of Mohun Biswas and buried in a sacred place, not to be forgotten but to be remembered, for they emerged with a new cultural definition: the Trinidad Indian. According to the 1990 census, Indo-Trinidadians are 40.3% of the national population, a visibly large ethno-cultural group to be identified in world history.

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বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ : মানৱতাৰ অনুকূলে ৰাজনৈতিক দ্বন্দ্ব বিশ্লেষণৰ কলাত্মক প্ৰয়াস

ড° দীপকজ্যোতি বৰুৱা

উপন্যাসত থাকিবলগীয়া মৌলিক বৈশিষ্ট্য সমূহৰ সাৰ্থক প্ৰয়োগ আৰু বৌদ্ধিক, সামাজিক আৰু মানবীয় মূল্যবোধৰ সুসম অভিক্ষেপনৰ আন্তৰিক প্ৰয়াসেৰে যুগচিন্তাক পাঠকৰ চেতনলৈ দ্বন্দ্ব-বিৰোধ আৰু আতিতিৰ মাধ্যমেৰে সঞ্চাৰিত কৰাৰ নৈতিক দায়িত্ব পালনৰ হকে বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই হাতত কাপ-মৈলাম তুলি লৈছিল। কলাত্মক অভিযোজনাৰ মাৰফত পাঠকৰ চেতনক মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী বাস্তৱ আৰু নিজস্ব জীৱন-চেতনাৰে আলোড়িত কৰিব পৰা যিকেইখন কালজয়ী উপন্যাস ৰচনাৰ জৰিয়তে তেখেতে অসমীয়া কথা-সাহিত্যৰ পৰিক্ৰমাটোক এক বিশেষ জীৱন-ৰস প্ৰদান কৰি থৈ গ’ল, সেইসমূহৰ ভিতৰত বিশেষভাৱে জিলিকি থকা উপন্যাসখনিয়েই হ’লগৈ : ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ (১৯৬০)। উপন্যাসখনিয়ে ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ সামাজিক তথা মানবীয় মূল্যবোধৰ সফল ৰূপায়ণ ঘটোৱাৰ লগতে তেখেতৰ ৰাজনৈতিক চেতনাৰো বিশেষ পৰিচয় বহন কৰিছে। তেখেতৰ মৌল-আদৰ্শবাদী (radical idealist) সত্ত্বাটোও উপন্যাসখনিৰ মাধ্যমত ইয়াৰ লগতে জিলিকি উঠিছে।

উপন্যাসখনিৰ পটভূমিটো গঢ় লৈ উঠিছে যুদ্ধ, বিদ্ৰোহ আৰু বিক্ষোভৰ অগনিত বিদীৰ্ণ হৈ পৰা মণিপুৰৰ উজ্বলৰ টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ সামগ্ৰিক অৱস্থাটোৰ এক বাস্তৱমুখী শৈল্পিক বৰ্ণনা তথা চিত্ৰণৰ জৰিয়তে। উপন্যাসখনিৰ দুই মুখ্য চৰিত্ৰ — বিশ্বাং আৰু জীৱন যেন ঔপন্যাসিকৰ ব্যক্তি-সত্ত্বাটোৰে মৌলিক প্ৰতিভূ অথবা *alter-ego!* বিশ্বযুদ্ধৰ দুই যুযুধান শিবিৰ বৃটিছ সৈন্য আৰু জাপানীজ সৈন্যৰ সমুখ-সংঘাতে নগা সমাজখনৰ অন্তৰ্জীৱন আৰু বহিৰ্জীৱন- দুয়োটা স্তৰতে বিস্তৰ প্ৰভাৱ পেলাইছে। যুদ্ধত টিকিব নোৱাৰি জাপানী সৈন্যই নগাভূমিৰ পৰা বিদায় লৈছে যদিও “বগা চাহাববোৰ আহিছে, সিহঁতে বা

