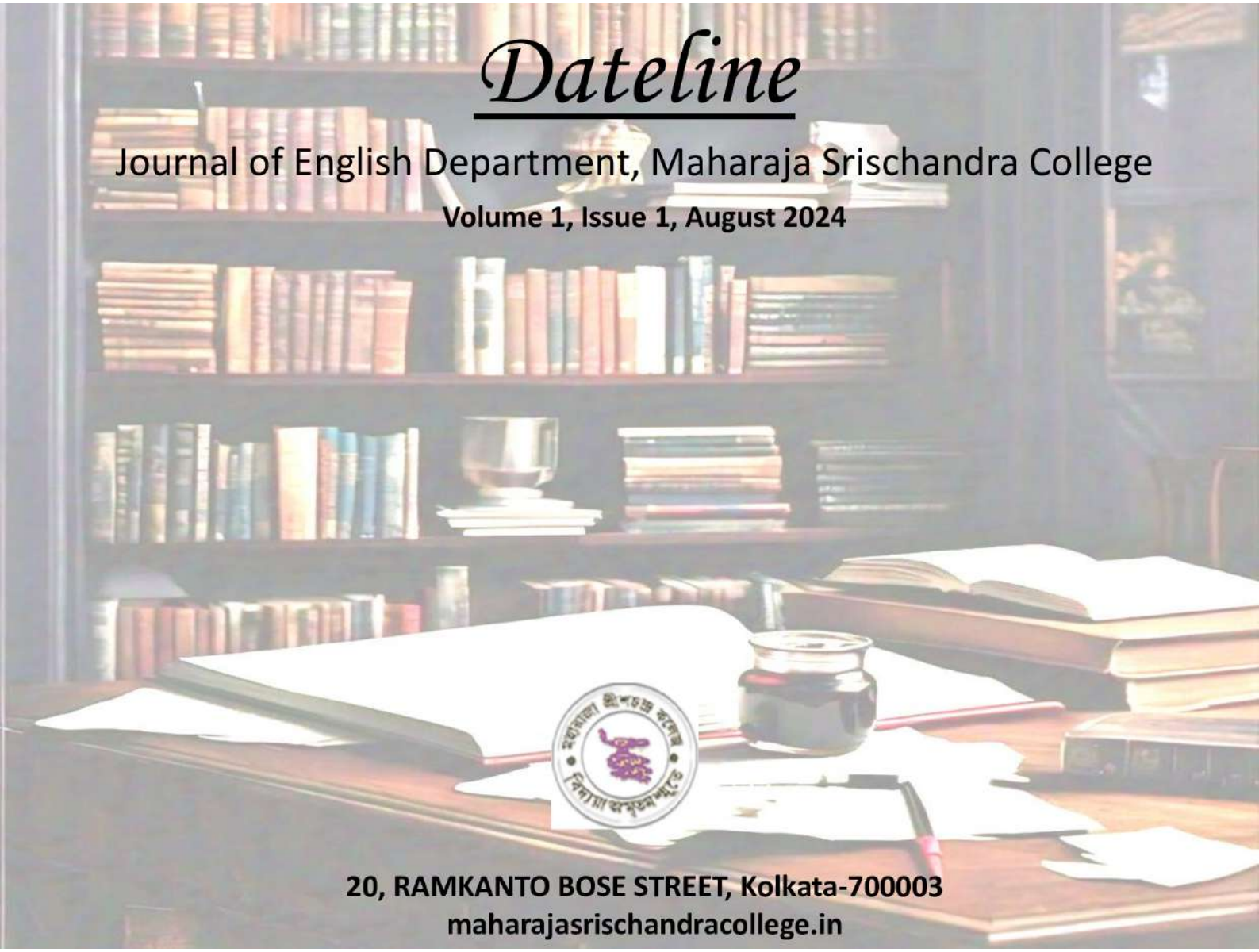

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Journal of English Department, Maharaja Srischandra College

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Editorial board

From the desk of the Principal

I am glad to know that the Department of English of Mahararaja Srischandra College is publishing the departmental journal, named ‘Dateline’ in the online mode. The English Department is the torch bearer of our college's literary activities since its inception and the publication of the online journal is another proof of that. I hope that the literary firmament of the journal will be illuminated with various important creative, innovative and well researched articles. The learned authors and contributors of various academic institutions will enrich the journal through their presentations concerning various societal and literary aspects. The journal shall cater to the needs of a global literary society. I wish our English Department all the best in their endeavour and I pray for their grand success. This journal shall make us righteously proud.

Shyamal Kumar Chakraborty

Preface

It is a matter of great pleasure that this maiden issue of **Dateline**, the journal of the Department of English of Maharaja Srischandra College has been able to explore new domains of thought by bringing together critically informed and scholarly essays on a diverse range of topics. I hope it will spur new intellectual conversations and catalyse debates on issues that find relevance across disciplines. In doing so, this issue of **Dateline** will hopefully be the first stepping stone towards more detailed and expansive volumes and issues in the years to come. I am also quite hopeful that students, teachers and researchers will find this issue interesting and useful.

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Dr. Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen, Professor, Department of Geography, Arizona State University, Dr. Chidananda Bhattacharya, Professor, Department of English, Rabindra Bharati University, Dr. Tapu Biswas, Associate Professor, Department of English, Visva Bharati University, Dr. Aparna Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Diamond Harbour Women's University and Dr. Piyali Gupta, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bethune College for kindly agreeing to be on our Editorial Board. I thank all our contributors for their scholarly and well-researched articles. Last but not the least, all the teachers of the Department of English, Maharaja Srischandra College deserve special thanks for their enthusiasm and tireless efforts to make this new academic venture a success.

Sunanda Ray

Contents

Dynamics of Violence in the North East: Reviewing Some Contemporary Mizo Poems

Aishwarya Banerjee

Abstract:

The Mizo insurgency of the 1960s is a significant chapter in India's history characterized by the Mizo people'squest for their survival, rights and cultural identity. In 1959, Mizo hills were devastatingly struck by a bamboo famine. Unable to procure any massive help from the Central Government, the local famine relief group metamorphosed into a political party naming it Mizo National Front or MNF. Under the leadership of Laldenga, the MNF resorted to arms, declaring independence from India. Repercussions rapidly ensued when the Indian government declared Mizoram to be "a disturbed area" and the Indian Air Force conducted a series of aerial attacks dropping bombs in several parts of Aizawl on 5th March, 1966. This heralded the twenty-year long chronicle of insurgency, *Rambuai*. The Mizo insurgency has been documented in granular details by Malsawmi Jacob whose novel *Zorami: A Redemption Song* is the first English novel from the region that sheds light on the harrowing experiences of Mizo people during the insurgency. Equally important yet overlooked are Jacob's poems that address the trials and tribulations of her land emphasising how the war on humanity is also a war against geography, territory and Nature. Jacob advocates the need for political peace in her poem "Peace Land", "No hurting no killing in this country / the place only for lovers of peace." The post-pandemic vision of a world marked by global cooperation has been constantly and drastically reshaped by reports of violence taking place in the North Eastern region. In such a scenario, Jacob's poems not only harp on the trauma of her people during the insurgency but are also a deliberate plea to recreate a world where vultures cannot have their full meal. This paper thereby attempts to read Malsawmi Jacob's poems from the perspective of insurgency, environment and peace-building in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: Mizo insurgency; Nature; Peace; Poetry; Pandemic.

Introduction

War annihilates civilization and heralds a demolition of body, culture and human consciousness. It is relentless in its own content that brings a dramatic change in the lives of the common people. Diplomacy, politics, territorial expansions are issues that are cut from the lives of the common people. Nonetheless countless lives get stuck in this hell-hole of war violence unable to find an agency to escape the stagnation. The cartographic construct of India's North East reflects a history of conflict and violence. In fact, the instability in North East India is characterized by multifaceted violence – political movements against the Union Government, ethnic clashes among the indigenous groups, and the stringent relationship between the migrants and the non-migrants. Violence as a means of protests and as a means to contain such protests has been the focal point of all the conflicts in the North East. The region has often been defined by separatist struggles against the Indian nation-state and the latter's attempts of crushing it. Although the Naga movementhas been adequatelydiscussed, very little documentation has been done on the Mizo uprising both in terms of information and understanding. The Mizo National Front (MNF) initiated a secessionist armed struggle in 1966. Even after the uprising, there was hardly any report in the mainstream media covering the incident except for a few pieces in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, which were vociferously critical about the state's violation of human rights in the Mizoram.[1]The history of blood and violence in Mizoram thereby remained largely undocumented as is expressed in a report,

> For twenty years, the Mizo people had lived in fear of being branded rebels, and for twenty years, they refrained from writing diaries, creative outpourings or records of experiences because the dreaded soldiers who could not read the language were wont to brand these as "MNF documents[2].(Hluna and Tochhawng)

Malsawmi Jacob, however, has endeavoured to fill this void with her works. The Mizo insurgency has been documented in granular details in her novel *Zorami: A Redemption Song,* which is the first English novel from the region that sheds light on the harrowing experiences of Mizo people during the insurgency. Equally important yet overlooked are Jacob's poems that address the trials and tribulations of her land emphasising how the war on humanity is also a war against geography, territory and Nature.This paper thereby attempts to read contemporary Mizo poems from the perspective of insurgency, environment and peace-building.

Background

Mautam is a cyclic phenomenon that occurs almost every fifty years in Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur, parts of Assam and Myanmar. When a particular species of bamboo flowers across a wide area in these years, it is followed by a "rat flood"- when rats multiply in response to large supplies of bamboo seeds. When the bamboo seeds are exhausted, the rats leave the forests to forage on stored grain, which in turn causes devastating "bamboo famines." In 1959, Mizo hills were devastatingly struck by a bamboo famine. Unable to procure any massive help from the central government, the local famine relief group metamorphosed into a political party naming it Mizo National Front or MNF. Under the leadership of Laldenga, the MNF resorted to arms on 28th February 1966 declaring independence from India. The repercussions followed sooner when the Indian government designated Mizoram to be "a disturbed area" and the Indian Air Force ushered a series of aerial attacks dropping bombs in several parts of Aizawl on 5th March, 1966. This heralded the twenty-year long chronicle of insurgency, *Rambuai* which, when translated into English, means "troubled land". Sanjoy Hazarika gives a vivid account of the insurgency,

> Four days after the rebel assault erupted on 1 March 1966, fighter jets of the Indian Air Force came screaming over Aizawl…It (MNF) had believed that there would be retaliation but not the scale of the counter-strike that followed, which smashed and burnt villages, molested and raped women, virtually displaced the district's entire population, destroyed property and tortured elderly men and youth. The violence was unprecedented in the history of India and its already nascent struggle against the pro-freedom group in Nagaland which had erupted over a decade earlier….The Rambuai had begun in real earnest with a campaign that, fifty years down the line, should make every Indian ashamed of the government and what it did to a civilian population during a time of conflict. (96-98)

However, this twenty year long saga of "manifest violence" forms only the tip of the iceberg while there are other latent forms of violence that remain below the waterline. The insidious grip of "manifest violence" extends to the human psyche long after they have been manifested. The psychological and the psycho-pathological shades of violence depict personalized trauma, a sense of loss and alienation. In *Reconstructing the Bengal Partition: The Psyche under a Different Violence* (2013), Jayanti Basu terms such violence as "soft violence." Such violence is like a living wound as the subjects have been constantly suffering from multiple forms of trauma. Malsawmi Jacob in an interview talked about a similar kind of experience that her people have encountered,

> The story of Mizo people, especially what they went through during those turbulent times, is important. I used to wonder how they were dealing with the psychological trauma of the time even though 'political peace' had returned. After listening to many people, I realised that the emotional wounds had not healed. (2016)

Poems of Protest

If there is one thing that the war cannot paralyze, then that would be words; the words that are shot from the barrels of poets, writers and artists making the age old proverb truer than ever that pen is indeed mightier than any sword. Malsawmi Jacob, who is celebrated for her novel *Zorami: A Redemption Song,* is a poet at heart weaving in her poems a rich mosaic of cultural imagery, social matrix, group laments, angst and reconciliation.

Malsawmi Jacob's poem "Pi Hmuaki" talks about the Mizo story of Pi Hmuaki, the first known Mizo poetess and her persecution because of her extraordinary vocal skills. She was said to have been buried alive along with her gong. Malsawmi Jacob's poem "Pi Hmuaki" can also be read keeping in mind the context of censorship and suppression that have been levied on the Mizo people during the twenty year long insurgency. The poignant lines "They couldn't stand your prophetic voice/ that spoke against their misdeeds as night after night you sang your songs in your lonely hut/ Your gong music enchanted them/ melody drove them wild/ but the lyrics did the mischief –the lyrics pierced their hearts" (Jacob) rightly encapsulate the struggle between poets and tyrants, a war often forged in the shadow of censorship and oppression. Poets, with their prophetic voices, wield a unique power to unravel the truth and interrogate the status quo. Therefore, this power is often interpreted as a threat by those in authority. They cannot stand the prophetic voice of the poet, for it exposes their misdeeds and lay bare the injustices that they perpetuate. In the face of such adversity, poets persist, singing their songs of truth in lonely huts like Pi Hmuaki piercing the hearts of those who would seek to silence them.

Pi Hmuaki

They couldn't stand your prophetic voice
that spoke against their misdeeds
as night after night you sang your songs
in your lonely hut
Your gong music enchanted them
melody drove them wild

but the lyrics did the mischief –
the lyrics pierced their hearts.

The heroes loved their exploits
heads and loots won in raids
killing was the way to live
to attain the honoured place in pialral[3]

You derided their philosophy
wouldn't sing their eulogy
after a successful raid,
tried to stop them dating lasi[4]
told them to choose tlangsam[5] over kangthai[6]

Their annoyance grew day by day,
decided to silence you altogether
Shut you out from golden sunlight
wind and call of chuk-chu-ri-kur[7] .

Your gong still rings under the earth
Bong! Bong!
A disturbance in tyrants' ears. (Jacob)

Jacob's "The Songster's Lament" carries a unique tone of environmentalism where she emphasizes the devastation of violence hurled on the flora and fauna. She says that "When guns sounded in our land/ bombs shouted/ fire screamed/ cicadas stopped singing…" (Jacob). She reflects how the airspace meant for birds and insects has been drastically overthrown by blackbirds or the black fighter jets of the Indian army that hovered across the sky carrying out an aerial raid. The poem minutely documents the ordeal of the Mizo people during the period of rambuai when she writes "homes went up in flame/ hearths were razed/ the sacred profaned/ music fell silent/ laughter turned to shrieks/ dreams to nightmare wild wolves prowled/ fear stalked every street/ songs curdled rozen by night" (Jacob). However, there is a sense of optimism in the last lines of the poem where the poetess waits for better days to come, for sun to shine on their hills again.

The Songster's Lament

On blue mountain the songster sits
guitar strings all broken
the song becomes a tuneless chant:

"When guns sounded in our land
bombs shouted
fire screamed
cicadas stopped singing

homes went up in flame
hearths were razed
the sacred profaned
music fell silent

laughter turned to shrieks
dreams to nightmare
wild wolves prowled
fear stalked every street
songs curdled
frozen by night.

I'm waiting, waiting.
Will the great bear turn around
over our bamboo hills? (Jacob)

In "Roses, Tar and Blood", Jacob intertwines images of Nature's beauty with the grim reality of violence. The juxtaposition of scenes, such as roses blooming in the garden and the sun and moon as erstwhile friends, with the brutal images of misdeeds and violence points out the discord between Nature and human beings. The poetess' desire to sing of simpler subjects is thwarted by the darkness of their reality, where the ink of her pen transforms from the beautiful blue of the sky to the murky tar of oppression. Through stark metaphors, the poetess conveys how war pollutes the purity of nature, as blood and tar muddle in the streets, staining

everything with its insidious hands, “So my pen flows with blood;/ today it is someone’s/ tomorrow it may be yours/ then you will find/ the colours all same./ Bloom away, roses in your ruby beauty though blood and tar meet in the street” (Jacob).

Roses, Tar and Blood

“Why have you gone political?”
they ask, “Why don’t you just do
your thing?”
Sure I’d love to sing of roses
blooming in the garden
and on my baby’s cheeks
It would be fun to tell
tales of sun and moon
invent fanciful stories
how they once were friends
then quarrelled one day
and parted ways
The ink I write with
should be blue as sky
flowing out freely
on paper white.
But our land is smeared with dark deeds
crimes so beastly no beast would commit
So my ink becomes tar
sluggish stinking sewage
oozing slimy lies you tell
generation to generation –
lies that justify
treading down
part of humanity
spilling blood
So my pen flows with blood;
today it is someone’s
tomorrow it may be yours

then you will find
the colours all same.
Bloom away, roses
in your ruby beauty
though blood and tar meet
in the street. (Jacob)

Conclusion

Malsawmi Jacob says in her "Power of Words" "I'll go for words,/ Words are my forte./ Words stab and jab,/ Heal, hurt,/Mask, unmask,/ Paint pictures./ WordsCreate" (Jacob). These words hope to change the world as they lay bare the grim realities of violence. War and its violence can never brew greatness, it can only entail futility and barrenness.

Notes

[1]J. V. Hluna and Rini Tochhawng, *The Mizo Uprising: Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement*, 1966-1971, Vol. IX (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

[2] J. V. Hluna and Rini Tochhawng, *The Mizo Uprising: Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement*, 1966-1971, Vol. XI-XII (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012)

[3] The place where the spirits of dead people were believed to go.

[4] Wood nymphs.

[5] A plant used for healing wounds.

[6] Nettle.

[7] Spotted dove.

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Decoding Shakespeare's Macbeth:A psychological meditation and reflection

Sarita Mal

Abstract

The pangs of unrequited throne, Lady Macbeth's guilt-ridden soul and Bellona's Bridegroom's dying attempt to escape Birnam Wood loom large in the darker world of Macbeth. Shakespeare, with his sorcery of language, presents a disrupted world of fear, passion and guilt.

These triad (fear, passion and guilt) create a chaotic world which finds its solace in the death of the Macbeths. While discussing the psychological aspects of Macbeth, we cannot but recall A C Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy. Bradley's reflection on Macbeth's dilemma between the conscious mind and the conscience is illuminating. Following Sigmund Freud in Civilization and its Discontents, Joan M Byles in Macbeth: Imagery of Destruction has further highlighted Macbeth's oscillation between superego and fear of castration. The image of blood is also a recurring theme in Macbeth.

Critics have so far reflected upon the unbridled passion and vaulting ambition of the Macbeths. Their mind-within-mind is an open vista to be explored from different points of view. Three Witches on heath, the unseen dagger, Banquo's ghost and Lady Macbeth's sleepwalk take us to the untrodden psychic world of Macbeth. We are afraid, yet excited. Does any mental disease or illness pervade Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's mind? Is it fear or is it guilt? The explanation is sought for in this paper with a humble attempt to unwrap the shielded mind that hovers our unconscious too.

Keywords- psychoanalysis, fear, passion, guilt, paranoia, psychosis

All: Fair is foul, and foul is fair.
Hover through the fog and filthy air. (Macbeth, Act I, sc.i, 11–12)

This chiasmatic prophecy at the very beginning of Macbeth, by the Three Weird Sisters, introduces us to the world of relentless pain. It is the incessant pain of oscillating between the good and the evil, the honest and the treacherous and finally the conscious and the subconscious of the human psyche that recurs throughout the play. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth fall prey to this pain. Macbeth, as represented in the play, is the harbinger of his own destiny. In order to act on the prophecy of the three witches, Macbeth takes a weapon in his hand. Grasping his bloody hands we are also about to embark on a journey fraught with fear, passion and guilt.

Harold Bloom in the introduction to his Shakespeare Through the Ages has metaphorized Macbeth as a 'dramatic poem'. This metaphor is further extended when he claims, "Of all Shakespeare's dramas, Macbeth is the most contaminating in its effect"(Bloom xi). We can smell blood and guilt both smeared in the dagger of Macbeth. Blood, as produced by the villain-hero's vaulting ambition, is also a metaphor in Ruth L. Anderson's The Pattern of Behavior Culminating in Macbeth.

Based on Chronicles of Holinshed (1577) both Marlowe and Shakespeare have created their protagonists as ambitious and passionate. In Marlowe's Doctor Faustus the protagonist sells his soul to devil in order to gain the supreme knowledge. In his pursuit of his ambition he is ruthless just as Macbeth and Richard III are.

If madness defines Richard III and Macbeth both, vaulting ambition also does so. Both of them are ambitious and cruel. But there is also a difference between the two: Macbeth "is too full of the milk of human kindness" whereas Richard III is merciless. Macbeth's feeling of guilt and fear stem from his kind nature but Richard III is desperate in achieving the crown. Shakespeare has created magic in both plays but Macbeth, certainly, is closer to our mind. Madness is a recurrent theme in many Shakespearean characters. Lear's madness, Jacque's melancholy, Timon's bitter cursing, Macbeth's hallucination and Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking invite us to the world of darkness. The supernatural and Macbeth plot to intrude into the darker world- not only in mind but also in atmosphere. Right from the beginning of the play "The Witches dance in the thick air of a storm, or, 'black and midnight hags,' receive Macbeth in a cavern."(Bradley ix). We, along with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, hesitantly step into the most ravishing and complex phenomena of human psychology., i.e., madness. We cannot but agree with Carol Thomas Neely that madness is a conundrum to those who would study it. Madness is supposed to be, according to MacDonald, the most solitary of afflictions to those who experience it and they also have to undergo many social restrictions under the influence of it. Shakespeare, not only as an author but also as a philosopher could interpret how excessive fear, guilt and fiery passion often lead to madness. Before Freud made his contribution to psychoanalysis we find Shakespeare with his fine sense of language is doing that artfully. He could easily discern the diseased mind. Madness, therefore, has remained a fertile ground to the theorists and philosophers for ages. It also tempted me to analyse this paper from a psychoanalytic point of view as we delve in the most unknown, multi-faceted territory of human psyche.

With the appearance of the Three Weird Sisters in the opening scene of the play, darkness prevails. The three weird sisters gradually invite us to the dungeon with their deadly prophecies. While talking about the Witches we must remember that in Macbeth, we find seven female characters in total- Three Weird Sisters, Lady Macbeth, Lady Macduff, Hecate, and Lady Macbeth's Gentlewoman. Witchcraft used to be practised in Greek polytheistic religion for a long time. Hecate was a goddess of that. However, supernatural worship became controversial in monotheistic Christianity. To appease the Jacobean church, the goddess Hecate is depicted as a witch. Except Lady Macduff and Lady Macbeth's Gentlewoman, all women in Macbeth are more or less involved in witchcraft. The Witches and their ambivalent existence are further intensified by Banquo in Act I^1 : They confuse both Macbeth and Banquo as to whether they are men or women. This confusing sexual identity adds to their horrifying image. Banquo doubts their earthly existence too; we hear him murmuring, "I'th' name of truth, Are ye fantastical, or that indeed which outwardly ye show?" What he thinks as a hallucination ultimately becomes Macbeth's forte. The Thane of Cawdor, a man living in wishful thinking, cannot foresee his impending doom. He considers those hallucinated images as real and tries to act on their prophecy. The more the play advances the more his guilt becomes explicit. In order to suppress his gentle and tender nature he ruthlessly murders one by one.

According to Allderidge, England was fascinated with the concept of madness from 1580 to 1640 (141). If we look at the history of the concept of madness in England, we would find that Neely has highlighted it in a different way. While talking about the 18th Century, Neely mentioned that Foucault made a revolutionary change when Foucault associated madness with the mark of unreason and animal instinct, which must be confined and restrained.

In the 19th century there was a slow change but the latter half of the 20th century witnessed remarkable change in the dealing of the subject of madness. The philosophers, theorists, anti-psychiatry movement added a dimension to it. Most importantly, there was a search for the chemical basis for mental disorders which "collapsed the boundaries between mad and sane, mental and physical, real and illusory, that were being constructed into the Renaissance" (Neely 317). The broad distinction that separated the body from mind was minimalised in Shakespeare's works. He could easily delineate the interconnection between the body and the mind. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth equivocate before the regicide of Duncan. They most probably tried to conceal their uneasiness at the thought of murdering Duncan. Lady Macbeth conjured up the spirits to 'unsex' her so that she could ignore her feminine traits. Her denial of the self, i.e., ferminine quality, led her to the ultimate destruction. But she didn't hesitate to instigate Macbeth. As a result, Macbeth, a man full of human compassion and pity, prepared himself for the bloody murder. His kind nature and repressed fear manifest in the hallucination of the dagger in Act II sc.i [2]. His proleptic vision of the dagger took us to the untrodden world of human psychology- Id, Ego and Superego.

Since I am trying to substantiate my paper from a psychoanalytical point of view, Freud's theory on personality becomes extremely relevant. The 'father of psychoanalysis' focuses on three aspects of the human psyche- Id[3] , Ego[4] and Superego[5] . According to his theory, the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, the super-ego operates as a moral conscience, and the ego is the realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. If we contextualize Freud within the discourse of Macbeth we will find that Macbeth's oscillation between the id and superego led to his heinous acts in the play. It is his id which led him to commit the murder of Duncan as well as his address to the dagger was also a symbol of the phallus. The fear of castration[6] was symbolic of his id; whereas his dilemma in the Banquet Scene reminded us of his superego. It seemed that his ego couldn't strike a balance between his id and superego. As a result, his mind entered into more darkness and he committed a series of blunders. Same was true for Lady Macbeth also. When she summoned up the Spirits to unsex her, she was reacting out of her primitive instinct, i.e., id. If her superego had acted fully upon her, may be, she could be afraid of murdering Duncan as he resembled her father. But her failed ego prevented her from doing so.

In the field of psychoanalysis Carl Jung was a new thinker. Initially both Freud and Jung were friends but in 1912 due to their difference of opinion they parted. Jung regarded the psyche as made up of a number of separate but interacting systems. The three main ones were the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. Jung (1933) outlined an important feature of the personal unconscious called complexes. A complex is a collection of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and memories that focus on a single concept.

Carl Jung also classified the human personality into four archetypes: namely, the Self, the Persona, the Shadow and the Anima/Animus. Among them Anima/Animus is related to the "mirror image of our biological sex, that is, the unconscious feminine side in males and the masculine tendencies in women"(McLeod 2018). It actually subverts the traditional concept of sexual identity. If it represents the masculine traits in a woman it should be termed as Animus and Anima is the feminine trait in a man. Macbeth can be viewed in this light also. If we consider Lady Macbeth's dialogues as Animus and Macbeth's dilemma and hesitation as Anima, we surely jump into the conclusion that they both complement each other. They, as a whole, are a unified soul destined to achieve the crown of Scotland by any means. In their pursuit of the crown they gradually become victims of paranoia[7] , obsession[8] , depression[9] and delusion[10] . Although these terms have medical connotation, I would like to discuss them from a psycho-social perspective.

Michael Foucault in Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason asserted that "self-attachment is the first sign of madness, but it is because man is attached to himself that he accepts error as truth, lies as reality, violence and ugliness as beauty and justice". We can locate both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's behaviour in this context. Macbeth's vision of the Witches was just an aberration of the truth. His wishful thinking made him believe that whatever the witches were saying was true. Before Duncan's murder he started hallucinating the dagger which was also a paranoiac act. He started suspecting his own vision. This paranoiac act continued until he gradually lost his senses and started talking to Banquo's ghost, thinking him as real.

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, seemed to be a comparatively strong woman, rebuking her husband for being kind and compassionate. But, as the play progressed, she, with time, lost her sanity. Though she artfully managed Macbeth's hallucination at the Banquet scene (Act iv, sc.ii), it triggered her guilt ridden soul, sulking into obsession. While analysing Lady Macbeth's character we cannot but recall Roman Polanski's film version (1971) and Trevor Nunn's stage version (1976) performed at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford. If we closely analyze Act V, scene I (1-80), we find Lady Macbeth, in her sleepwalking (compounded by guilt and insomnia), plays out the washing theme that runs throughout the play. " Her sleepwalking may be seen here as a state of mind where she can express what she is repressed for in a waking state, showing her duplicity of personality, oscillating around repression and bravery, free expression and cowardice"(Moraes 1). Lady Macbeth was suffering from somnambulism as well as delusion. The Doctor remained silent at the mention of her 'infected mind'. She tried to wash off her guilt by washing her hands repeatedly. This obsessiveness led to her suicide. But as some may wonder how could she commit suicide only out of OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)? Was she also suffering from depression? If yes, then what was the psychological state of Macbeth? From their numerous behaviour before and after the sleep-walking scene there can be an assumption that Macbeth also suffered from depression. His frequent hallucination was nothing but a part of the depression. We may question whether Macbeth was depressed from the very beginning or is it because of his guilt and conscience that later he became a patient of depression. His depressed mind was accentuated by the Second Witches' scene. It is from this scene that Macbeth murdered a series of people- from Lady Macduff to her children. He desperately

sought the man ‘not born of woman’ without understanding the caprice of the Witches. They were certainly an extension of his personality which would appease at gaining the crown. Macbeth, initially an innocent and simple man, became a victim of Hecate and the witches. He turned into a demonic figure, searching for blood. His thirst for blood and vengeance could not stop Birnam Wood approaching him. Losing everything in life, Macbeth became a philosopher uttering, “Out, out, brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage/And then is heard no more: it is a tale /Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, /Signifying nothing (Act V, sc. v (22-27)”. Life has now nothing to offer him except darkness. We, as readers and audience, also delve deep into the darkness. Our senses become numb, searching for a ray of sunlight after the devastating storm- it is “calm of mind and all passion spent”.

Shakespeare’s protagonists have always awakened a sense of awe. We not only admire but also empathize with them. Be it Hamlet or Macbeth or Richard III, he always experimented with the darker side of human mind. As the field of psychology and psychoanalysis are yet unexplored and undefined, there can be numorous interpretations of Macbeth too. In this paper I have tried to reflect on some of the probable causes of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s irrational behaviour though Shakespeare’s genius calls for more seminal thoughts in this field.

Notes

[1]What are these /So wither'd and so wild in their attire,/ That look not like th'inhabitants of th'earth, /And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught/That man may question? You seem to understand me,/ By each at once her choppy finger layings/ Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,/And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/That you are so (Macbeth, Act I, sc.iii 39-46).

[2]Is this a dagger which I see before me, /The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee./ I have thee not, and yet I see thee still./Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible To feeling as to sight? or art thou but/A dagger of the mind, a false creation,/Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (Macbeth, Act II, i, 33–56).

[3] Id is the unconscious part of our personality. It operates on pleasure principle and impulsive behaviour.

[4]Ego is the only conscious part of our personality. It mediates between the unrealistic id and the external world. Freud made the analogy of the id being a horse while the ego is the rider. The ego is 'like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse.' (Freud 15).

[5]Superego is also a part of the unconscious consisting of two systems- the conscience and the ideal self.

[6]Fear of castration arises from the fear of childlessness. As Macbeth could never be a father, he wanted to destroy Fleance's father, i.e., Banquo. This is a complex psychology of Macbeth.

[7]The act of suspecting someone without any specific reason.

[8]When someone performs an action irrationally and repeatedly.

[9]That phase of human mind when he/she no longer finds joy in life.

[10] an idiosyncratic belief or impression maintained despite being contradicted by reality or rational argument, typically as a symptom of mental disorder.

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Fade in India: Failure of Animation as a Narrative Genre in India

Dr. Pritesh Chakraborty

Brief history/literature review:

The history of animation in India is characteristically marked by the lack of any consensus regarding either its origin or its course of development. While some trace the beginning of the animation to the puppet shows (Ghose and Gupta,37) some locate the beginning in the western formats. While the puppet shows using the shadows of the same on a screen with the lanterns as the source of light could be hailed as the desi precursor of the animation in India, more sceptical people would like to see this art form as yet another import from the west. Ghose and Gupta point out that J.S. Blackton was, ". . . known as the father of American animation. . . " (37.) This lack of consensus on the origin of the form is reflected in the individual examples in India as well.Assuch, there is hardly any consensus with the first animated work produced in India. While the pioneering work in this field was initiated by Dada Sahab Phalke, according to Ghosh and Gupta the first animated artwork was "The Pea Brothers" (1934) directed by Gunamoy Banerjee. It is interesting to note that while animated films began their journey began earlier than the feature movies, they lost out soon enough. This was not just the case with Indian animated movies but the same happened in many other countries. In India, however, the slide of the animation from popular radar was more pronounced, at least in comparison to Hollywood. Kanakasabapathy Pandyan confirms by quoting Ram Mohan in his article, 'The coming of age of Indian animation', ". . . for the next few decades, the art of animation went into deep hibernation in India." (69) This hibernation was prolonged by several factors which we are going to analyse in the next section of the chapter.