কি কৰে তাক ভাবি মানুহবোৰৰ মনত নকৈ আতংকৰ উদয়” হৈছে। নগা গাভৰু চাৰেংলাৰ জীৱনলৈ জাপানী সৈন্য ইশ্চৰৰাৰ জৰিয়তে নামি আহিছে কাৰুণ্যৰ কলীয়া ডাৱৰ; ভিজল বুঢ়াৰ পুতেক ভিডেচেলীয়ে সমগ্ৰ নগাৰাজ্যখন স্বাধীন কৰি এখন সাৰ্বভৌম ৰাষ্ট্ৰ গঢ়াৰ পৰিকল্পনা কৰি সেই পৰিকল্পনাক বাস্তৱ ৰূপ দিবলৈ ব্যাকুল হৈ পৰিছে; ভিডেচেলীৰ বিদ্ৰোহী নেতৃত্বত সহজে ভোল গৈ ফানিটফাঙৰ দৰে সৰল সহজ তথা অপৰিপক্ক মনৰ বহু নগা যুৱক ক্ৰমে হৈ পৰিছে দিশহাৰা আৰু বিভ্ৰান্ত; নগাসমাজৰ আন এচাম চেতনাশীল আৰু পৰিৱৰ্তনশীল মানসিকতাৰ যুৱক-যুৱতীয়ে আকৌ বিশ্বাঙৰ দৰে আধুনিক শিক্ষা-দীক্ষাৰে পৰিপক্ক নেতাৰ জৰিয়তে মহাত্মা গান্ধীৰ অহিংসা আন্দোলনৰ নীতি-আদৰ্শেৰেই যে স্বাধীনতাৰ মোহ-মুক্তিক প্ৰকৃত মুক্তিৰ উপলব্ধিৰ পৰ্য্যায়লৈ উত্তৰণ ঘটাব পৰা যায় সেই সম্পৰ্কত প্ৰত্যয় গৈছে; পুৰণি বিশ্বাস আৰু ৰীতি-নীতিৰ ঠাইত খৃষ্টান ধৰ্মৰ দ্ৰুত সম্প্ৰসাৰণ ঘটিছে, যি তৎকালীন নগা সমাজখনত এক প্ৰকাৰৰ সামাজিক তথা সাংস্কৃতিক সংঘাতৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে; ইফালে পৰম্পৰা আৰু ৰীতি-নীতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত থকা প্ৰজাতীয় গোড়ামিক উচ্চ স্থান দি থকা নাজেকৰ দৰে নগা সমাজৰ আপোচহীন লোকেও শেষত পৰিৱৰ্তনক স্বীকাৰ কৰি লৈছে; অসমীয়া প্ৰগতিশীল মনৰ যুৱক জীৱনে সৰ্বস্ব ত্যাগ কৰি নগা সমাজখনক নিজৰ কৰি লৈছে আৰু নগাভূমিত শাস্ত্ৰ শান্তিৰ স্থাপনৰ উদ্দেশ্যেৰে আগবাঢ়ি যোৱা বিশ্বাঙক তেওঁৰ যাত্ৰাপথৰ সহযোগী কৰি লৈছে। - এনে এক জটিল তথা বিচিত্ৰ ৰূপৰ সজীৱ পটভূমিৰ সৃষ্টিৰ জৰিয়তে ঔপন্যাসিক গৰাকীয়ে ‘ভাৱিষ্যতিক’ অভিব্যক্তিৰ সঞ্চাৰণ ঘটাইছে আৰু সামাজিক ৰূপান্তৰৰ তথা সলনিৰ প্ৰচ্ছন্ন ইংগিতেৰে শেষ হৈছে উপন্যাসখনি (এই প্ৰসংগতে লেখক

ভট্টাচার্যই “মোৰ উপন্যাসঃ নেপথ্যৰ কথা” শীৰ্ষক এটি প্ৰবন্ধত এইদৰে প্ৰকাশ কৰিছিল : “..... এনে অবিচ্ছিন্ন সলনিৰ ইংগিত লেখকে উপন্যাসত থৈ যাব লাগিব। নহ’লে কালক মহাকালৰ লগত আৰু স্থানক ব্ৰহ্মাণ্ডৰ লগত সংযুক্ত কৰা অসম্ভৱ। এই কাৰণেই মই সদায় চেষ্টা কৰোঁ একোটা ‘ভাৱিষ্যতিক’ উপাদান উপন্যাসত সুমুৱাই দিবলৈ”।

সমাজৰ ৰূপান্তৰ সম্পৰ্কত সূক্ষ্ম বিশ্লেষণী মন এটাৰে লেখকে উপন্যাসখনি ৰচনা কৰিছে। ভিডেচেলীৰ চৰিত্ৰটোৰ জৰিয়তে স্থিতাবস্থাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সমকালীন সামাজিক পৰিৱৰ্ত্তনটোত কেনেকৈ উঠি অহা চাম অধৈৰ্য্য হৈ পৰিছে, লগতে বিদ্ৰোহৰ আবেগৰ ধলত উঠি ভাঁহি গৈ কেনেকৈ তেওঁলোকৰ মাজৰে অতুৎসাহী এচামে শেহত হিংসাকেই অস্ত্ৰ কৰি লোৱাৰ ফলত সামগ্ৰিকভাৱে সমাজখনৰ ক্ষতিৰ আশংকাহে প্ৰবল হৈ পৰিছে — এই সন্দৰ্ভত পাঠকক অৱগত কৰাবলৈ সমৰ্থ হৈছে। আগ-পিচ নুগুণি কেৱল আবেগ সৰ্বস্ব উগ্ৰ জাতীয়তাবাদী মানসিকতাৰে কৰা যিকোনো বিক্ষোভৰ ফলাফল যে ভয়াবহ আৰু ক্ষতিকৰ হ’বলৈ বাধ্য তাকে যেন তেওঁ প্ৰকাৰান্তৰে প্ৰকাশ কৰিব বিচাৰিছে ভিডেচেলীৰ চৰিত্ৰায়ণৰ মাধ্যমেৰে। কলিকতাত সাংবাদিকতাৰ উচ্চ শিক্ষাৰ আৰু ‘বাঁহী’ আলোচনীৰ সম্পাদনাৰ কামত থাকোঁতেই তেওঁ এনে বিক্ষোভ কিম্বা আন্দোলনৰ সৰ্বগ্ৰাসী টোৰ পৰিণতি কেনে হ’ব পাৰে সেই সম্পৰ্কে তেওঁৰ চৌপাশে ঘটা অনেক ঘটনাৰ জৰিয়তে অনুভৱ কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছিল। বিশেষকৈ ১৯৪৬ চনৰ কলিকতাৰ সাম্প্ৰদায়িক ৰায়তত তেওঁৰ কবি-বন্ধু অমূল্য বৰুৱাৰ মৃত্যু ঘটিছিল আৰু উক্ত ঘটনাই তেওঁৰ মনটোক এক বিষাদ-চেতনাৰে সদায় আকীৰ্ণ কৰি ৰাখিছিল। ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ত অংকিত হোৱা ১৯৪৬ৰ সাম্প্ৰদায়িক-সংঘৰ্ষকালীন কলিকতাৰ এই বিশেষ খণ্ডচিত্ৰই পাঠকৰ হৃদয়-কুণ্ডলত লেখকৰ যত্নবোধক হুমুনিয়াহলৈ ৰূপান্তৰ ঘটোৱাৰ লগতে উক্ত প্ৰেক্ষাপটত ভিডেচেলী চৰিত্ৰটোৰ তথা তেওঁ বাচি লোৱা পথটোৰ নেতিবাচক তাৎপৰ্য্য সম্পৰ্কেও যেন উপলব্ধিৰ দুৱাৰ মুকলি কৰিছে। ১৯৪৭ চনত অৰ্থাৎ উক্ত ঘটনাৰ এবছৰ পিছতেই ভট্টাচার্য গুৱাহাটীলৈ ঘূৰি আহি জয়প্ৰকাশ নাৰায়ণৰ নেতৃত্বত নতুনকৈ গঠিত হোৱা সমাজবাদী দলত যোগান কৰে। গণতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজবাদৰ আধাৰত সৃষ্টিৰ সাধনা আৰু অভিজ্ঞতাৰ ‘পৰীক্ষিত সত্য’ৰ মণিকাঞ্চন-সংযোগৰ ফলশ্ৰুতিত ভট্টাচার্যৰ মনত সুস্থিৰ বৌদ্ধিক পৰিমণ্ডল এটা আপোনা-আপুনি গঢ়লৈ