Challenges:

Neha Dhupia had once rather candidly pointed out as an answer to a question on a talk show - 'BFFs With Vogue', that in Bollywood, ". . . SRK (sic) and sex sell!" (Sahadevan) Bollywood is mainly icon driven. Here stardom matters more than talent. The recent debate on nepotism (starting after the death of a popular Bollywood actor, Sushant Singh Rajput) in Bollywood is a stern reminder of the issue. Animation cannot itself have big stars. Voice hardly substitutes the face. The technology available in India has not been able to replicate the exact face of the artists on screen yet. Even if it did, things wouldn't still be the same. Moreover,the lobby at the real action movie is not going to harbour competition. We Indians as a culture like any other culture are suspicious of anything that is new. We might have

forgotten the brouhaha over the introduction of the computers in the job sector back in the 1990s. We thought that it would take away our jobs. Perhaps, in general the people associated with movies think the same. We might not have to go far to get another example of this apathy towards new things. For example, many of the educators have been crying hoarse over the fact that online teaching has resulted in the decline of the standards which have been set by so called physical classes. This attitude is nothing but our collective distrust of something that appears to be different from what we are used to. We as viewers are used to real life feature movies, with real people and real locations. It doesn't matter if these locations change from Mumbai to Switzerland for the sake of a romantic song at a moment's notice. Of course, it is 'willing suspension of disbelief' at its best. Somehow, this suspension of disbelief cannot be exported to the animated movies. One of the reasons for the same has been discussed in detail below. Before, we do that we could continue to understand this investment in the 'real' life feature movies. In India, where most of the people overtly worship idols and the minorities do the same but in a covert way, we cannot but escape hero or heroine worship. The multidimensional heroes and heroines are palpable and hence believable. Animated movies even the best ones could not provide this multidimensionality. These characters no matter how realistically drawn cannot match the real people out there. One of the reasons for the fan following of the stars (if not the actors) is the fact that they can be followed outside their movie roles. We could know to whom they are married, with whom they go out on a date, what food they like and so on and so forth. Animated characters do not have a real life outside their studios. The make believe is only so much powerful. Then why do children like the characters so much instead of the real movie stars? The answer might lie in the fact that the minds of the children are more fertile than adults which allows them to create a world for their loved characters. The world they see on their screen gives rise to the world of imagination which the movie stars might not offer. Again, even if there have been a lot of progress in the visual effects, there is still a limit to what a real protagonist could do on screen but the animated people could do anything they can be made to do. This feature corresponds to the imaginative range of the children whose fantasy knows no limits. I remember when I used to watch movies, I often went bored when the hero was romancing the heroine, especially when they were singing songs around trees. I remember being interested only in the action scenes. Further, the contrasts of colour that the animated movies could provide to the eyes of the children is greater than what the real-life colours could. Not only children but adults also process colour faster than other things in the visual spectrum.William Brown confirms that, "With colour seemingly the element of our visual field that is processed

fastest (Viviani and Aymoz estimate that colour is processed some 50 microseconds faster than form and movement, 2909)" (Brown, 09). Hence when motion is added to colours the impact, they have is much greater.

Now, to analyse another challenge against the animation movies in India we might say that people in general are prejudiced that animations are movies for children and hencenaïve. The animation movies haven't taken up any serious themes or issues either since they don't want to let go of the market they think they have. Consumers want entertainment, adults seem to like real action drama as opposed to animation. Who would like to watch a daily serial and similar content in the animated form? Strangely enough the data pertaining to the consumption of hentai in India, which is a form of animation that contains adult content tells a different story where we find that adults consume a sizable chunk of the same. We should mention the popularity of the animated version of Savita Bhabi comics among the Indian consumers of pornography. The following excerpt from an online news article confirms our view. ""We get 60 million unique visitors every month. The average time a visitor spends on our site is more than 10 minutes," the site administrator told GlobalPost by email. "Almost 70 percent of our traffic is from India, ..."" (Overdorf). Certainly, neither Japanese hentai nor the Savita Bhabi animations are made for the children. Their popularity might rest on the fact that while the hentai is 'imported' from Japan (and anything imported from a foreign place automatically becomes lucrative to the average Indian), Savita Bhabi satisfies the fantasy of the average Indian male regarding a figure of sexual interest as well as a taboo. After all, in Hindi, the husband's brother is known as 'dewar' or the second husband! Of course, the paper doesn't suggest that to be popular the animations made in India should tilt towards pornography and even if it did, it will certainly lose its market among the children. The latter might be very interested in the same, but their parents won't be very forthcoming! In their attempt to cater to the children, the makers have been making the serious mistake of thinking that children are naïve and that they cannot handle adult themes. Instead of making the toons realistic with episodes on real life problems, these animations rely mostly on clichéd themes and stories. It often fails to excite even the imagination and curiosity of the children. A case in point is the decline of the popularity of the cartoon network viewership even among children. This leads to yet another challenge that faces the animation industry in India –clichédthemes and storylines. Most of these animations are based on mythological themes and fantasises. According to an estimate out of seventy-two animated movies produced in India between 2000 and 2020, thirty-five were based on mythological themes. Even if these themes were handled more maturely then perhaps the results could have had

been better. The treatment of the themes is no better than the themes themselves. Simple black and white narratives of the triumph of good over evil is well pastclichéd. Even the children have come to realise that the world is not just black and white but with a lot of grey in between. Apparently, the world of the children has become more mature and the animation makers simply have not been able to keep up. *Kitni jaldi bade ho gaye!*[Oh! How they have grown!]

Another thing that has rather gotten out of hand is the cost of production. The reason is not just that the "Animation costs are prohibitive today. A 23-minute standard animation film could costRs. 23 lac - the rate being Rs. 1 lac per minute." (Chunawala, 438) But also that the animation studios don't have enough work to reach their breakeven points. Whereas in USA the dedicated studios work round the year with one or another project, in India a dedicated studio producing full length animated movies is a luxury, producers cannot afford. The way they keep the system ticking is perhaps by working on some small project in some advertisement or any other part of a bigger project. Since, the graphic designers and animation workers do not have enough work to sustain them either financially or aesthetically they soon migrate to more 'greener' pastures for solid jobs. It so happens that when there comes an opportunity for a big project the required manpower or technical mastery seems to be missing form that particular studio.

Chunawala hits the proverbial nail on the head when he says that "Our animation films are not good because we do not have trained animators. And asthere are no trained artists, we cannot produce a sufficient number of animation films. Itis a vicious circle." (Chunawala,438)It is truly a vicious cycle where one component of the process cannot hand over the baton to the next for a smooth process of working and reworking on already built up resources.

To make things more difficult for Indian animation to flourish, Foreign competition with their superior graphics have already taken the centre stage. It is almost impossible for the average Indian animator to compete and produce a superior level of work. This is sadly reflective of the condition of Indian technology itself. Landmarks in technological advancements are often driven by Indian minds but they work for foreign concerns. The situation reflects the condition of the brain drain common in almost all sectors that matter. Many parts of foreign animations have been outsourced to India, especially to firms in Bangalore over the last decade. Some of them even went to win Oscars! Yet they were foreign produced and financed. The situation reflects the condition of the brain drain common in almost all sectors that matter.

Talking of vicious circles, we encounter yet another one when we find that there is hardly any will among the producers or makers to test new grounds. This could be the result of the lack of the talent pool which the seasonal, rather occasional nature of the work offers to the potentially talented persons. The lack of the talent results in stale productions which in turn brings back insufficient monetary returns which drives away any potential financiers. So, what could be done to get out of this cycle and ride the aeroplane to success?

Solutions:

One of the possible solutions to the first and the last problem is that if Bollywood icons start investing themselves in similar projects. It is not that it did not happen. Some did but with limited or little success. For example, 2010's *Toonpur Ka Superhero* with Ajay Devgan as one of the leads made Rs 3.56 crore at a budget of Rs 25 crore, and *Roadside Romeo* (2008) with a budget of Rs 15 crore collected Rs 5 crore. *Delhi Safari (2012)*, made on a budget of Rs24 crore, earned from the box a little over Rs 2 crore in India. *Jumbo* (2008), 'starring' Akshay Kumar, made at a budget of Rs 21 crore, faltered at the box office. But only because some of them have failed, they shouldn't stop trying altogether. They might create a series for the mobile platform or the small screen and then when they become popular (if they do) they could be taken to a larger screen. With the Covid situation giving rise to OTT platforms, Bollywood might now invest in the same and now children being restricted at home, they just might get more viewership. Though there is some competition in these areas as well, but this could be a good opportunity to create a space for Indian animation.

The monotonous features, as far as storytelling technique is concerned, could be got ridden by enhancing storytelling techniques where indigenous form of storytelling could be pitched against the western form of narratives. Even if Indian characters were produced, they had western or Japanese features in them which could lead to a potential defamiliarization of the audience. Let us take the following example from *Ramayana: the Legend of Prince Rama* (1992).

Here we find the character of Rama who looks nothing like an Indian. With their large eyes and fair complexions both Rama and Laxmana appear to be foreigners.

Indian animators can still rework mythological themes but through indigenous techniques. The path had been paved by the 1974 animated film called *Ek, Anek aur Ekta* directed by Vijaya Mulay and produced by Films Division of India in collaboration with NCERT. This animation presented ideas of unity in diversity and treated the theme in the traditional way of storytelling once popular in India. However, this success was never followed by later creators. The government of India can and should take steps towards this concern. In fact as a solid step towards this goal, last year Prakash Javedkar, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, announced the establishment of a 'centre of excellence' in cooperation with IIT Bombay which will provide courses in animation, visual effects, gaming and comics. This could provide a steady source of animators. At least recruiters would know as to where to look for talent.

Now, more money will pull more talent. If not more money but a steady job would do the trick of retaining talent in the industry.There is no dearth of people who can draw. These artists could be helpful in drawing for traditional animations. They could be encouraged to utilize local forms of expressions. By local forms of expressions one means not only the almost extinct forms of puppet shows and the shadow play version of the same but also animating forms of painting like patachitra and madhubani. These forms have been telling stories since time immemorial. They can now to be put on the world map as truly 'made in India' products. This could offer us an edge over the global competition.Now a days anybody with a few megapixels of mobile camera can make movies. The same could be done

with animations with the right applications and incentives following them. Mobile movie should also include mobile animation. A 'tictok' for animation maybe!

Another way to boost up popularity of the animations could be to use already popular icons from the other mediums or Indianize western or eastern ideas/technology. For example, we have already discussed the popularity of the Savitha Bhabi enterprise. The same could true with popular icons from sports, politics, even crime. Besides there is a large stock of untapped potential in the form of the Indian superheroes in comic books. There have a long and loud demand for animations made on these Indian comic book superheroes. They are already popular with a large section of the people specially in the Hindi speaking regions on Northern, Eastern and Central India. These figures have been around since the early 1990s almost till date. We could use this resource to jump start our 'hibernating' animation industry. While on one hand they offer a parallel plane of entertainment on another they are still Indian enough.

Pros:

Even if we argue that producing an animation is relatively costly it is still less costly than feature/live action movie. The stars wouldn't be paid in crores only for lending their voices. Locales would not cost a thing and one system in a studio could produce several movies using the same soft wares. There will be hardly any problems with dates with the big stars. This issue has often been highlighted in the discussions on making movies. Producers and directors have often found themselves on high seas due to the unprofessional behaviour of the some of the artists involved.

With the coming of AI induced special effects the boundary between live action and animation is narrowing. When this feature could be utilized to its maximum, the star power that the animations couldn't boast of would be compensated for. While many animated movies like *Avatar* (2009) broke the threshold long ago, computer generated images or CGI has already arrived and is here to stay.

Just like comics as Harvey Pekar profoundly says, "Comics are words and pictures. You can do anything with words and pictures.",animation which is nothing but moving images havetremendous story telling possibilities. These moving images could be moulded in any manner to do anything. We can learn a few things from the way the western or eastern animated stories tell a lot about their daily struggles. This attracts viewers of all ages and from all walks of life towards this medium. Another advantage of this form of storytelling or communication is not really monitored closely by the censoring authorities of the government and in the context of the present clamp down on anti-government aka protest art,

these less monitored sites could get away with proliferating criticism until it's too late for the government to catch up. While it would become easy for a government to target a person who plays a particular satirical role, animated images cannot be targeted as such. Of course, the director and or the story writers including the producers might still be caught hold of. The naivety associated with the medium often leads the authorities to think that animation might not harbour any subversive tendencies, especially since they are hitherto known to perpetuate all kinds of stereotypes.

Conclusion:

One can argue that given the emphasis on 'self' reliance and the make in India adventure, this is the best time for Indian animation to take wing and fly away with the nets of self-doubt and other handicaps just like the birds did in the *Ek, Anek aur Ekta*(1974) animation. It is visible from the length of the chapter itself that the discussion on the problems outweighs the deliberation on the solutions, the same is true of the situation in the real life. There are more problems than their visible solutions but that shouldn't discourage the people who are genuinely interested in the industry and its development. We might look upon the challenges not as handicaps but as opportunities for pathbreaking creative work. Afterall only a contrary wind raises the kite high in the sky.

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"My hands felt just like two balloons": **the** Conflict **between Mind and Body in Sartre's *Nausea*.**

Mohul Bhattarcharya

Abstract: In this paper I would try to explore how Jean Paul Sartre in his novel, Nausea, describes the daily life of an existential protagonist, Antoine Roquentin. Existential literature has in general pointed out how a man is hyperaware of his existence, this inevitably leads to fixation, obsession, and ultimately disrupts his daily normative and conformist duties towards a society. Sartre talks about the perils of a post-modern society in this autobiographical novel, and the similarities to today's neo-modern capitalist society are uncanny. The urban illness with body image and isolation of the self and creation of a big Other was pointed out by Jacques Lacan, I would try to examine if the social alienation of a man and his identity are only psychologically individual or does a social setting affect their existential state.

Keywords: body dysmorphia, existentialism, alienation, the big Other, symbolic self.

Jean Paul Sartre, in his existential novel *Nausea,* writes of a phenomenology where the body of his protagonist has an identity of its own, almost a dual narrative where his actions among the crowd is distorted. Nausea, written during Sartre's stay in the town Le Havre of France as a teacher has the same flavours of duality and mental fragmentation which are not essentially physical in nature. The protagonist starts his diary with, "Something has happened to me: I can't doubt that any more." (Sartre 5) This shows us the first steps of a common man turning and facing the big Other which is a presupposition, which will not exist unless acted upon(2). Antoine Roquentin is a historian, he has never faced "psychological analysis", and he implores himself of any "self knowledge" he has so he can understand what

exactly is happening to him. This is not however exclusive to him because he is a historian. People in seclusion do not function normally. Though philosophies like stoicism are attractive to read, you can rarely function so freely. Freedom has its limits. Sartre in this diary novel deliberately keeps the entries short and from the beginning. Showing us exactly how the "nausea" starts and how the man in the eye of the storm deals with it. Roquentin is also not satisfied with his conditions. There is a deep longing for "Anny". We don't see this relationship go further than expected. Roquentin when visiting his ex-girlfriend Anny finds he has no real connection left to her. She also does not understand his Nausea, it is natural she would not. The obsession Roquentin experiences are very individualistic. Existential novels are not moral compasses, never had been. In his essay collective Myth *of Sisyphus and other Essays* Camus talks about 'Philosophical Suicide':

> *To say that, that climate is deadly scarcely amounts to playing on words. Living under that stifling sky forces one to get away or to stay. The important thing is to find out how people get away in the first case and why people stay in the second case. This is how I define the problem of suicide and the possible interest in the conclusions of existential philosophy. (Camus 23)*

"I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which attracted my attention by means of a sort of personality. I opened my hand and looked: I was simply holding the doorknob." (Sartre 5) The dissociation and the breakaway of the mind from physical dimensions of a person is what post-modern writings brought into the literary spheres. The world had faced two devastating wars on unprecedented scales in human history. The usual currencies of human societies were not working, religion seemed farfetched and money was either abundant or so scarce people feared it. Philosophers and authors alike turned to the only available source of introspections. The shift was so rapid from the Eurocentric cultural and society, periods of modernism and post-modernism were a retaliation on the Self just to locate an entire culture. Roquentin is not the first existential protagonist, 'Gregor Samsa', 'Raskolnikov' have all faced the inexplicable turmoil of what would the world mean if they had not been what they were. During the 1930's Sigmund Freud encountered a patient who

was nicknamed the ‘Wolf Man’; such was his obsession with his own nose, he would powder it every other minute, carry a mirror and frequently look into it.