উঠিল আৰু স্বাধীনোত্তৰ ভাৰতত স্বাধীনতাৰ প্ৰসংগত হোৱা ৰাইজৰ মোহ-মুক্তি তথা মহাসমৰৰ অনাছত বা-মাৰলিত তছ নছ হ’বলৈ ধৰা জনজীৱনৰ হতাশাৰ খেও ধৰি নতুন প্ৰজন্মৰ মনত ক্ৰমে গঁজালি মেলিবলৈ ধৰা সামাজিক ৰূপান্তৰৰ সম্ভাৱনাৰ প্ৰচ্ছন্ন ছবিখনক সাহিত্যৰ মাধ্যমেৰে অভিব্যক্ত কৰিবলৈ যেন তেওঁ এতিয়া অধিক ব্যগ্ৰ হৈ পৰিল! ১৯৫০ চনত তেখেতে মণিপুৰৰ উখুলৰ এখনি নগা গাঁৱত নতুনকৈ স্থাপন হোৱা খ্ৰিষ্টিয়ান মিশ্যনেৰী স্কুল এখনত শিক্ষক হিচাপে যোগান কৰে। সেই সময়তে নগাসকলৰ প্ৰজাতীয় মনবোৰ আৰু লগতে নগা জাতীয় মনটোৰ সৈতে তেখেতৰ নিবিড় সান্নিধ্য ঘটে। নগা সমাজৰ সমষ্টিগত জীৱনটোৰ বিচিত্ৰ ৰূপ আৰু লগতে ব্যক্তিগত জীৱনৰ পৰিধিৰো বিচিত্ৰ খণ্ড-চিত্ৰবোৰে তেখেতক এই মানুহখিনিৰ জীৱনটোক বহল আৰু ঐতিহাসিক ৰূপত উপলব্ধি কৰিবলৈ উৎসাহিত কৰে। ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ৰ “মোখনী”ত লেখকে এই প্ৰসংগতে পাঠকক এইদৰে জনাই থৈছে — “টাংখুল নগাবিলাকৰ লগত বাস কৰোঁতে তেওঁলোকৰ বিচিত্ৰ জীৱনৰ ভিতৰ চ’ৰাত সোমাবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিলো। দৃষ্টিয়ে যিমান দূৰ চাব পাৰে সিমান দূৰলৈকে মানুহবোৰৰ অন্তৰ-জগতখন চাবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছিলো। কিন্তু সেইটো কাম মোৰ পক্ষে বলে নোৱাৰা শিলৰ দৰে গধুৰ হৈছিল। ভিন্ন পৰিবেশত জীৱনৰ ভিন্ন ৰূপ ফুটি উঠে। সেই সময়ত জীৱনক বহল আৰু ঐতিহাসিক ৰূপত উপলব্ধি কৰিব পাৰি। নগাবিলাকো মানুহ, কিন্তু এক বিশেষ ধৰণৰ মানুহ। তেওঁলোকৰ হৃদয়ৰ লৌহ-বৰ্মৰ অন্তৰালত সনাতন মানৱতাৰ অপূৰ্ব ৰূপ-কুসুম ফুলি আছে।” ১৯৬০ চনত প্ৰকাশ পোৱা তেওঁ এই বিশেষ উপন্যাসখনিৰ নাম থ’লে : “ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম”। এই নামটোৰ সম্পৰ্কত “মোৰ উপন্যাসঃ নেপথ্যৰ কথা” শীৰ্ষক লেখাত তেখেতে এইদৰে প্ৰকাশ কৰিছিল : “ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম মোৰ এজন নগা বন্ধু ল’ৰাৰ নাম। বন্ধু আদৰ্শবাদী আছিল, সেইবাবে “ৰাইজৰ শাসন” বা “ৰাইজৰ ল’ৰা” এই ভাব নিজৰ প্ৰিয় পুত্ৰ সন্তানৰ ওপৰত আৰোপ কৰিলে। এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ ঘটনাটিয়ে মোৰ মনত এৰাব নোৱাৰা ছাপ বহুৱালে। কিন্তু উপন্যাসৰ ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ বাপেকৰ জীৱনৰ স্বপ্ন-স্বৰূপ। জীয়া ইয়াৰুইঙ্গমৰ লগত এই ইয়াৰুইঙ্গমৰ সম্পৰ্ক কম। ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম এটা ৰাজনৈতিক আদৰ্শ মাথোন, অথবা প্ৰতীক।.....”