> *It might appear at first glance that there are two distinct bodies under consideration, but this is manifestly not the case. A human being neither "has" nor "is" two bodies; the body as it is lived and the body as it appears in objective observation are one and the same body. The lived body is the physiological body.* (Gallagher 140)

The physiological act of nausea surpluses us with overwhelming emotions but Sartre is not concerned about crass emotions involving everyday routines. The protagonist is a historian and an accomplished one at that who keeps reading quirky historical figures like “Monsieur de Rollebon” for the last ten years of his life. Just because he had read Rollebon had stayed in Bouvelli, Roquentin moves to this town. Day after day he not only loses interest in this historical figure, he also starts seeing this figure in his own reflection. Simple acts of drinking in a pub and the sound of shuffling cards suddenly makes Roquentin exclaim the ‘Nausea’ is back. “Then the Nausea seized me.” (Sartre 23) When talking of a body separately from the entity we often talk of extravagant processes just to explain panic attacks or nervous breakdowns. This is not the same. Roquentin functions as he is expected, none of the patrons of the pub see him differently, just like Meursault is not seen differently after his mother’s death, in *The Stanger*. It is only when questioned that people project their own believes into the big Other, explaining how the man is not quite right.

Jacques Lacan, after being expelled from the IPA (International Psychoanalytical Association) felt the need to ‘return to Freud’ as essential and important because he felt Freud had been grossly misrepresented, misinterpreted. Lacan being controversial and contrasting between structural and post-modern talked about the Real, Imaginary, and the Symbolic. In *Nausea* we see the Symbolic developing inside the lonely history academic, so profuse is the sensation it is capitalized almost always. “A little more and I would have fallen into the mirror trap” (Sartre 37). Slavoj Žižek in explaining how to read Lacan gives an excellent example in the form of a joke where a man is stranded on an island with Cindy Crawford. After

having sex with her, he very politely asks her if she could pretend to be his best friend, reassuring her it's not some perversion. Once she has put on the disguise, the man nudges Crawford on the rib and says he just had sex with Cindy Crawford. This intense need to share one's sexual activity is the big Other. Roquentin faces this overwhelm where his head seems placed on his shoulders and the slightest movement would decapitate him. Roquentin is at the same time facing this truth and running from it. He does not want to be complacent and give in. But his solitude is also not letting him get rid of this big Other.

This brings us to the illness named Body Dysmorphic Disorder. First coined in 1891 by an Italian psychiatrist, Enrico Morselli, body dysmorphic disorder is a condition where an individual is fixated on a deformity on one's own body. Morselli wrote in his paper:

> ***The first condition consists of the sudden appearance and fixation in the consciousness of the idea of one's own deformity****; the individual fears that he has become deformed (dysmorphos) or might become deformed, and experiences at this thought a feeling of an inexpressible disaster… The ideas of being ugly are not, in themselves, morbid; in fact, they occur to many people in perfect mental health, awakening however only the emotions normally felt when this possibility is contemplated.*

This fear of a deformity is present in Roquentin and is portrayed to us time after time as the protagonist avoids the mirror and calls it a 'trap', once he looks into the mirror he is hyper focused overtly critical of his facial features and calls himself "ugly". "I can understand nothing about this face. Other people's faces have some significance. Not mine." He goes on to say, "I think it is ugly, because I have been told so." His body is as important to him as others think it is. It is an idea, merely existing only when there's an 'other' present there.

BDD is not a new condition but has been prevalent since the dawn of the classical literature, claiming references in Herodotus' writing of Therapne where a nurse would visit daily to pray for Hera to "free a girl from her ugliness". Plato talks of the same Theory of forms which is ultimately a struggle between the Real and the Ideal. He explains how a common man is trapped in a cave unable to see the Ideal form. A torch is lit behind the man and in between is a parapet where a puppeteer shows him forms. The big Other here being the

puppeteer whose absence would mean absence of forms. Existential protagonists often lack forms. Under the psychoanalytical lens the characters become what would be termed unstable, often self harming and counterintuitive. BDD is a logical conclusion to such a hero who is at best unsure of their own body. “They are glassy, soft, blind, and red-rimmed; anyone would think they were fish scales.” This is the description Roquentin gives when writing about his eyes.

Neo-modern societies today are severly consumerist in nature, from social media to the food we eat, clothes we wear, or even the entertainment we enjoy. Today’s world has people with severe body image issues, surgery addicts, and people facing dysmorphia and fear of their own bodies. Existential dread is not new, but neither is it old and outdated. Authors like Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoevsky, or Sartre are relevant to the masses because we have lost our hierarchy among ourselves. There is no power dynamic when the introspective mind starts finding flaws within itself. Roquentin and the likes of him are present in people in almost all metropolises. Rene Descartes(1596-1690) argued that the nature of the mind and the body could exist independently and has almost an individual will of their own(2). Though Descartes had argued that the body and the mind are different, independent, saying as much as “I think, therefore I am” in the Discourse of Method (1637), the body is not independent of the mind, neither is the other way around. Arrival of newer theories like eco-criticism only ensures our doubts about a shift from the individualistic to the communal. The search for identity is a perpetual cascade of overwhelming nausea overshadowing the sense of belonging. Since the perpetuation of existential philosophies from the likes of Søren Kierkegaard we have seen an out of body experience which is not the usual, it is essentially absurd. There are definitive identities which play with our minds and sometimes those identities are too real to suppress. Fear is the oldest instinct among humans.

Be it an existential protagonist or a tragic hero in crises. Still “One must imagine Sisyphus happy”(3).

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(1) Comfortably Numb, a song by the Progressive rock band Pink Floyd talks of this dissociative feeling with one’s body. This song, similar to BDD shows us the problems and issues of the fear of one’s existence.

(2) In the essay ‘How to read Lacan’ Slavoj Zizek talks of the introduction of Lacan and the Symbolic, from Lacan’s lecture series book 1.

(3) Albert Camus talks of the myth of Sisyphus. The unbearable weight of being and philosophical critique of existence of an individual in a perpetual loop of crises.

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Kali in Kalyug: The Rise of Women in Indian Comics and Graphic Novels

Anuradha Dosad

"How important it is for us to recognise and celebrate our . . . she-roes"
Maya Angelou, African American Poet

The present paper will try to analyze the status of women in Indian comics. The journey of graphic narratives in India began in 1967 with the publication of the first issue of *Amar Chitra Katha*comics, with protagonists based onmythological tales. Since the birth of the comics in India, the male characters have been leading the stories. Women were given not much importance. Amar Chitra Katha comics was pioneered by Anant Pai, published by India Book House as an attempt to correct the colonial hegemony of western comics in India. This colonial- cultural hegemony can be experienced in the area of comic books within the branch of popular 'children's literature'. In 1967, Amar Chitra Katha(ACK) helped supply an impressionable Indian identity wedded to the prejudice of masculinity and patriarchal norms. ACK's writing and illustrative team (led by Pai as the primary "storyteller") constructed a legendary past for India by tying masculinity, Hinduism, fair skin, and high caste (dominant) to authority, excellence and virtue. The medium of comics until recently had been appropriated by patriarchal ideology. This ideology suppressed the voice of women and had to be problematized. This problematization unravels the feminist ideological stance in the light of cultural politics. The term subaltern has gained significance with Gramsci(1971) who describes subaltern as those excluded from playing a meaningful role in any regime of power and who are subjugated by hegemony or who are excluded, including women and peasants. No wonder that the representation of women in the male dominated world of comics is affected by dominant ideologies and naturally bear the burden of an " epistemic violence"(Spivak, 1988). Therefore these representations of women to use Gramsci's words should never to be taken as 'natural or inevitable'. From the concept of discourse, an analysis of how women characters are addressed, described and constructed as a system of knowledge emphasizes that women representations does not exist as a single faceted and unchanging social reality to be reflected by discourse; rather it gets systematically constructed in these. Hence women who had hardly a chance for self-representation then, they have been mostly erased, side-lined or distorted in the mainstream discourse. The patriarchal ideology at work ensures the relegation of women to its inferior binary, which aids in the construction of itself as markedly superior. Women in Indian comics find themselves bestowed with an image over which they do not have power and are forced to accept the image as their own, which becomes metaphorically a dispossession of identity. Naturally the images tend to be in concord with the ideologicallypreferred images of the time. Like the damsel in distress image within a discourse of pity is intended to extol the benevolence of the hero. Like in the story of "Nala Damyanti", where Nala leaves Damyanti in the forest and disappears. The excuse that Nala gives is that he does not want Damyanti to spend her life with him in the forest. Nevertheless, Damyanti expects her hero Nala to rescue her from the dander of being left alone in the forest.

However, comic books have been bending if not breaking the rules of strict moral codes of normativity established by the restrictive authorities. This article portrays the history of graphic narration in India from a feminist perspective. Using deconstructionist approach my

paper will analyze the subtle change of the role of women in Indian comic books (printed) from the 1960s to contemporary printed graphic novels as well as web comics. Such graphic novels as *Kari* and *Adi Parva* along with comics of Shakti (Raj Comics) will be taken up as primary texts.

Not only in my preliminary research on comic books but also in my experience with comic books themselves it was found that these perishable products of popular culture hold within them the possibilities of radically questioning standing norms of authoritative interpretations. This view has found support for my assumptions from such people as Roland Schmidt who in his article *Deconstructive Comics* (March 1992) has shown that since comics reading establishes a completely different kind of literacy the traditional custodians of literacy obviously are opposed to the same. William Brown in his essay *The Pre-Narrative Monstrosity of Images: How Images Demand Narrative* (2011) agrees to the view.What is true of the reading practices could also be true of the practices of interpretations. The radical interrogations of the authoritative (mis) representations of the orientations of the characters in the comic books could be done at an elemental level. It is usually assumed that one of the largest consumers of comic books are children and if the comic books can incorporate the ideas of questioning early in the psyche of the children then they just might be trained in the habit of questioning authority. However, it also possible that the opposite of the same occurs, i.e., through the misrepresentations and reductive stereotyping through the comic books the children could be indoctrinated in believing the queer to be aberrant. The paper will try to understand the politics and economics behind the representation/mis-representation and stereotyping of the queer in the comic books vis-a vis the religious narratives and mythologies. While negotiating our analysis of the texts we will also look at the other spectrums of representation where the normative becomes so exaggerated that it looks aberrant. The queer theory can interestingly be used to examine the non-queer. It has hitherto been so done that the normative has been used as a marker against which the non-normative could be judged but in the research effort I will try to take things from the opposite spectrum as well. The very texture and make of the comic books are inductive for the harbouring of the issues and themes of the queer since comics themselves have been regarded as something that defies categorizations. Comics is neither regarded as traditional literature since it contains pictures and nor has been assigned a place with painting since it contains written (typed) words. This flexibility parallels the undetermined status of the queer as well. This art form has hitherto been marginalised as low and the queer people have been marginalised as different. Perhaps a medium/form like comics could be a very convenient vehicle for the narratives of the queer. This paper will try to understand the ways in which superhero comic books have been doing that subtly. Comic books have been bending if not breaking the rules established by the restrictive authorities of strict moral codes of normativity. This paper will try to unite the theories of narratives and formalistic studies with queer/gender studies in order to analyse comics and their formats on one hand and the queer themes they resonate on another. A constant tool of analysis will be discourse analysis along with structuralism.

Hindu Queerness, the concept of Ardhanarishvara

The Ardhanarishwara is a composite of masculine and feminine qualities. They are combined to form an androgynous image which is sexually ambiguous. This deity is formed by the fusion of Shiva and Parvati. n the Hindu mythology there are both gods and goddesses. The

divine, Ardhanarishwar, is drawn as half male and half female. The right side is Shiva and the left side is Parvati. The purpose of drawing is to show that the divine consists of both male and a female side. Both are equally important. This can be seen as a starting point for equality between men and women. It is the union of male and female energies that is at the base of all creation. Therefore Shiva and Shakti together form this universe. The symbolic intent of the figure, according to most authorities, is to signify that the male female principles are inseparable.

Concept of Mohini (Goddess of Enchantment)

The blending of male and female gods is being presented repeatedly throughout Hindu teachings. For instance when the god Vishnu transformed into the female seductress Mohini. He tricked the demons into giving uo the elixir of life. She is portrayed as a femme fatale (seductress) ,an enchantress, who maddens lovers, sometimes leading them to their doom.

Concept of Goddess Kali

Devi Mahamatyam is also known as the Durga Saptashati or Chandi Patha.The text contains 700 verses arranged into 13 chapters. Alongwith Devi-Bhargava Purana and Shakti Upanishads. It is one of the most important texts of Shaktism (goddess) tradition.

Kali is the Hindu goddess or devi. She is an avatar of Parvati who is often associated with death, time and doomsday, sexuality and violence. But she is also considered as a mother figure and is symbolic of motherly love.

Kali is born to kill the demons Chand-Mund as mentioned in the Durga Saptashatiandkater she was named as Chamunda by the divine mother Parvati. The name is a combination of Chand and Mund, two demons whom Chamunda killed.

In ACK we see Shumbha and Nishumbha as symbols of arrogance and pride which is ultimately overcome by Parvati's humility and wisdom. They were killed by devi Parvati. In Shashi Tharoor's satirical novel, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), the story of Shumbha and Nishumbha is used both a s a warning against dangers of seduction and as a metaphor for the collapse of the relationship between the five Pandavas.

The image of Savita Bhabi or Vellamma apparently augments the sexual objectification and over sexualisation of feminine bodies. However, on a 'closer' look what we might find is the fact that she takes the reins of sexuality in her own 'hands' (and other body parts!). She deconstructs the gender role of the women in India as meek housewives. She comes up both as a desired object and a subject with a very naughty mind of her own. She also projects the repressed sexual desires of women in India who are otherwise projected as angels in the house.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we might figure that much of the literature and discourse surrounding women are subjugated to the patriarchal discourses yet like the Derridian 'trace' we might find the latent 'her' stories behind the watered down or masculinised versions of the story. Under the patriarchal duress, these mythemes and stories have been muted or mutilated quite often. Yet through the resurgence of the comics, TV, and graphic novels these hidden and repressed desires are well brought out.

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Nevermore
An article on "THE RAVEN" by Edgar Allan Poe

In the ethereal tapestry of literary legends, Edgar Allan Poe stands as a chiaroscure artisan, weaving strands of darkness and light into his masterpieces. A maestro of the macabre, commonly illustrated with the ill omen black cat upon his lap and the grim, ghastly, ebony raven upon his shoulder. With ink as his medium and the human condition as his canvas, he crafted symphonies of terror and beauty that resonates in the deepest recesses of the human soul. "The Raven" his poem, the same raven in his illustration is one of his famous masterpiece, in which , each verse is a brushstroke of despair and melancholy upon the canvas, his canvas. Through the somber rhythm of its words, Poe conjures a world cloaked in sorrow, where a nameless lone figure sitting alone in his chamber reading old books as we discover that his chamber is filled with purple silk curtains and velvet lining chairs and holds a library of old, forgotten books, it is just the house to be expected in a gothic setting building perfect atmosphere for a tale to be brewed. As the poem unfolds itself we realise the man is trying to bury his sorrow caused due to loss of love for a woman named Lenore. We as readers do not get to know who Lenore is or what happened to her . All we are left with is the man for whom love has turned into a curse , who is desperate to relief the pain of his lost Lenore. We find him hallucinating of her perfume filling the room as every other aspect of the house fills his very being with terror. Then there is a tapping on the door, this represents a spectrum of possibilities- first and foremost it is the unknown, Secondly it is the introduction of the stranger, the very concept of 'the stranger' may not be particularly bounded to a person but rather is a category of experiences. It is the beginning of the anomoly and uncertainty which shakes up the existing status quo , it fills us with both hope and dread, for the Stanger may inspire or shower us with gifts or kill us. Either way the tapping is the disruption of the serene state within the man's chamber. As he find the courage to open the door he finds himself staring into nothing but darkness as the word Lenore slips his tongue just to echo back exhibiting his desire to meet his lost Lenore. Turning back to his chamber with his soul burning, as he has created his personal hell he observes the sound of tapping louder than before coming from the window as he tries to comfort himself saying it to be the wind and steps forward to check. As he opens the window, enters the room the ebony raven , who then flies and sits over the bust of Pallas above the man's chamber door. On seeing the raven the

man starts to speak with it, drawing attention towards the man's state of mind, lonely and on the edge of sanity. One inquiring the raven for it's name "quoth the Raven Nevermore." Amused and astonished by the speaking Raven the man starts fantasizing about the raven origin maybe he is from one unlucky master who has been a victim of the cruelty of fates as all his songs ended in this one word 'Nevermore'. So the man thought.