আপাত দৃষ্টিত উপন্যাসখনিৰ ভৌগোলিক পটভূমি যদিওবা মণিপুৰৰ উখুল, বহল অৰ্থত ই স্থানীয়তাক অতিক্ৰমি

বাস্তৱৰ অলেখ যোজন আঁতৰত উপন্যাসিকৰ জীৱন- বীক্ষা সম্বলিত এক শক্তিশালী সাহিত্য। লেখকে নিজেও “আধুনিক জ্ঞানলব্ধ, সমাজতাত্ত্বিক পোহৰ” সাহিত্যত নিষ্কপ কৰাৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাৰ কথা সদায় দোহাৰিছিল। সাংস্কৃতিক ঔপনিবেশিকতাৰ প্ৰবল অভিঘাতৰ বিৰুদ্ধে বিতত-প্ৰায় উত্তৰ পূব ভাৰতৰ এই বিশেষ প্ৰান্তীয় অঞ্চলটোৰ খিলঞ্জীয়া অধিবাসীসকলে যি প্ৰতিৰোধ আচৰণেৰে প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে (উপন্যাসখনিত) এনে ধৰণৰ প্ৰতিৰোধ আচৰণক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি বিশ্ব সাহিত্যত হেজাৰ-বিজাৰ অনুপম কথা সাহিত্যৰ সংযোগ ঘটাইছে। কিন্তু ঔপনিবেশিক শাসন, শোষণ আৰু অবদমনৰ ফলত একোখন প্ৰান্তীয় (marginalised) সমাজত একোটা জনগোষ্ঠীৰ সাংস্কৃতিক সত্ত্বাটোৰ অস্তিত্বকলৈ হ'ব পৰা শংকা আৰু উদ্ভিগ্নতাকলৈ সৃষ্টি কৰা কথা-সাহিত্য অসমীয়া ভাষাত বৰ বেছিনহ'ব। সাংস্কৃতিক ঔপনিবেশিকতাৰ বিৰুদ্ধাচৰণ কৰি ৰচনা কৰা উত্তৰ-ঔপনিবেশিক সাহিত্য ৰচনাৰ প্ৰক্ৰিয়াটোক ইংৰাজী – ‘decolonization’ (বিউপনিবেশিকীকৰণ) শব্দটোৰ জনা যায়। বিউপনিবেশিকীকৰণ প্ৰক্ৰিয়াটোৰ সম্পৰ্কত গৱেষক প্ৰমোদ কে. নাৰায়ণে তেওঁৰ “Postcolonial Literature : an Introduction” শীৰ্ষক গ্ৰন্থত এইদৰে ব্যাখ্যা দাঙি ধৰিছে :

“Decolonization is marked by a reaffirmation 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”

উপন্যাসখনিৰ বিশ্বজনীন আবেদনটোৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত যুদ্ধ আৰু শান্তিৰ মাজৰ চিৰন্তন দ্বন্দ্বৰ theme টোৰ বিশেষ ভূমিকা আছে। যদিওবা উপন্যাসখনিয়ে সাংস্কৃতিক ঔপনিবেশিকতা বনাম ঐতিহ্য, জাতীয় সত্ত্বাৰ অস্তিত্বৰ সন্ধান, সামাজিক অৱক্ষয় তথা সমাজৰ ক্লেদময় ৰূপ, প্ৰেমৰ মহিমামণ্ডিত স্বৰূপ, স্বাধীনতাৰ মোহ, স্বাধীনতাৰ মোহ-মুক্তি, হিংসা বনাম অহিংসা, প্ৰেম বনাম ঘৃণা ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন পৰিক্ষেত্ৰৰ মাজেৰে এক বহুমাত্ৰিক জীৱন দৃষ্টি সামৰি লৈছে, যুদ্ধ আৰু শান্তিৰ মাজৰ চিৰন্তন দ্বন্দ্বটোৱেই প্ৰথমৰ পৰা শেহলৈকে ইয়াত ইয়াৰ বিশ্বজনীন আবেদনটোৰ গুণধৰ্ম নিৰূপণৰ দিশত মূলতঃ ক্ৰিয়াশীল হৈ আছে। সাধাৰণ মানুহবোৰৰ মনবোৰ প্ৰলয়ৰ বাবে নহয়, শান্তিৰ বাবেহে সদা-উন্মুখ। সেয়েহে এটা গভীৰ আশাবাদেৰে উপন্যাসিকে তেওঁৰ বৃত্তান্তৰ অন্ত পেলাইছে। উত্তৰ-