The bird Raven in spirituality symbolizes alot, In Norse Mythology, The All Father Odin has two raven namely -Hugin and Munin , these names roughly translate to thought and memory. These birds were gifted the gift of speech by Odin, Hugin and Munin would fly though out the world bringing secret wisdom to the All Father of Aesir. Similarly here, the man expects the raven to be in possession of some secret knowledge. The Raven has perched itself above the bust of Pallas, the other name for the Greek goddess Athena (in Roman Pantheon: Minerva) who is commonly known as the goddess of wisdom , logic and reasoning. The raven places itself above the bust of Pallas symbolizes it to be greater than mortal wisdom, logic and reasoning. Another Mythology insight is when he mentions "Plutonian Shore" The Roman god Pluto (in Greek pantheon: Hades) the god of the dead and the ruler of the underworld, ravens are commonly depicted over human skeletons makes them a message of the afterlife Similar depiction of raven could be found in Irish Mythology, The Morrigan, also known as the phantom queen, is mainly associated with fate, who often takes the form of a raven. Similarly in the Hindu Mythology, Lord Shani, the God of karma, is often depicted with a raven, delivers justice depending upon one's thoughts , speech and deeds. In Global mythos, Raven is depicted to be a bird related to fate and the unseen. The perfect being to haunt one's nightmares as they could be seen as the grim messenger of fates.

These perfectly sets the tone of the poem where the man is alone in his room or depending how one may look at it, alone in his mind with nothing to occupy him but his sorrowful thoughts and memories. As the poem now progresses we find the man drifting slowly away from his rational thought, he tries to reason with the raven's existence and how it could speak as his reason ultimately fails him while the bust of Pallas, goddess of wisdom constantly looks down on him from the very beginning. As he continues to question the raven he loses his sanity with every stoic respond of "Nevermore" and as he becomes desperate he wants a different answer which is never to come, the raven with his final 'Nevermore' crushes his hopes. To this spectral echo of 'Nevermore' he succumbs to despair as grief is turned into madness. His desired to meet his rare and radiant Lenore after his death was meet with the raven's Nevermore- as

death is an absolute end, his hope is lost. This triggers in him reaction of outrage and anger reflecting the universal human feeling of wrath and grief at being denied what is most desired. Many scholars have drawn parallel between the man and Poe who also lost his wife at a young age.
Through its lyrical cadence and evocative "The Raven " becomes a meditation of human condition, a testament to the enduring power of loss and longing followed by a overwhelming sense of emptiness. In our own life the raven of thoughts and memories becomes our eternal companion and escape isn't possible as from the shadow of the raven that sits atop wisdom our souls "shall be lifted— Nevermore!

Myth and its Relation to Folk- wisdom

Sukla Kisku

Abstract:

Since the dawn of life, human beings have been curious to find about the mystery of the creation of the universe, living creatures, and about human life also. This eagerness to search for the truth of something unknown offers the possibility to achieve knowledge or wisdom. Out of this concern and ignorance, they tried to build their own history of truth, which eventually resulted into mythology, folk tale and legend. These three aspects have been familiar as the product of folklore in the appearance of prose-folk narrative. Folk-wisdom implies the body of knowledge and experience that Springs from the beliefs and opinions of ordinary people. The morals or proverbs found in Aesop's *Fables* are also forms of folk-wisdom. From "The Hare and the Tortoise" humanity is reminded "slow but steady wins the race," whereas "The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf" teaches that "there is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth". In Aesop's *Fables* there are stories based on mythic characters like Jupiter, Pandora, Hercules and others. The discussion of this paper will be concerned chiefly with the relation between folk-wisdom and myth and how this relation becomes a mode of expression in literature.

Key words: Folk-wisdom, myth, truth, knowledge, morals, literature.

1. **Introduction**

Of creation, people could seldom imagine anything that is able to answer the questions they have in their mind since their consciousness after being into this vast, gigantic world. They are so full of curiosity to investigate their existence, the nature, the world, and the Divine God that they worship. In this very quest, to look for the concealed, unknown, and undiscovered truth, the notion of knowledge or wisdom comes into its being. From the very outset, they started to compose imaginary stories of gods, of the creation of earth and its creatures. With this, chronically appears the notion of Myth and that of folk-wisdom. Out of curiosity, these two genres come into reality. Henceforth, I would discuss, in an acute way, how Myth and folk-wisdom channel through this mission for getting the answers related to the truth about creation.

2. **Origin of Myth and Folk-wisdom: Ignorance, Truth, Knowledge, Creation**

In their attempt to unravel this nudging mystery of their creation, people in the ancient period failed very obviously to seek out the answer. Thus, they started to believe that behind the mystery of creation of the world and its beings is none other than a supernatural presence who is the cause of everything in this world by managing and controlling the cause of the situation, something they could never be able to know.

Therefore, this failure of humans does emerge with a key solution to cope up with their own situation: they started to write down stories about gods, creation of the world, of the human beings. It is those narratives which may apparently seem fictional utterly, but still remain under shadows. Eventually, the birth of Myth took place. As far as the origin of folk-wisdom is concerned, it absolutely came from the intention of collective belief upon those beliefs and opinions that generate throughout the societies, in spite of geographical location. Its main aim is undoubtedly to keep people endowed with knowledge that has been genealogically passed from generation to generation.

3. **Folk-wisdom**

Folk-wisdom implies the body of knowledge and experience that Springs from the beliefs and opinions of ordinary people. Folk wisdom should be distinguished from folk cures or wives' tales which generally refer to remedial practices. Folk wisdom could be traced in the proverbs, poetry, songs, stories, rhymes, and religions of all society. The telling off, “don't

judge a book by its cover," and the recommendation "strike while the iron is hot" are instances of folk wisdom found in Western culture. The morals found in Aesop's Fables are also forms of folk wisdom. From "The Hare and the Tortoise" humanity is reminded "slow but steady wins the race," whereas "The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf" teaches that "there is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth". While a precise definition of wisdom is elusive, "wisdom is generally considered the pinnacle of insight into the human condition and about the means and ends of a good life".

In an article "Wisdom: A Metaheuristic (Pragmatic) to Orchestrate Mind and Virtue toward Excellence" written by Paul B Baltes and Ursula M. Staudinger the conception of wisdom has been explicated clearly:

> "The first branch, implicit theories of wisdom, consists of psychological research that is associated with folk-psychological and/or common-sense approaches, a line of work initiated by Clayton (Clayton & Birren, 1980), Holliday and Chandler (1986), Sternberg (1985, 1986), Orwoll and Perlmutter (1990), and Sowarka (1989). At stake here is the question of how the term wisdom is used in everyday language and how wise persons are characterised.
>
> Wise persons permit five conclusions about the concept of wisdom: (1) Wisdom is a concept that carries specific meaning that is widely shared and understood in its language-based representation. For instance, wisdom is clearly distinct from other wisdom-related psychological concepts such as social intelligence, maturity, or sagacity. (2) Wisdom is judged to be an exceptional level of human functioning. It is related to excellence and ideals of human development. (3) Wisdom identifies a state of mind and behaviour that includes the coordinated and balanced interplay of intellectual, affective, and emotional aspects of human functioning. (4) Wisdom is viewed as associated with a high degree of personal and interpersonal competence including the ability to listen, evaluate, and to give advice. (5) Wisdom involves good intentions. It is used for the well-being of oneself and others.
>
> Most recently, we extended our inquiry concerning wisdom to the study of proverbs and their relevance in accessing wisdom-related knowledge (Baltes & Freund, 1998). This research follows the notion of folk psychology (Haselager, 1997; Mieder, 1993) that much of a culture's historically acquired knowledge is stored in proverbs, and that

accessing this body of knowledge is a major facilitator in achieving and interpreting a good life.

In this instance, we focused on the use of proverbs that reflect the three strategies of life management that Margret Baltes, Paul Baltes and their colleagues have identified as foundational to successful life development: selection, optimization, and compensation (M. Baltes & Carstensen, 1996; Baltes, 1997; Freund & Baltes, in press; Marsiske et al., 1995). Selection involves goals, optimization concern means to reach goals, and compensation denotes means that are invoked when established means fail to reach a given goal. Examples of such proverbs are: "Jack of all trades, master of none" (selection), "practice makes perfect" (optimization), and "when there is no wind, grab the oars" (compensation)." (Baltes and Staudinger)

The life of Aesop- the pioneer of folk-wisdom- is as much complicated as that of Homer, the most legendary of Greek poets. He was born, as has mostly been believed, about the year 620 B.C., and was a slave by birth. He had been in possession of two masters from Samos, Xanthus and Jadmon. It was Jadmon who liberated him from his slavery, as an incentive for his learning and wit. One of the advantages of a freedman in ancient Greece was to have the permission of taking an active contribution in public affairs. That helped Aesop to evolve himself from the servile ignominy to a position of high repute.

In his desire to instruct and to be instructed, he travelled through many countries. One of these ambassadorial travels, commenced at the command of Croesus, was the occasion of his death. Having been sent to Delphi with a large sum of gold for distribution among the citizens, he was so provoked at their covetousness that he refused to divide the money, and sent it back to his master. The Delphians, enraged at this treatment, accused him of impiety, and, in spite of his sacred character as ambassador, executed him as a public criminal. This cruel death of Aesop was not unavenged. The citizens of Delphi were visited with a series of calamities, until they made public reparation of their crime; and, "The blood of Aesop" became a well-known adage, bearing witness to the truth that deeds of wrong would not pass unpunished.

4. **Myth**

To define the genus of myth one first always remembers instinctively about the Greek myth which revolves around the well known stories of Zeus, Poseidon, Hades and other famous

mythic characters. The word has originated from the Greek word “muthos”, which means a story, narrative, or plot. Basically, Myth refers to a story that deals with Gods, humans and the mutual relation between them; quest of heroes and their first hand combat with giants or supernatural beings or even with other heroes. Thus, mythology implies collectively to all those narratives and beliefs- that could be of any group or a number of groups, in spite of their distinguished geographical margin.

Since the beginning, people have written myths because they wanted to know what kind of being they are. What makes them different from other beings like animals or birds? Who is the creator of this whole universe? Is there anyone above the sky, who is watching us from there? Who created this earth and the creatures on it? How day comes after night? Such questions like these keep coming in the mind of humans and this insinuation drives them to compose such stories which would be distinctly called Myth. By such narrative not only the mystery of creation is being materialised in a fictional format, but also such story-line also discloses an individual society's or group's history, culture, religion, and also collective psychology, civilization. As we know that such composition is nothing but a distinguished format of prose narrative and also something from which the whole universe of literature originates. Even though the famous myths, like that of Greek or Rome, had been written in the primitive ages, they still possess an enriched wealth material in them, which could be helpful both for literature and art. Springing from the mother figure called folklore, myth as a prose folk-narrative- something generated from the concept of oral literature- is a non-material part of folklore wherein we get the other two major aspects of folklore including myth- Tale and Legend.

5. **Morals**

The Parable and the Fable are all common and popular modes of conveying morals and interestingly both are part of folk culture and tradition. Each is distinguished by its own special characteristics. The *parable* is the designed use of language purposely intended to express a concealed and covert meaning other than that contained in the words themselves; and which may or may not bear a special reference to the hearer, or reader. The *fable* will refer to a brief but authentic narrative line; it will look for, like the Parable, to convey a veiled implication, and that by the skilful introduction of fictitious characters (may be human or non human and even also gods), not just by the use of language; and it will ever keep in view, as

its high priority and inseparable trait, the great purpose of instruction or lesson, and will necessarily seek to inculcate some moral maxim, social duty, or political truth.

A *true fable*, if it rises to its highest requirements, always aims at one great end and representation of human motive, and the improvement of human conduct. Yet, it conceals its purpose under the masquerade of fictitious characters, by giving human attributes with speech the animals of the field, the birds of the air, the trees of the wood, or the beasts of the forest. In such a way, the reader shall obtain instruction without understanding the presence of the counsellor. Thus the superiority of the counsellor, which often conveys instruction, is remained under the veil, and the lesson comes with the greater acceptance when the reader is led, unconsciously to himself, to pursue what is pure, honourable, and praiseworthy, and to have his resentment against what is low, ignoble, and unworthy.

The *true fabulist*, therefore, performs a most significant role. He is neither a narrator, nor an allegorist. He is a great teacher, a corrector of morals, a censor of vice, and a commander of virtue. In this consists the superiority of fable over parable. The fabulist is to create a laugh, but yet, under a merry guise, to convey instruction.

Professor K. O. Mueller, a German scholar and Philodorian, or admirer of ancient Sparta, who introduced the modern study of Greek mythology, said that:

> "The fable originated in Greece in an intentional travestie of human affairs. The 'ainos,' as its name denotes, is an admonition, or rather a reproof veiled, either from fear of an excess of frankness, or from a love of fun and jest, beneath the fiction of an occurrence happening among beasts; and wherever we have any ancient and authentic account of the Aesopian fables, we find it to be the same." (Mueller)

The construction of a fable involves a minute attention to- (1) The narration itself; (2) The deduction of the moral; and (3) A careful maintenance of the individual characteristics of the fictitious personages introduced into it.

The narration should relate to one simple action, consistent with itself, and neither to be overloaded with multiple details, nor distracted by a variety of circumstances. The moral or lesson should be so plain, and so intimately interwoven with, and so necessarily dependent

on, the narration, that every reader should be compelled to give to it the same undeniable interpretation. The introduction of the animals or fictitious characters should be marked with an unexceptionable care and attention to their natural attributes, and to the qualities attributed to them by universal popular consent. Many of these fables are characterised by the strictest observance of these rules. They are occupied with one short narrative, from which the moral naturally flows, and with which it is intimately associated.

Dodsley, an English bookseller, poet, playwright, and miscellaneous writer, said:

> "'Tis the simple manner in which the morals of Aesop are interwoven with his fables that distinguishes him, and gives him the preference over all other mythologists. His 'Mountain delivered of a Mouse,' produces the moral of his fable in ridicule of pompous pretenders; and his Crow, when she drops her cheese, lets fall, as it were by accident, the strongest admonition against the power of flattery. There is no need of a separate sentence to explain it; no possibility of impressing it deeper, by that load we too often see of accumulated reflections." (Dodsley)

6. **Relation between Myth and Folk-wisdom: Prose Vs Oral literature**

As has been already explicated, out of the pursuit for knowledge people created such genres like myth and folk-wisdom. Both appeared eventually as a product of human curiosity for truth. Even though they failed to figure out that actual hidden knowledge, they didn't give up to their failure. But rather they proceed with the hunch of imagination to create a fictional truth (that is myth), something that subsequently becomes a vast beehive of literature. It's very likely to accept the fact that chronologically myth came much before folk-lore; in fact, the presence of myth has smoothed the passage for folk-wisdom, otherwise it would have been quite impossible to write stories upon mythical gods or goddesses. Myth itself is an institution of literature, which is authored by anonymous writers from centuries, of whatever continent it is. Even though it has no proper authoritative presence, this genre is coming under the lineage of prose folk narrative, since most of the stories of all myth are in prose format.