পূবৰ এক বিশেষ প্ৰান্তীয় জনগোষ্ঠীৰ জীৱনৰ পটভূমিত ৰচিত হৈও উপন্যাসখনিয়ে লেখকৰ বহল সামাজিক বাস্তৱবোধ আৰু সুগভীৰ জীৱন-বোধৰ মাৰফত বৃত্তান্তত নিহিত হৈ থকা প্ৰান্তীয় পৰিধিক চেৰাই সৰ্বশেষত এক বিশালয়াতন লাভ কৰিছে। ভট্টাচাৰ্যই তেওঁৰ বিজ্ঞানসন্মত সমাজমনস্কতা আৰু মৌলিক হৃদয়বৃত্তিৰ মাৰফত এই মানুহখিনিৰ সমাজ জীৱনত তৰপে তৰপে সৃষ্টি হোৱা অসহায়বোধখিনিক তীক্ষ্ণ অন্তৰ্দৃষ্টিৰে চালি জাৰি চাওঁতেই উপন্যাসখনি ইয়াৰ স্বমহিম ৰূপত আপোনা আপুনি জিলিকি উঠিছে। কি পৰিস্থিতিত ভিডেচেলীৰ দৰে এজন সাধাৰণ নগা যুৱকে হাতত মৰণাস্ত্ৰ তুলি লৈ এটা বিদ্রোহৰ নেতৃত্ব দিব লগা হৈছে, কিদৰে চাৰেংলাৰ দৰে সাধাৰণ এগৰাকী নগা গাভৰুৱে সৰ্বস্ব হেৰুৱাই এক অনিশ্চিত ভৱিষ্যতক সাৰটি ল'ব লগা হৈছে, কিদৰে নগা সমাজৰ আপোচহীন দুৰ্দম্য সাহসী জাতীয় সত্ত্বাটোৰ ‘স্বলন’ দেখি নাজেকৰ দৰে চৰিত্ৰই নিজ পুত্ৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধে কঠোৰ দৃষ্টিভংগী পোষণ কৰি তেওঁক ত্যজ্য কৰিবলৈকো কুণ্ঠিত হোৱা নাই, কিদৰে গীৰ্জা ঘৰ সজালৈ সমাজৰ দুটা পক্ষৰ মাজত বিৰোধ তথা সংঘাতৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছে – এনেবোৰ বিষয়ত ব্যক্তি-মানসৰ লগতে নগা সমাজখনৰো স্বকীয় মানসিকতাৰ অভ্যন্তৰলৈ জুমি চাবলৈ ঔপন্যাসিকে বিশেষ প্ৰয়াস কৰিছে আৰু ইয়াৰ বাবে নগা সমাজৰ ভিতৰৰ ফালটোলৈ প্ৰৱেশ কৰি তেওঁ তেওঁলোকৰ জীৱনৰ সাৰল্যতা, দ্বিধা-দ্বন্দ্ব, সামাজিক জীৱন-চয়ন, প্ৰেম-ঘৃণা, সুখ-দুখ, জাতীয়বোধ, সামাজিক মৰ্যদাবোধ, সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতি, পৰিবৰ্তনাকাংক্ষী মনোভাৱক একান্ত সংবেদনশীলতাৰে গমি পিতি চোৱাৰ লগতে যথার্থ ৰূপত উপস্থাপন কৰিবলৈকো যত্নপৰ হৈছে। ঔপন্যাসিকে নগাসকলৰ স্বাধীন-মনা স্বভাৱটোক আখ্যানটিৰ জৰিয়তে এফালে দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰিছে, আন ফালে যুদ্ধ আৰু ঔপনিবেশিক শাসন আৰু ক্ষয়িষ্ণু প্ৰতিস্থানিক ব্যৱস্থাই কিদৰে তেওঁলোকৰ জীৱনৰ প্ৰতিটো দিশলৈকে বহু অনাছত পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ আমদানি কৰিছে, সেই সংঘাত আৰু অৱক্ষয়ৰ চাকনৈয়াৰ ছবিখনিকো অনভূতি আৰু চিন্তাৰ সমন্বয়েৰে অতি প্ৰত্যয়জনকভাৱে আগবঢ়াই নিছে। বিশ্বযুদ্ধত জাপান ইম্ফলক বৃষ্টিৰ পৰা নিজৰ হাতলৈ আনিবলৈ সৰ্বশক্তি প্ৰয়োগ কৰি সন্মিলিত শক্তিৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সমুখ সমৰত লিপ্ত হ'ল। ইমান দিনে আপেক্ষিকভাৱে শান্তিত থকা নগা সমাজখনলৈ অশান্তিৰ কলীয়া ডাৱৰ নামি আহিল। এই সংঘাতৰ অতিঘাতত বলী হোৱা সকলৰ বিক্ষুব্ধ আত্মাৰ প্ৰতিচ্ছবি বিচাৰি পাব পাৰি

চাৰেংলা চৰিত্ৰটোৰ মাধ্যমত। উপন্যাসখনৰ ৰাজনৈতিক প্ৰেক্ষাপটটোত প্ৰচ্ছন্ন ৰূপত ব্যাপ্ত হৈ থকা সমকালৰ ব্ৰহ্মধ্বনি চাৰেংলাৰ চৰিত্ৰটোৰে অভিব্যক্তি কৰিছে। চৰিত্ৰটোৰে উক্ত পটভূমিকটোক অধিক বাস্তৱানুগতাত প্ৰদান কৰিছে। অৱশ্যে পৰিৱৰ্তিত ৰাজনৈতিক পৰিস্থিতিয়ে ইয়াৰ লগতে নগা সমাজখনৰ কেতবোৰ ইতিবাচক সলনিৰ সম্ভাৱনাৰ ইংগিতো দাঙি ধৰিছে। ঔপনিবেশিকতাৰ হাত ধৰি সোমাই অহা বগা চাহাবৰ ধৰ্মৰ বতাহ চাটিয়ে ঠায়ে ঠায়ে সংঘাতময় পৰিস্থিতি সৃষ্টি কৰিলেও মিশ্যনেৰীসকলৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাতেই পাহাৰীয়া লোকসকলৰ মনত শিক্ষাৰ পোহৰ পৰিবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিছে আৰু স্বাস্থ্য-সচেতনতাৰো শ্ৰীবৃদ্ধি ঘটিছে। তলৰ উদ্ধৃতিটিয়েই নিশ্চয় সামাজিক পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ সম্ভাৱনাৰ ইংগিতময় দিশটোক আঙুলিয়াই দেখুৱাবলৈ যথেষ্ট হ'ব :

“ওচৰৰ আটাইবোৰ গাঁৱতে বৰ আই ওলাইছে। মিশ্যনেৰীয়ে কৈ পঠিয়াইছে যে তেওঁৰ ক্লিনিকৰ পৰাই সম্প্ৰতিকৈ ছিটা দিয়া বন্দৰস্তু কৰা হৈছে। স্বেচ্ছাসেৱক গৈ ঘৰে ঘৰে মানুহক ছিটা দিব লাগে। কিন্তু মানুহবোৰে ছিটা ল'বলৈ ভয় কৰিছে। নাজেকে আকৌ সাত পুৰুষত নোহোৱা কথা এটা গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ ৰাজী হোৱা নাই। কেৱল বিশ্বাঙৰ দেউতাকেহে দৃঢ়তাৰে কৈছে যে মানুহে ছিটা ল'বই লাগে।...”