Significantly, folk-wisdom has some pioneers like Aesop, Demetrius Phalereus, Nevelet, and many other names to be related with. These famous names appeared with the intention to convey moral lessons or instructions to the common folks which "involves good intentions" and for the "well-being of oneself and others", with the assistance of virtues and

vices as well. Moreover, folk-wisdom has this mission for the betterment of common good, unlike myth functioning like a story and also as a wish fulfilment for the presence of divinity for common people. In fact from childhood, people are more acquainted with the stories of fables rather than that of myths; as all the parents intend to build a rational life for their children. If one looks at the history of fables, it would be uncovered that throughout the world it is the stories of Aesop's *Fables*, which have been translated in multiple languages for the readers. As a matter of fact, Aesop's *Fables* is the second popular work of art just after *The Holy Bible*.

Chaucer, George Orwell is among those eminent authors who have been inspired chiefly by the persuasion of fables in their works, making them well-known authors in the field of literature. Whereas, there are those names like Shakespeare, Eliot, Sartre, Heaney, Yeats and some others, with whom we could adhere to the genre of myth.

7. **Conclusion**

Therefore, one must proclaim that even though folk-wisdom and myth are of different rank, they are actually intertwined with each other. Both qualify or complement each other constantly, each works as a supplement for the other, for accomplishment. One must not forget the presence of mythic characters in the fables of Aesop (the presence of Jupiter, Hercules, Mercury) and some moral lessons one could acquire from the mythic stories as well (Paris, Anteus, Medusa and some others). This crucial procedure of influencing each other indeed had been initialised in Greece centuries ago, which is again the same old headquarters of wisdom.

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Unhomed and Rehomed: Interrogating the Problematics of Repatriation and Rehabilitation in Saadat Hasan Manto's short story "The Dutiful Daughter"

Ankita Mukherjee

Saadat Hasan Manto lived through the greatest upheaval in the Indian subcontinent i.e., the Partition of 1947. The Partition of India was accompanied by violence across the subcontinent. This violence divided communities along religious lines. People left behind their homes, possessions and loved ones. Between eight and ten million people migrated to places marked exclusively by religious identity. Amid this mass migration of people, thousands of women became victims of abduction, rape and brutal murder. As a sensitive writer, Manto was traumatized by the political turmoil of the times and his stories reflect his repeated attempts to come to terms with this cataclysmic event. For him this unfathomable violence was a clarion call for artistic intervention as he struggled with the inherent inexplicable nature of such widespread trauma. Poignantly, Manto never used the term independence, instead he always referred to the event as *batwara* – the ripping apart of the nation . Reflecting upon the dislocations in his own personal and professional life, Manto painfully explored the spectacle of parochialism and the politics of attrition on both the victims and the perpetrators with faithful accuracy.

Manto emigrated to the newly created Pakistan in 1947 but the horror of Partition, its effects and repercussions, remained deeply entrenched in his mind. Reflecting on the dislocation in his own life, Manto in his later stories, made the effects of communal violence and its consequent disruption, on both victims and perpetrators, his primary concern. As Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin assert, Partition literature 'validates historical truth precisely in its power to represent' the stories of thousands of people affected by the largest migration in the history of the subcontinent. (Menon and Bhasin 23)In such a time of intolerable insanity, the plight of woman became most vulnerable. In a number of Manto's stories, there is an impending sense of immediacy with which one confronts a totally degenerate society, a world of raped and ravaged women, women commodified and consumed,

with the backdrop of the Partition of 1947 which caused one of the most massive human convulsions in history.

Manto's stories map violence as a set of complex issues that converged during the dissolution of communities. Manto synthesizes thousands of accounts of Partition violence into narratives exploring the abuse of women during those unholy times. In doing so, they highlight how not just the body but also the body's place in the world becomes a site of trauma. In fact, the State in general and the society in particular, failed to address the trauma and the suffering of the ravaged women, who were rejected, returned, silenced and duly forgotten. Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence* endeavours to pierce through this selective amnesia by placing people, their individual experiences and their private pains at the center of this epochal event. Butalia asserts that, 'The patriarchal and nationalist discourses that reduced women to mere symbols of honour also prevented them from speaking out or being heard. They were denied their own voices and experiences, and their stories were erased or distorted by history.'(Butalia98)

While there are plenty of official accounts of Partition, there are few social histories and fewer feminist historiography on the partition of India. *Borders and Boundaries* by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin changes that, providing first-hand accounts and memoirs, juxtaposed alongside official government accounts. The authors make women not only visible but central. They explore what country, nation, and religious identity meant for women, and they address the question of the nation-state and the 'gendering' of citizenship.Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's seminal work looks into the question of women's sexuality, as it had been 'violated by abduction, transgressed by enforced conversion and marriage and exploited by impermissible cohabitation and reproduction…' (Menon and Bhasin 20) The figure of the abducted woman became symbolic of crossing boundaries, of violating social,cultural and political boundaries. Menon and Bhasin further asserts that the extent and nature of violence that women were subjected to when communities conflagrated, highlights not only their particular vulnerability but larger questions of women's sexuality under an overarching, hyper-masculine, nationalist-patriarchal system.

In the largest ever peace-time mass migration of people, violence against women became the norm. Thousands of women committed suicide or were done to death by their own kinsmen. Nearly 100,000 women were abductedduring the migration. A young woman might have been separated from her family when a convoy was ambushed, abducted by people of another religion, forced to convert, and forced into marriage or cohabitation. After bearing a child, she would be offered the opportunity to return only if she left her child behind and if she could face shame in her natal community. These stories do not paint their subjects as victims. Theirs are the stories of battles over gender, the body, sexuality, and nationalism–stories of women fighting for identity.

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in the chapter titled "Borders and Bodies: Recovering Women in the Interest of the Nation" of their seminal work Borders & Boundaries write: 'In the aftermath of Partition the governments of India and Pakistan were swamped with the complaints by relatives of missing women, seeking to recover them, either through government, military or voluntary effort.' (Menon and Bhasin 67) Recognizing the enormity of the problem of the large number of abducted women, the Indian and Pakistani governments entered into an Inter-Dominion Treaty on 6th December, 1947 to recover as many abducted women, as speedily as possible, from each country, and restore them to their families. This agreement came to be known as the Central Recovery Operation, and within a short period of time, the initial agreement arrived between the two governments was given legislative sanction. The Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Ordinance was transformed first into a Bill and later, in 1949, into an Act. By the terms of this Act, the government of India set up an implementation machinery and arrived at a working definition of what was meant by the term 'abducted person'. The violence in Punjab had begun early in March 1947 thus any woman who was seen to be living with, in the company of, or in a relationship with a man of the other religion, after March 1, 1947 would be presumed to have been abducted and taken by force. Menon and Bhasin in their historiography give concrete numerical data, 'In all, approximately 30,000 Muslim, Hindu and Sikh women were recovered by both countries over an eight -year period.' (Bhasin and Menon 99)

In the story 'The Dutiful Daughter', Mantowrites, *'The year 1948 had begun. Hundreds of volunteers had been assigned the task of recovering abducted women and children and restoring them to their families.'(187) The story* deals with the aftermath of Partition and the confusion faced by the newly formed nations regarding women. Both India and Pakistan were overwhelmed with the repercussions of this cataclysmic event and a huge project was undertaken by the two nations in restoring the population of women who were abducted and raped, and were to be brought back to their own country. But the questions that Manto poses are how, on what basis did the two countries decide which country 'belongs' to the abducted and raped women? What were the grounds on which it was decided? Was it religious, patriarchal, or State driven?Manto writes, *'One heard strange stories. One liaison officer told me that in Saharanpur, two abducted Muslim girls had refused to return to their parents, who were in Pakistan. Then there was this Muslim girl in Jullandar who was given a touching farewell by the abductor's family as if it was a daughter-in-law leaving on a long journey. Some girls had committed suicide on the way, afraid of facing their parents. Some had lost their mental balance as a result of their traumatic experiences.' (187-188) In this story Mantoproblematises the narrative of abduction-and-rescue and interrogates the idea of the 'abducted' woman itself.*

Told in the first person by a liaison officer involved with the recovery of 'abandoned' women, the story 'The Dutiful Daughter' portrays an old Muslim woman in search of her only daughter. Wandering from town to town in Punjab, each time she is encountered by the officer her condition seems to have worsen. But when the officer tries to convince that her daughter is dead and offers to take her to Pakistan, she vehemently refuses as she believes her daughter is alive for sure: 'Murdered? No. No one can murder my daughter. No one can murder my daughter.' When the officer asks, 'How's that?' The old woman replies confidently, 'She's beautiful, so beautiful that no one can kill her. No one would even lay a hand on her.' (189) The story reaches its climax when the liaison officer finally encounters the old woman in a bazaar in Amritsar, just at the moment when a handsome young Sikh walks by with a veiled woman by his side. Pointing to the old woman, the Sikh says, 'Your mother', (190) at which the young woman averts her face and hurriedly walks away. But

it is too late for the old woman has seen her. As the couple hastens away, the old woman screams out for her daughter. As soon as she sees the liaison officer the woman rushes towards him to inform him that she has just seen her daughter:

She was trembling. I have seen her…I have seen her.
Whom have you seen? I asked.
I have seen my daughter…I have seen Bhagbari.Her eyes were like burnt-out lights.
Your daughter is dead, I said.
You're lying,she screamed.
I swear on God your daughter is dead.
The old woman fell in a heap on the road.

The situation of the young woman in the story was not an uncommon one. As Menon and Bhasin have discussed in their book, young women were known to have made use of the social chaos ensuing from Partition to run away and marry men of their own choice from other communities. Acts that would have been impossible under normal circumstances. In other instances, as seen in novels like Pinjarby Amrita Pritam, women often adjusted to situations such as abduction or forced marriage to settle down to fairly happy lives. In the ambiguity of the liaison officer's words, as consolation to the old woman as well as a true depiction of the fractured relationships of war-time separation, the single feeling that we are left with is that truly more people died than simply those that were physically murdered.

Menon and Bhasin argue that women's rehabilitation and return after the Partition of India in 1947 was a complex and contested process that involved multiple interests. They show how women were treated as symbols of national honour and communal identity, and just as their bodies became sites of violence and abduction, their returnand rehabilitation also became a patriarchal, State imposition. Butalia asserts that women who had survived the violence of Partition were denied all agency.Under the Central Recovery Operation (1948-1956) of the government of India, both India and Pakistan agreed to return to their families and native homes the women who had been abducted during the chaos. However, a number of these women had already converted their religion, married, given birth to the children of their so-called abductors, and settled, happily or otherwise, into their

new lives. This "recovery" was often against their wishes. Many of these women lamented leaving behind their children when they were being repatriated, some of them feared that they would be castigated as 'impure', and many of them chose to live in care homes or ashrams rather than joining their families.

The reluctance to being rescued and rehabilitated by women after the partition was therefore a complex, multifaceted concern that involved various factors such as trauma, stigma, identity, loyalty and agency. The recovery operations homogenized women, based on the assumption that all women wanted to return to their original communities, regardless of their personal circumstances and preferences. To the likes of Menon, Bhasin and Butalia, this operation of rehabilitation was more of a vindication of the honour of the emasculated nation. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin however clarifies, 'It is by no means our intention to suggest that the predicament these women found themselves in was not traumatic or fraught with anxiety and uncertainty, merely that it would be false to presume that their lot was uniformly grim, their 'abductors' without exception 'bestial' or unreliable and craven…' The 1947 Inter-Dominion Treaty legitimized India's Central Recovery Operation and led to an act of Parliament that was strictly enforced till 1957. Menon and Bhasin question why the Indian government pursued this plan despite the tremendous resistance they met from the women who were the supposed beneficiaries. Manto similarly asserts, 'It always amused me to see that such enthusiastic efforts were being made to undo the effects of something that had been perpetrated by more or less the same people. Why were they trying to rehabilitate the women who had been raped and taken away, when they had let them be raped and taken away in the first place? … Sometimes it seemed to me that the entire operation was being conducted like import-export trade.' (187-188)

Manto, who himself migrated from Bombay to Lahore, understood the agony and suffering of displacement that millions of people, on both sides of the border had to undergo. In 'Toba Tek Singh', arguably his most famous partition narrative, Manto similarly delves into the concept of being 'unhomed' through Bishan Singh's profound sense of displacement in the context of the partition of India in 1947.Throughout the story, Manto portrays the inmates of the mental asylum, including the

protagonist Bishan Singh, as embodiments of this unhomed condition.These individuals, already marginalized by society due to their mental illness, are further estranged by the violent upheaval of partition. As the story unfolds, Bishan Singh finds himself caught between the newly drawn borders of India and Pakistan, neither of which feels like home to him. He refuses being moved back across the border. He challenges the drawing up of the geo-political boundary between nations.He finally chooses, or rather falls, in the zone of no man's land–unhomed from his asylum in Pakistan, the lunatic cannot accept the proposal of being rehomed in India. This gesture is his way of negating the cumulative pressure of history, his own past and his memories. His death on the undefined ground becomes a protest against the reality of madness, violence and dislocation.Manto uses Bishan Singh's character to explore the psychological toll of displacement and the existential crisis faced by those who are forcibly uprooted from their homes. Through his refusal to move from Toba Tek Singh, despite the chaos surrounding him, Bishan Singh becomes a poignant symbol of the human desire for belonging and the tragic consequences of political divisions. Such narratives, prove all over again that the partition was not merely a geographical and political fact. It is a continuing process that invades the psychic hinterland, effecting deep schism between the self and the other.

Manto's partition stories can be contextualized in relation to Soja's trialecticalidea of space and Lefebvre's theory of spatial production by analyzing how space is not only a backdropbut a protagonist, a symbol in his partition narratives. The French Marxist theorist, Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* proposed the concept of social space as a way of understanding how societies produce and reproduce their spatial relation. He argued that space is not a neutral container of social life, but a social product that reflects and shapes social practices, perceptions, and representations. Lefebvre similarly developed a spatial triad and conceptualized space from three points of view: physical, mental and social. He proposes a spatial triad that consists of three dimensions of space: Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace. Partition and displacement are phenomena that affect all three dimensions of space in different ways. Partition and its consequent displacement can be seen as affecting Soja'sFirstspace, the directly experienced or perceived space, by changing the physical boundaries and forms of the territory and its inhabitants. Partition and displacement can also be seen

as affecting Secondspace, the conceived or imagined space, by altering the subjective and symbolic representations of space in the minds of the people.Partition and displacement can also be seen as affecting Thirdspace, the lived or experienced space, by creating a complex and dynamic interplay between Firstspace and Secondspace. Therefore, we can see Soja's theory of trialecticshelp us understand partition and displacement as they are spatial phenomena that involve multiple dimensions and perspectives.Taking into account Lefebvre and Soja's theory of spatial production, we can interpret Manto's portrayal of different types of space in his partition stories. But the questions that Manto wants us to ponder over in the context of partition and its associated notions of displacement are–how and to what extent did the partition disrupt the spatial practices of the people, especially women? How did the partition challenge the representation of Space that defined people's, especially women's identities? What foundations of gender and space can we create out of these slippery notions of home and belonging? Is it really possible to build a home after the havoc of displacement?

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Folklore As Metaphor In Subhas Mukhopadhyay's Poetry

Ritupriya Bhanja

Abstract- 'Padatik kobi'Subhas Mukhopadhyay (1919-2003) contributed greatly to enriching the literary wealth of contemporary Indian literature by introducing various progressive ideologies, sketching the social condition at the conjuncture of modernity and portraying the typical oral tradition in his modernistic poems. For generations, different varieties of rhetorical figures, i.e. figurative language in the form of a single word or phrase, have been used in order to reach the pinnacle of excellence in the field of literature. The stemming poets of the first half of the twentieth century trace the effect of socio-political turbulences that resulted in the establishment of a new genre of poetry writing and in enhancing a true economic picture of the text's place of incident. This paper aims to analyze and discuss Subhash Mukhopadhay's metaphorical use of folklore and oral tradition in his drab modernist style in order to depict the perturbation in nature that pursues its impingement on the modern literary technique. Mukhopadhay's skilful use of folk tradition and creative use of myth preserves the typical Indian heritage in the domain of his progressive ideologies and in the shifting paradigm of modern literature. The inclusion of these types of elementary rhetorical devices makes his writing perspicuous to the local people in general and the pragmatic class in particular. It also adds an indigenous legacy to his writing. These simultaneously upgraded Indian typical oral tradition, which deeply prevented his poetry from being a monotonous slogan composed for political benefit. His poetic imagination, mixed with his use of folklore, differentiates his identity from a political slogan composer and uplifts his imaginative whole thereby establishing him as a dominating Indian poet in the realm of modern Indian literature.