নক'লেও হ'ব, বাস্তৱৰ খণ্ড-বিক্ষিপ্ত স্বৰূপটোক, ইয়াৰ জটিল ৰূপটোক এইদৰে সম্বলিত কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰাৰ মাজেদিয়েই লেখকে উপন্যাসখনিত ইয়াৰ কলা-সমাগ্ৰতাৰ বিকাশ ঘটাবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে।

চৰিত্ৰ সৃষ্টিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত লেখকৰ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক অন্তৰ্দৃষ্টি মন কৰিবলগীয়া। বিশেষকৈ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহক তেওঁ ৰৈচিদ্ৰ্যময় আবেদনেৰে গঢ়ি তোলাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সূক্ষ্ম মনস্তাত্ত্বিক অনুভূতিৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। তদুপৰি এখন পুৰুষশাসিত সমাজৰ বাসিন্দা হৈও একাধিক নাৰী চৰিত্ৰই স্বতন্ত্ৰ ব্যক্তিত্বক সম্পূৰ্ণ বিসৰ্জন দিয়া নাই; নিজে প্ৰত্যক্ষভাৱে বিদ্ৰোহ অথবা প্ৰতিবাদ নকৰিলেও প্ৰতিকূল পৰিস্থিতিৰ মাজতো তেওঁলোকে অন্তৰৰ আতৌল তোল সপোনসমূহক সম্পূৰ্ণ বিসৰ্জন দিয়া নাই। চাৰেংলা চৰিত্ৰটোৰ নিৰ্মাণৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত লেখকে বিশেষ মননশীল দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ পৰিচয় দাঙি ধৰিছে। নাৰীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত “anatomy is the destiny of woman” (ফ্ৰয়'ড) বোলাতকৈ পৰিস্থিতিগত

কাৰকহে ইয়াৰ বাবে বিশেষ জগৰীয়া — এনে এক দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে লেখকে উপন্যাসখনিত একাধিক নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ বিকাশ ঘটাইছে।

উপন্যাসখনৰ বৰ্ণনা ৰীতিৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা নকৰিলে এই লেখা অসম্পূৰ্ণ হৈ ৰ'ব। বাস্তৱৰ প্ৰত্যয়জনক বৰ্ণনাই কাহিনীৰ গতিক চলময়তা তথা স্বচ্ছতা প্ৰদান কৰিছে। “জেকা মাটিৰ গোক বতাহত উটি আহি তাইৰ নাকত লাগিলহি” — সংবেদনশীল পাঠকে আৰম্ভণিৰ এই শাৰীটোৰ পৰাই উপন্যাসখনৰ জৰিয়তে যে লেখকে সাধাৰণ মানুহৰ কেঁচা জীৱন-প্ৰবাহৰ যথার্থ অনুভৱৰ এখনি দীপ্তিময় ছবি দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰিছে তাৰ এক সম্ভাৱনা-ধ্বনি অনুভৱ কৰিব পাৰে। উপন্যাসখনৰ বৰ্ণনাৰাতিটোত মূলতঃ অন্তৰ্দীন হৈ আছে যুদ্ধ আৰু শান্তিৰ মাজৰ দ্বন্দ্বৰ অভিঘাতত বলি হ'বলৈ ওলোৱা মানবীয় প্ৰমূল্যৰ সম্পৰ্কত ঔপন্যাসিকৰ মনত সৃষ্টি হোৱা বিষাদবোধটো। উপন্যাসখনত এই সংঘাতৰ সমান্তৰালকৈ আন বহুকেইটা সামাজিক আৰু ব্যক্তিগত পৰ্যায়ৰ সংঘাতো বিবৃত হৈছে আৰু এই দ্বন্দ্বসমূহৰ উপস্থাপনৰ জৰিয়তেই উপন্যাসখনে ইয়াৰ গতিশীলতা লাভ কৰিছে। উচ্চ শিক্ষাৰে শিক্ষিত যুৱক বিশ্বাঙে উপলব্ধি কৰিছে যে মহাত্মা গান্ধী আৰু যীশুৰ পথেৰেহে তেওঁৰ সমাজখনে স্থিৰতা আৰু প্ৰকৃত মুক্তিৰ সোৱাদ পাব পাৰে। ইয়াৰ বিপৰীতে এজন সাধাৰণ নগা যুৱক ভিডেচেলীয়ে সশস্ত্ৰ অভিযানেৰেহে প্ৰকৃত স্বাধীনতা আনিব পৰা যাব বুলি বিশ্বাস বিলাব খুজিছে নগা যুৱক যুৱতিসকলৰ মনত। আন এক স্তৰত ঔপনিবেশিক শাসনতন্ত্ৰৰ খেও ধৰি বাহিৰৰ পৰা সোমাই অহা বতাহছাটিৰ সৈতে নগা সমাজৰ স্বকীয় পৰম্পৰাগত সামাজিক তথা সাংস্কৃতিক সত্ত্বাটোৰ মাজত সৃষ্টি হৈছে এক পৰস্পৰবিৰোধী প্ৰমূল্যগত সংঘাত। ব্যক্তিগত স্তৰত চাৰেংলাই নিয়তিৰ স'তে হোৱা তেওঁৰ সংঘাতত অৱশেষত নিয়তিৰ ওচৰত মূৰ দোঁৱাবলগীয়া হৈছে (“অত্যন্ত অকলশৰীয়া অনুভৱ কৰিলেও অপূৰ্ব দৃঢ়তাৰে নিয়তিৰ স'তে সন্ধি কৰিবৰ বাবে তাই ঠিৰাং কৰি পেলালে।”), গীৰ্জা সাজিবলৈ মাটি দিয়াক লৈ ইয়েংমাচ আৰু খাটিংখুইৰ মাজত প্ৰবল সংঘাতৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছে আৰু “উখুলৰ প্ৰত্যেক ঘৰতে জীৱন-মৃত্যু আৰু মৰম-নিষ্ঠুৰতাৰ দ্বন্দ্ব চলিছে” আৰু “সেই দ্বন্দ্ব দিনক দিনে মূৰ্ত্ত আৰু ভয়াবহ হৈ আহিছে।” ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ বৰ্ণনাৰীতিৰ এটি বিশেষ মন কৰিবলগীয়া দিশ হ'লগৈ মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী বাস্তৱৰ পৰিৱেশ ৰচনা আৰু দ্বন্দ্ব বিৰোধৰ বৃত্তান্ত পৰিৱেশনাৰ ফাঁকে ফাঁকে জীৱনৰ মোহময় দিশটোৰ আৱিষ্কাৰ আৰু অন্বেষণৰ আকাংক্ষা-চেতনা।