"Writing was a political art, and poetry was a cultural weapon"(1)

-Linton Kwesi Johnson

By analyzing this line and taking it into consideration, it can be presumed that political poets made their poetry a 'cultural weapon' to fight against the criminality, unscrupulousness and corruption of political as well as social turmoils. Subhas Mukhopadhyay, born on February 12, 1919, in Krishnanagar, Nadia, West Bengal, is best known for his poems of protest, resistance and empowerment that are rather morally right than politically correct. His non-romantic, straight forward approach in the domain of Indian Literature heralded a new era along with many poets following his footprints. This paper aims to discuss Mukhopadhyay's metaphorical use of folklore, myths and fairy tales in his political and other modernist poems, thereby making it perspicuous to the local people in general and the pragmatic class in particular. It, too, helps to uplift the typical Indian heritage and attaches an indigenous legacy to his writing. His creative use of folk tradition, combined with his poetic imagination and various progressive ideologies, offers a telling description of social and political conditions at the conjuncture of modernity.

Mukhopadhyay's birth witnessed the troublesome period of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy (1919) in Bengal and the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918) and the Russian Revolution (1917). Born and brought up in social unrest, he developed solid political beliefs at an early age. He delved deep into the cause of social justice and was an active participant in left-wing student politics throughout his college years. Whereas, since childhood, he was heavily influenced by different political leaders among whom Subhas Chandra Bose was quite prominent. He even entertained a meeting at Alipore Central jail with Ramdulal Basu's elder brother, who himself was a "satyagrahe' at that time. Thus, he was too much attracted to politics in his later childhood. His wife, Gita Bandopadhyay, commented, "While still in school, we joined demonstrations under the leadership of

communist students"(2). After completing graduation, he formally joined the communist party of India. He thereby came to be known among people as one of a handful of

literary practitioners with first-hand experience as a party worker and activist (3) His association with the labour class during his working days at Khidirpur harbor and his collection of a handbook on Marxism from poet Samar Sen marked the very beginning of his growing interest towards communism. However, later on, his direct attachments with political life resulted in the formation of stark, explicit, unambiguous modernist poems out of his political ideologies and sloganistic assertions.

The 1940s were marked by different types of socio-political turbulences as the world war, famine, Partitions, communal riots and mass emigration in Bengal. Subhas's writings broke away from the traditional moorings of the establishment poets and instead portrayed the despair and disillusion felt by the common people. However, in contrast to the social and political upheavals, the period marks the 'spring' of Mukhopadhyay's career as a poet with the publication of poetry 'podatik' (The Foot Soldier), which is regarded as a milestone in the development of modern Indian literature. His non-romantic, perspicuous, direct voice, allied with his technical skill and radical world views, welcomes the formation of a new genre of poetry writing in order to depict the perturbation in nature that pursues its impingement on the modern literary technique. In 1964, he acquired The Sahitya Academy Award for his composition 'joto dure jai' for which he was quite young. His wife, Gita Bandopadhyay remarked -"When Subhas got the Academy Award, he was only forty-six. I say 'only' because awards appear for people in their old age like pension"(4)

An eminent critic Buddhadeb Basu remarked on his unpretentious and undemanding construction of poetry by restating the aptness of his style in relation to the irksome

phase.He looked upon the poetry in the hands of Bengali poets as a sparkling weapon that threaten social turmoil and not just a mere parody of poetical extravagances.

From the late 1950s onwards, Mukhopadhyay's poetry evolved into something more personal and contemplative. The readers can clearly trace a deep change in his literary form, use of rhetorical devices and creative motive, through which it took a turn towards the narrative and the allegorical.

Mukhopadhyay himself accepted this change by stating that reality and experience change him every time. But in the early wake of the 1960s, he changed his tone completely and defamiliarised his common verse form, though he never lost his technical felicity nor his unique voice. During this phase, his poetry became more idiosyncratic and reflective. Innate beauties of daily life, empathy for the common man, and his faith in mankind created such unforgettable and awe-inspiring line-

"whether flowers bloom or not, it's spring today" (5)

Society as an integrated collection of human beings possesses the remarkable property of self-expression.(6)The experiences gained by the community or the society when finding spontaneous expression with some degree of aesthetic and artistic skill is termed folk literature (7). G.W Boswell defines folklore "as the unwritten history of ancient societies preserved in the minds of the people and handed down through ages by the medium of language or practice"(8). Most part of the folk literature is generally being created and passed on by words through mouths. As a result, it possesses more social elements than individual inventive literature. While creative literature owns the experiences of an individual, folk literature documents the entire society; thereby, being the product of the society, it actually gives a vivid description of society and the age itself.

Thus, a poem including such traditional manifestations actually provides indigenous inheritance and sketches a true economic picture of the text's place of incidence.

Mukhopadhyay's modernist poems have at their centre the socio-political turbulence effective at that time and the impending destruction of the young generation as an adverse effect. The two major movements that are the Naxalbari movement and the freedom struggle of Bangladesh experienced the most horrific treatment of human corruption and inspired Mukhopadhyay to compose stark modernistic poems out of his robust sensibility and intelligence. To make it understandable and available to the people in general, he took the assistance of different varieties of rhetorical devices, provincial or daily language and proverbs that added an Indian bequest to his writing. The poem 'Chele gachey bone' (1972) bore the signature of the most dreadful and dark

period in the 70s- the Naxalite movement. The poem has its central theme, the Naxalite movement, though the book was dedicated to the freedom fighters of Bangladesh. The use of typical Indian folk tradition is evident in the most repeated lines-

When I reached the age

when I should have left for vanaprastha

Leaving me behind in shackles

My son has gone to exile (9)

The term 'vanaprastha' literally means giving up on worldly life and attachments. It is a concept in Hindu traditions representing the third of four ashrams of human life which a person accepts after his fulfillment of household responsibilities. This phase of life can be characterized as a willful exile from worldly possessions and spending life like a saint. But, here, the term 'vanaprastha' coincides with his son's early age, when he should have been experiencing his most joyous, mirthful, exuberant and vigorous stage of life, which is

in turn completely shattered by the cruel forces of society. The mythological history of ancient India is once again repeated at the conjuncture of modernity but with changed circumstances, increased horror and a more universally compelling existential message-

I am not a mistaken murderer by throwing the arrow

listening to the sound of filling water

I am not given curse

By any agonized blind saint(10)

Thus, by analyzing the circumstantial epical manifestations of King Dasharath's agonized state for his son Rama, as a result of malediction brought about by a blind saint whose only son has been murdered mistakenly by the king in place of a deer, he makes a universal appeal on behalf of the afflicted and anguished fathers. Mukhopadhyay creatively chose this allegorical story to illuminate the despondency and anguish of Indian fathers who were blameless of any innocent assassination but suffered a lot as an adverse effect of it. Here, King Dasharatha acts as a metonymic signifier- a representative figure of all Indian fathers who are not by happenstance cursed by a visually challenged saint out of his son's grief but fall prey to the contemporary socio-political tumult, without performing any harm to mankind. Another poem, 'agnikone' (1948), was composed in a much similar context, portrays a character from the Indian epic 'Ramayana' and by adds the consequences of the Naxalite movement that revolted against the old and primitive forms of the society-"In a blood-stained mirror/ Vashyalochol see his face"(11)

'Vashyalochon' was a character in 'Ramayana' who was blessed by the powerful god 'Brahma', that making eye contact with 'vashyalochon' will incinerate his enemy. But unfortunately, he himself gets inflamed by seeing his own face in the mirror on an idea to ignite his enemy, 'Rama'. Here 'Vashyalochon' symbolizes the imperialists whose

impending destruction would be an effect of their own misconceptions, fallacy and delusion.

The poem 'Thakumar Jhuli' (1979) also illustrates his use of fairy tales to convey and uphold the problem of emigration evident in the late 1970s -

"Seven plumeria in seven trees

Sister Parul is staying close

King Dharma sent motor palanquin to Dandak

That's all for my Granny's sack of tales" (12)

Through the use of various folk terms, Mukhopadhyay actually wants to elucidate the ignominious and deplorable condition of the Bangladeshi refugees witnessed by the tumultuous years of the 1970s. The title of the poem portrays the whole narrative as implanted with folk tales or moralistic tales for children, but, at a deeper level, the poem carries an intense political hereditament possessing a drab note of political nuisance which is targeted at enlightening the consciousness of the mature generation. The mention of certain folk elements like the flower 'plumeria', sister 'Parul', king 'Dharma' and the reference to the place 'Dandak' makes it typically Indian and also makes the circumstances of the piece of poetry relatable to past incidents.

Generally, poems incorporated with these types of folklore and fairy tales are dedicated to children but his poems actually contrast with universality with a second-order significance and a deep detailing embedded under typical oral traditions. In another of his perspicacious poems ' Khela' (1983), the grim and desolate reality is characterized by frolic components-

The toys are left

Scattered here and there

Matchboxes joined with one another

to form coaches of rail" (13)

The manifestation of a casual world of child's play actually acts as a foil to the harsh reality that has to be confronted: "When eyes will be closed," along with the commencement of "the journey of truth."

Similarly, the poem 'Jete jete'(1962) ends up with an almost similar epiphanic situation, stating- "Then? What to tell/ That witch ate me up"(14), which to inherit a deep political connection. This portrays his disillusionment and detachment from his political background during his later phase. The term 'witch' at the very last line of the poem lends a contradictory effect against the lady who was at first addressed as a 'princess' and was viewed as an emblematic ideal of love and fulfilment of desire- "Then that princess/Enclosed her fingers into mine"(15)

The juxtaposition of the two metaphors 'princess' and 'witch' first visualizes a faultless, supreme world of the fulfilment of the eros and then gets trapped up into it without leaving behind any way of departure. The enigmatic ideal turns out to be an unavoidable enchanter who provides harm in disguise of an attractive figure while also making a deep contrast between appearance and reality. On understanding and knowing people by their first impression, he upholds the fact in one of his interviews that imprisonment helped me make me conscious of the facade and pretentiousness of human nature.

Mukhopadhyay's use of metaphorical folklore also aimed at sermonizing and preaching to the common people against any discrimination based on caste, creed, social and religious beliefs. A perfect example to analyze this logic is the poem 'Ghore na baire na' (1989), which, at its very beginning stages-

One side comprises

Three lakh crore

Of Krishna's army.....

Other side comprises of

Unarmed lonely

War deviated

Krishna himself. (16)

and the poem ends with a universally impelling message of comradeship and brotherhood-

"....we are all but brothers!

This brotherly combat should be stopped

No one should murder mankind-

Neither at home nor outside"(17)

The poem owns its central theme as the futility and uselessness of various types of riots and massacres, which are being looked upon as 'brotherly combat' that India evidenced in her troublesome years. The traditional epic tale of saint Vyasa's 'Mahabharata' and its central theme of warfare among brothers is chosen by Subhas as a medium to make the common people aware of the result of the warfare which would again take place with 'double toil and trouble' if repeated at the juncture of modernity. The poem contains a ubiquitous message left in its sake to adopt kinship and companionship among the people of the text's place of occurrence. In another of Mukhopadhyay's reflective poetry, 'Dhormer kol' (1991), we get references to the problem of mass emigration evident during the partition of Bengal and the shabby, abysmal and odious condition of women during that time-

..Lakshman lines are being drawn

For women

And monsters would attack

If kept feet outside the line (18)

The very first line of the poem, ‘Time is not fair’, strikes the reader’s mind, suggesting a pandemonium that is similar to its metaphorical history. The safety line created by saviours remains the same throughout the ages, but the ‘monstrous’ evil forces of modern society are becoming more brutal, horrific and dreadful day by day. But at a deeper level, ‘women’ serves as a metaphor for the innocent mass and ‘monsters’ are associated with the diabolical force.

Thus, Mukhopadhyay’s poetry witnessed the hue and cry of the Indian society at the time of various socio-political disruptions as well as gifted a number of intellectual and inventive poetry to the contemporary literary oeuvre. His poetic journey, starting from his ‘padatik’ phase till his recognition as a successful Indian poet, sketches the transformation of his rudimentary political inheritance to a more mundane realm of metaphorical plotting. His keen sense of humor, along with the use of folk tales in poetry and the historical relevance between the two, differentiated his identity from other conventional political poets of the era. His poems can be universally relatable to any social turmoil and can be referred to as a continuation of Indian extant literature.

Mukhopadhyay’s construction can be characterized as much more mythical than political. As a result, his writing can reach people irrespective of age and literacy. His poetic construction is free from the use of rigid words or phrases and includes a transfiguration of colloquialism, thereby excluding the need for a polymath to reflect upon the substance of this writing. He himself described the commencement of his poetic career in ‘kobitar bojhapora’ by stating that he wrote his first poem for his school magazine named ‘chitrakar’ and ‘jhoraphul’ while he was in seventh standard. He further elucidated that it was a summer noon, and he was trying to compose a poem. Meanwhile, his attention deviated towards the sound of banging clothes on the ground by a washerman, and he suddenly innovated his subject and style of writing. Thus, the origin of his poetry also

establishes a sense of mass evolution and something which belonged to the general people and which is related to our quotidian struggle, characterized by upheavals and reversals. He himself commented on his use of words by stating- "I want to make the words stand on their feet"(19) Referring to his use of colloquialism in his poetry, he remarked in an interview that his purpose in writing was to pursue his realistic views and personalized thoughts about life. He does not use a vivid poetic imagination to uphold the problems of life but makes it free to pass through natural outbursts. He neither wants to establish himself as a poet nor wants anyone to call him a poet, but only to walk through the path of humanity and serve the people with his utmost till the last breath of his life.

However, during the last phase of his life, Mukhopadhyay totally turned himself from political bondage and took will-full exile from the Communist party, the reasons for which are not clearly mentioned, though he safeguarded his firm faith in Marxism in a protective corner of his heart. During this phase, he wrote rhymes for children as well as made himself more deeply involved in translations though he continued this translation from his early career. But if we compare his 'podatik' phase with his later phase, we can trace his evolution from a diplomatic person to a more sensible, realistic, logical and responsible poet. His use of uncomplicated language does not stain his poetic creativity but rather reflects his brilliance, simplicity and directness. Mukhopadhyay himself recounted his poetic career, that he stepped into his literary oeuvre through prose writing, and after a great struggle he made himself efficient in poetry. His poetry is sometimes about simple manifestations of rural life and sometimes the bloody depiction of the revolts, massacres as well and disastrous effects of imperialism though not directly but with the help of different metaphors. His intention was to change the existing social structure by giving it a breakthrough from its bondage existence and to provoke non-judgemental and unbiased thoughts. He wrote, " Through poetry, I want to make the

human hands useful in a way that we can change the world as our hearts wish". He himself mentioned that, without constant walking, he faced difficulties in writing poems, and this brought out his interest in mankind, so he engraved his name as 'podatik kobi' in the domain of Bengali literature. However, he stopped walking on 8th July 2003, giving a break to his immortal creations.

Hence, Subhas Mukhopadhyay's contribution towards modern Indian literature is not only lingual but also the establishment of a poetic weapon which possesses universality, which is not of a particular age but of all ages. His poetic composition is not only for the sake of poetry or to make himself eternal in the field of literature but to open a new sphere of enlightenment which delves deep into socio-political tumult and facilitates a subtle hint of the solution to certain problems. The poet himself declared that there is no separate world for a poet. The normal world, which encompasses men's radical exchange of views and thoughts, is also a poet's main concern. The regular words in the mouth of people, which help us to know our surroundings and gain experiences about the realities of the world become his main preoccupation, and he can never be isolated from it. (20)Thus, his creation is always a reflection of the age itself, besides the expansion of the supreme path of politics that may lead to the desired nation.

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From Devdas to Dev D: Tracing the Male Gaze

Anusua Chatterjee

> "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle" … "she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combines spectacle and narrative." (Mulvey)

In a 2012 interview with Oorvazi Irani director Anurag Kashyap said regarding the genesis of the core concept of his 2009 film *Dev D*: "The core idea began with Abhay. He was the one who told me this idea of this boy lost in strip bar in LA and that triggered off hell lot of idea that was in my mind and showed me the possibility of adapting *Devdas*."(Irani) The more than 20 adaptations on screen and television including two major films in the 21st century, more than almost a century after its publication, indicates the persisting appeal of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's 1917 novella.