কাব্যিক অভিযোজনাৰ মাৰফত উপন্যাসখনিত লেখকৰ জীৱন-দৃষ্টি সংকীৰ্ণতাৰ পৰা মুক্ত হ'বলৈ সুযোগ পাইছে আৰু ক'বলৈ গ'লে জীৱনৰ কুটিল বাস্তৱতাৰ বিপৰীতে স্থাপন কৰা এই বিক্ষিপ্ত স্নিগ্ধমধুৰ আলফুলীয়া কাব্যিক অভিব্যক্তি সমূহে উপন্যাসখনিক অধিক অৰ্থবহু আৰু সুখপাঠ্য কৰি তোলাত সহায় কৰিছে। আনফালে বিশেষভাৱে মন কৰিবলগীয়া কথাটো হ'লগৈ কবি ৱাৰ্ডছৱৰ্থৰ দৰেই মানুহ যে বিশ্ব-প্ৰকৃতিৰ অন্যতম এক বাস্তৱ উপাদান-সত্তা, সেই বোধটোকে কাব্যিক অভিব্যঞ্জনাৰ জৰিয়তে তথা গদ্যৰ মাধ্যমেৰে উপন্যাসখনিত তেখেতে অনবদ্য ৰূপত সংযোজন ঘটাইছে। ইন্দ্ৰিয়ানুভূতি বিজড়িত ৰমন্যাসিক চেতনাৰে মানুহ আৰু প্ৰকৃতিৰ নিগূঢ় সম্পৰ্কৰ এই প্ৰতীতি-অন্বেষণ কাহিনীকাৰৰ বৰ্ণনাৰীতিৰ এক অন্যতম বৈশিষ্ট্য। উক্ত চেতনাৰ তথা অন্বেষণৰ প্ৰতিফলন ঘটা উপন্যাসখনিৰ এনে গদ্যৰ দুই চানেকি দাঙি ধৰা হ'ল –

“কামৰ নৈখনৰ খৰসোঁতৰ ফেনবোৰ হঠাতে উজ্জ্বল মুকুতাৰ দৰে জিলিকিলে; নৈৰ সিপাৰৰ ঘন, নিবিড় আৰু ক'লা বননিখনৰ ছাই নিসঙ্গতাক মনোৰম কৰি তুলিছিল। বননিৰ সিপাৰে দুৰৈৰ চিৰৈ পৰ্বতটোত বৰ বগা এচপৰা ডাৰৰে শৰৎ কালৰ জোনৰ দৰে লাহে লাহে আকাশত গম্ভীৰ খোজ পেলাইছিল। ওচৰত সুকণ্ঠী খুটিংলাৰ শায়িতা দেহৰ মৃদু সৌৰভ ফুটি ওলাইছিল। বিশ্বাঙৰ মনত হ'ল, এইটো এটা চৰাইঘৰ। ইয়াত মানুহ, প্ৰকৃতি আৰু প্ৰেমৰ মিলন ঘটিছে। চাৰিওফালে এক অনাবিল শক্তি।”

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“পৃথিৱীৰ কোনো জীৱকে তাৰ তেতিয়া পৰ যেন লগা নাছিল। ধুনীয়া পাইন বনৰ তলৰ ছিৰলি ছাঁতছেও মণিৰ দৰে গুটিবোৰ পৰি আছিল। কচু খোৰৰ দৰে ৰঙা, তিতা পাইন-পাতবোৰ তাৰ আচহুৱা ভৰিৰ খোজ লাগি মৰ্মৰাই উঠিছিল। তলৰ বিশাল এন্ধাৰত সৰু সৰু গছৰ জোপাবোৰ কোনোবা অজ্ঞাত ৰাজ্যৰ নিঃশব্দ প্ৰহৰীৰ দৰে তাত থিয় দি আছিল। কিছুপৰ নীৰৱে যোৱাৰ পিছত তাৰ অনুভৱ হ'ল

যেন হাবি আৰু তাৰ মাজত আৰু একো প্ৰভেদ নাই।”

প্ৰকৃতিৰ বিক্ষিপ্ত ছবিৰ মাজত ক'ৰবাত ক'ৰবাত মানুহৰ বিষাদ আৰু কাৰুণ্যতাৰ প্ৰতিচ্ছবিৰ সন্ধানৰ প্ৰতিফলনো উপন্যাসিকগৰাকীৰ গদ্যৰীতিৰ আন এক দিশ। দুটি চানেকি :

“বিশ্বাঙৰ মনটোৱে চাৰেংলাৰ অধঃপতনৰ কথা ভাবি বিষাদত কান্দি উঠিল; কিন্তু মুখেৰে একো নক'লে। হৃদয়ে বাৰে বাৰে তাইৰ উদ্ধাৰৰ বাবে প্ৰাৰ্থনা কৰিবলৈ লাগি গ'ল। এচটা ডাৰৰে জোনটো ঢাকি দিলেহি। খন্তেকৰ বাবে পোহৰ আৰু এন্ধাৰৰ মাজত এখন অঁৰিয়া-অঁৰি দেখা গ'ল পৰ্বতমালাৰ বুকুত।.....”

* * *

“..... সি মাতিলে ‘আই!’

বতাহৰ সোঁসোঁৱনিত তাৰ মাতটো উৰি গৈ ওচৰত কেনিবা হেৰাই গ'ল। মাকৰ কোনো সঁহাৰিয়েই নেপালে। আকৌ সি মাতিলে, ‘আই, নেমাত কিয় আই?’ তাৰ মাতটো ভাগি পৰিছিল। কিন্তু মাকৰ কোনো মাত নেপালে। বহুত দুৰৰ পৰা তেতিয়াও খ্ৰীষ্টমাচৰ কেৰলৰ গীতৰ ধ্বনি ভাহি আহিছিল। ওচৰত এজোপা গছৰ পৰা চপ্-চপকৈ ডেউকা কোবাই এটা চৰাই উৰি যোৱাৰ শব্দ হ'ল। ওপৰৰ চালখনত থকা নিগনি, ডালশলীয়াবোৰে হঠাতে ভয়াবহ শব্দ কৰি খৰ্মৰাই উঠিল। বিশ্বাঙে দেখিলে পাকঘৰত বতাহৰ বিৰুদ্ধে মৰো জীওঁ সো আধিকৈ জ্বলা চাকিৰ পোহৰৰ শিখাবোৰ কাঁপিছে। বাহিৰত ধুমুহা লগা গছবোৰে মূৰ আফালি আফালি কান্দিছে। এক অসহ্য শোকত বিশ্বাঙৰ চকুৰ পৰা সৰি পৰিল এটুপি চকুলো।”

ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’এ ইয়াৰ প্ৰকাশৰ দিনৰে পৰা আজি পৰ্যন্ত সমালোচক আৰু পণ্ডিত-গৱেষকৰ মনত ইয়াৰসমীক্ষা আৰু মূল্যায়নৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বিশেষ আগ্ৰহৰ সৃষ্টি কৰি আহিছে। ড° নগেন শইকীয়াই মত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে - “এই উপন্যাসখনৰ মাজত নগাজীৱনৰ সামাজিক স্বৰূপতকৈও সমাজ মানসিকতাৰ সমকালীন স্বৰূপ ফুটি উঠিছে।” ড° হীৰেন

গোহাঁয়ে অনুভব কৰিছে : “ বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ এখন সাৰ্থক উপন্যাস। লেখকে ওচৰৰ পৰা অন্তৰংগভাৱে নাগাসকলৰ জীৱন পৰ্য্যবেক্ষণ কৰিব পৰা বাবেই নাগাবিদ্রোহে ইয়াত এক বিশ্বাসযোগ্য মানবীয় ৰূপ লৈছে, মধ্যবিন্ত গতানুগতিক সঁহাৰিৰ উৰ্বৰত উঠিছে।.....” ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ উপন্যাসত ৰাজনৈতিক চেতনাৰ প্ৰসংগত তেখেতৰ এটি লেখাত ড° কৃষ্ণ কুমাৰ মিশ্ৰই ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ত লেখকৰ প্ৰফেটিক দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ প্ৰকাশ ঘটা বুলি মত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। তেখেতৰ মতে : “নগাসকলৰ জাতীয় জীৱনৰ অন্তৰালত সংঘটিত ৰাজনৈতিক দ্বন্দ্বৰ ৰূপায়ণ কৰি তেওঁ তাৰ যোগেদি ভৱিষ্যতৰ আগজাননী দিছে।.... সামৰণিত গভীৰ আশাবাদ উজলি উঠা উপন্যাসখনত

প্ৰতিফলিত ঘটনা পৰৱৰ্তী কালত বাস্তৱত পৰিণত হৈছে।” যুগচিন্তা, সমাজমনস্কতা, গভীৰ জীৱন-চেতনা, ৰাজনৈতিক আৰু সামাজিক দ্বন্দ্ব বিশ্লেষণ, মনস্তাত্ত্বিক অন্তৰ্দৃষ্টি, স্থানীয়তা অতিক্ৰমি বিশ্বজনীন আবেদনৰ সঞ্চাৰণৰ প্ৰয়াস, পৰিৱৰ্তন-আকাংক্ষী বিচাৰ-ব্যগ্ৰতা আৰু সুগভীৰ মানৱতাবাদৰ সংযত, তথা সুসংহত আৱেশত ‘ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম’ হৈ পৰিছে সাধাৰণ পাঠকৰ লগতে চিৰিয়াছ পাঠকৰ বাবেও এখনি অতিকৈ অতুলনীয় তথা সুখপাঠ্য উপন্যাস। সেয়েহে এই উপন্যাসখনিক অসমীয়া কথা সাহিত্যৰ বুৰঞ্জীৰ এক অন্যতম কীৰ্তিস্তম্ভ হিচাপে নিশ্চয় গণ্য কৰিব পৰা যায়।