Devdas, both the novella and the eponymous character, have become cult icons in Indian popular culture through various retellings and adaptations in several languages. These include Naresh Mitra's 1928 silent version produced by Eastern Film Syndicate, the 1935 film starring K.L. Saigal, Bimal Roy's iconic 1955 adaptation starring Suchitra Sen as Paro and Vaijayantimala as Chandramukhi, and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2002 blockbuster version overdosed with spectacle, glamour, grandeur. So much so that the name has become a byword for a heart-broken lover - Devdas is a trope. In common parlance *Devdas* is referred to as a tragic love story, though there are hardly any elements of the tragic as we understand technically. The novel, and the cinematic adaptations mentioned above, deal in melodrama and pathos. Though named after the eponymous character, *Devdas* is as much a story of Parvati and Chandramukhi.

Bhansali doesn't interact with modernity at all. His setting is an unspecified glamourised version of the feudal past. The film deals in exoticism and escapism to inflated emotions, elaborate sets, lavish costumes – as is the case with most of Bhansali's films. It is an audio visual spectacle with song and dance and of course superstars in all their glory. It promotes and glorifies the conventional, stereotyped, gendered value system and moral parameters of the feudal society. The film deals in several popular tropes like the love triangle, star-crossed lovers, the tragic romantic hero, drowning sorrows in alcohol, the ghar-ki-lakshmi and bazari aurat binary and the love conquers all cliché. The phalocentric discourse of the film condones physical and verbal violence against women. Shanti Wesley in her essay "Violence and misogyny: Patriarchal Rhetoric in Devdas" writes:

> While the spectacle is certainly exhilarating, I found myself disturbed by the attitudes toward and treatment of women in the film. I believe the rhetoric of Devdas with

> respect to the women in the movie is characterized by misogyny and violence. The patriarchal rhetoric condones verbal and physical violence against women and defines them strictly by their relationships with men. (Wesley)

In his relationship with Paro, Dev repeatedly asserts his control and ownership over her. In their first scene together, Dev kills a fly that has been pestering Paro. He says jealously, "thumhe aur koi chuye, mujhe achha nahi lagta" (I don't like it if someone else touches you). (Bhansali) This scene illustrates Dev's sense of entitlement to Paro's body: Paro belongs to him, and no one and nothing else can be permitted to access her, nor does she have autonomy over her own body. Rather than identifying Dev's sentiment as obsessive, possessive and toxic, the film expects the audience to accept it as appropriate protectiveness of a lover. There are several such glimpses of erotic violence in the film's portrayal of Dev and Paro's relationship. At one point, Dev forcefully throws a deck of cards at Paro in a mock slap. He grabs her hair and twists her wrist at various points in the film. In the scene before Paro's wedding Dev picks up a necklace and hits Paro on her forehead with it; as blood comes out of the wound Dev smears it on her head like sindoor, as if branding her as his possession before she goes on to become another man's possession through her wedding. Here Bhansali makes his Paro sing: "Jo daag tumne diya, usse mera chebra khila. Sajaake rakhoongi, yeh nishaani pyaar ka" (the wound I have received from you has made my face bloom, I will keep it adorned). (Bhansali) Through the rest of the film the scar remains prominently visible on Paro's forehead as a brand or a stamp on her body proclaiming that it "belongs" to Dev. Such violent acts are common in Hindi cinema, in which intense passion and sexual desire become tantamount to literal physical domination by the man. In that vein in Bhansali's *Devdas* the brutality of Dev's actions, and even words, are not condemned as inappropriately violent, but instead eroticized, normalized and even glorified. Bhansali's Paro has internalized the phallocentric hierarchy of the society she inhabits; she makes no protests when physically assaulted, rather considers Dev's violent abuse as his prerogative. Thus, giving up her autonomy over her self and body, she becomes complicit in her own commodification and marginalization.

In Sanjay Leela Bhansali universe of Devdas, Chandramukhi, a 'tawaif', lives and reigns in grand opulence in her palatial 'kotha'. She meets Devdas when the latter's friend Chunni brings him to one of Chandramukhi's spectacular performances. For Chandramukhi it is love at first sight. In response Devdas has only contempt for her : "aurat ma hoti hai, behen hoti hai, patni aur beti hoti hai. Jab wo kuch nahi hoti, to tawaif hoti hai" (a woman is mother, sister, wife, or daughter. If she is none of these things, she is a prostitute). (Bhansali) This line highlight the film's androcentric perspective: a woman is defined only by the roles she plays in men's lives. Later he says "nehi dekh sakta mai aurat ka ye rup." (I can not tolerate this avatar of women"). (Bhansali) He only frequents Chandramukhi's kotha to drown his sorrows in alchohol. To Devdas Chandramukhi is untouchable, quite literally – she is barred from ever touching him. While Devdas' violence towards Paro was mostly physical he repeatedly inflicts verbal and emotional abuse towards Chandramukhi, which the latter silently suffers without any protestations. Bhanslai shows Chandramukhi deride and throw out a client. Hence it is not that she has agency. Yet she adores Devdas to such extremes that she forgets her identity and agency. In fact, she literally "adores" him: when Paro comes to

look for Devdas in Chandramukhi's kotha she finds a veritable altar in the room that Devdas used to live.

Kashyap's *Dev D* is set in 21st century India, in a world of cyber communication, drugs, highway hit and run cases and MMs scandals. Kashyap divides his film into three segments: Paro, Chanda and Dev D. The film is as much about Paro and Chanda as it is about Dev. The women are the protagonists of their segments, while Dev is a supporting character in their stories.

The obstacles in the way of Dev's and Paro's union/marriage aren't external factors like family objections, class. Class does play as a factor but not in the form of societal pressure, rather as an internalized aspect of Dev's mind which caters to his narcissism and ego. But the main reason for his split with Paro is his sexual jealousy, based on gossip from an unreliable source, and inability to deal with Paro's uninhibited sexuality. The barriers are all in his own mind. The elements that Dev retains of the original character are his propensity for self-destruction, egotism, narcissism, indecisive vacillation. There is masochism in his morbid fascination for "emotional atyachar" that he inflicts upon himself and others. He is a purposeless quitter savouring his own ennui.

Kashyap gives both the female leads more nuanced treatment than they get in the novella or in previous films. They divide a large chunk of the movie between themselves, with Paro being the focus in the first half and Chanda dominating the latter. Chanda gets a back-story which sketches out her journey to becoming a prostitute. Kashyap doesn't glamourise his prostitute like Bhansali, nor is Chanda a helpless victim to be pitied upon, nor a femme fatal. She accepts the situation of her life and takes charge of it – "move on karna parta hai" she says.

Both women, Paro and Chanda, go through the loss of innocence arc – loss of innocence in the sense that both are betrayed by those they love and find society inadequate to nurture their free spirit. Both are let down by the hypocrisy and ethical discrepancies of society, especially in relation to female sexuality. The transition is beautifully captured through the song "ye hi meri zindagi hei".

They are modern in an un-modern society. But instead of languishing in self-pity they "move on". This "moving on" becomes a major thematic thread. Paro moves on to marriage with Bhuvan. She does come to meet Dev, but not to reiterate her undying love and promise to look after him, but more to spite him for his rejection – sexual and social – and reassert her autonomy over her own body. It is her way of getting closure. The climactic epiphany that Dev experiences is that he too needs to "move on".

The college topper Paro is uninhibited in her sexuality – be it printing and scanning her nude photograph for her boyfriend, or carry a mattress on her bicycle to a field by the canal to set up a sexual rendezvous. But Dev's mind is colonized by patriarchal norms. He is unable to handle the doubt about her virginity, though cast by an unreliable source. And when she attempts to initiate their sexual encounter he presumes that it is proof that she is a 'slut'. Chanda iterates the film's take on society's gaze and duplicitous judgmental standards: "half the country jerked off, and then they turned and called me the slut". (Kashyap) The word gets thrown around a lot, but Kashyap problematises its connotation by de-gendering it. It is no longer a word to censure "loose' women, in Kashyap's film's urban slang 'slut' refers to promiscuity in both genders.

However in the climax of Dev-Chanda relationship Kashyap gives in to traditional archetypes and tropes. Chanda leaves the brothel (and her friends there who had helped her in her hour of need) not because of any new exploitation but she leaves with the dream of someday marrying Dev having found his ring. Chanda gets her happy ending when Dev comes looking for her after an abrupt epiphany. In the final sequence Chanda bathes him with sponge becoming a mother-surrogate for a man-child. The final scene shows Dev taking charge of their lives as he drives Chanda's bike while she sits back representing the exact patriarchal, phalocentric power balance that Kashyap had tried to subvert through most of the film.

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"[T]he theatre alone was my route to success...:[1] " An exploration of Binodini Dasi's "mad, black scrawls[2] " as the autobiography of an actress.

Roopsa Sanyal

Binodini Dasi (1863-1941), who was born in the same year as Swami Vivekananda and two years after Rabindranath Tagore, was an extremely important figure in nineteenth century Bengal yet, somehow could never reach the same illustrious apex as her contemporaries, in the context of the recorded history of the Bengal Renaissance. Virginia Woolf's assertion that women are "all but absent from history" is probably the reason behind women taking up the pen to preserve their 'selves' because documented historical narratives have always favoured men over women.

Georg Misch's definition of autobiography in History of Autobiography in Antiquity as "the description (graphia) of an individual human life (bios) by the individual himself (autos)," makes the process of scripting an autobiography, a chronicle of self-achieved great prominence. Therefore, Misch's notion of the autobiography as a document of the representative life of a public figure excluded those who had been accorded anonymity and forced to embrace silence. As evident, it has been traditionally argued that the autobiographical subject must be a representative figure whose life is held up for emulation and enables edification of posterity. Binodini then occupies a position of absolute negation by virtue of her being a prostitute actress and a colonial subject.

Georges Gusdorf talks of the autobiography as an act of "reconstructing the unity of life across time," proposing it as an act of creation and not a faithfully factual written document reproducing the past. This idea brings forth a constitutive process in the composition of the autobiography- the politics of memory[3] . The autobiographer, who is located in a particular space and time, during the composition of the autobiography enjoys complete liberty regarding "what is recollected and what is obscured" which is "central to the cultural production of knowledge about the past." Then, as Piyali Gupta states in her unpublished doctoral dissertation on Actress Autobiographies, "It is not simply a recalling and retelling of various incidents in the past that constitute the act of writing an autobiography. It is the selection, arrangement, exclusion, emphasis and examination of the incidents that accords meaning to the autobiography," and it is this very process that was named the "autobiographical act" by Elizabeth W. Bruss. The process of scripting an autobiography, then, becomes strictly performative. The conscious decision on the part of the author scripting their own life story about how they want to present themselves to all posterity ultimately becomes a self fashioning, a process of creation, and a performance that outlasts

and outlives them. It is impossible for women to view themselves as individuals, as an autonomous independent entity as they are always seen in relation to a group. They are traditionally viewed as relational creatures because their identities are always mapped by their roles as daughters, mothers and wives. For example, Sarada sundari Devi's identity as Keshub Chandra Sen's mother foregrounds the account of her life. In fact, she only wrote her autobiography on being insisted to do so by her son's disciples because they told her that people wanted to know about her as she was the Acharya Mata and were also interested in the childhood anecdotes of her son. Women were believed to only be able to "record" and "not transcend... the concerns of the private self." (Stanton 4) In fact, as Gupta observes, "[Women were] marginal figures divorced from mainstream society so they [could not] fully participate in contemporary life… Women's self-fashionings were inextricably interwoven with ideologies of gender, they defined themselves through relationships and thus their autobiographical writing [focused] more on personal details than on public matter."

In the context of nineteenth century Bengal, women suffered double marginalization by virtue of their gender and status as a colonial subject. They found themselves firmly located in the inner private space of domesticity, the ghar, as the caregiver, nurturer and the custodian of traditional values. She could not dream of social and financial independence, let alone acquire enough education to script an autobiography, and in turn carve out a separate, stable identity. Drawing such attention from the public realm would be deemed utterly despicable and thus destabilize her position as a respectable bhadra mahila or lady in society. This "anxiety of authorship" (Gubar and Gilbert) thus provoked her to adopt a self-deprecating stance in her self-fashioning by shaping the autobiographical self according to the standards of normative femininity. Their criticism of patriarchal injustice and complaints against being silenced and marginalized forever was disguised under the cover of rhetorical strategies such as self effacement and submission to avoid antagonizing the reading public. In Bengal, the first autobiography written by a woman was Rassundari Devi's *Amar Jiban*, a spiritual and domestic narrative[4] , and Binodini remains the singular actress autobiographer from nineteenth century Bengal to have composed her autobiography. Binodini's autobiography was first published serially in the magazine Natyamandir as Abhinetrir Atmakatha (The Autobiography of an Actress) (1910) and then later as Amar Katha (My Story) (1912) with an added preface. She wrote a second autobiography titled "Amar Abhinetri Jiban" (My Life as an Actress) which was serialised in Roop O Ranga in 11 instalments but was then dropped without explanation. After the foregrounding, Binodini's life is entirely divided into stages on the basis of the theatre houses she worked in, resulting in a very neatly structured narrative of Binodini's autobiographies and the naming - Amar Katha, Amar Abhinetri Jiban - focus on herself and her profession. Her narrative is structured completely around her professional identity, as chapters have been named according to the

theatre houses that she worked with. She openly claims that her life before it included her acting career, is nothing but a “Prelude to [her] Entry to the Stage”. So, despite being a personal story, Binodini’s autobiography is veritably the autobiography of an actress.

For a working professional, one of the key factors is the salary. Therefore, in her attempt to establish acting as a serious, professional job, Binodini mentions her salary multiple times. Her first income was at the Great National Theatre where she was paid a monthly salary of ten rupees, which was incremented to twenty-five rupees at the Bengal Theatre. In fact, when she was refused a paid leave, she left the theatre group because, as she writes, “I had always worked for money… It was back-breaking work in any case, and working without wages did not make sense.”

Her unapologetic and pragmatic way of dealing with wages as a professional actor stresses the pride that she took in her job. Upon joining the Bengal Theatre in 1876 with a raise of fifteen rupees, Binodini expresses her confident assertion of her stance as an actress: “Although I was still a little girl, I had become more skilful and powerful as an actress as compared to my performances in my early years. This was the first step on the path to better income and progression in my acting career.”

Gupta comments, “As the story of the first professional actress in colonial Bengal, this pride in the profession and the benefits that accompany it makes the narrative singularly inspiring.” Her pride in her professional accomplishments is made obvious from the ample reviews that she provides in the autobiography. From being declared the Signora of the Native Stage to the senior actresses being ‘jealous’ of her, Binodini leaves no stone unturned to showcase her celebrity status, professional prowess and achievements in very strategic ways.

Despite her autobiography never being published as a complete whole, or the criticism she faced from her mentor Girish Chandra Ghosh in the preface he wrote for her[5], Binodini never once shies away from her identity as an actress or from owning it as “Amar Katha/Jiban.” Thus, she easily forgoes the reticence so characteristic of the nineteenth century Bengali woman, claiming her agency as she unhesitatingly talks about her life. At an age when women were not expected to be seen outside the boundaries of domesticity, the insistence of Michael Madhusudan Dutt to employ female actors in the Bengali public theatre led to women joining the public theatre at last in 1873, during the performance of Dutt’s Shormishtha. Although, he was concerned with the accurate representation of female characters more than anything else, some people deemed the introduction of the actress as a redemptive act, a civilizing mission that would liberate her from the status of a social outcast[6] , because these women were mostly employed from the prostitute quarters because the theatre was shunned by ‘respectable’ women. Nineteenth century public theatre in Bengal rose in imitation of European Theatre and proscenium staging. It can be said that the

public theatre in Bengal was shaped by the bourgeois intelligentsia bred on colonial education making it a colonised state's response to colonial forms of entertainment. Theatre was used to build national consciousness, supposed to educate and reform masses, aimed at moral improvement as well as assert the superiority of Indian culture over the British. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa too, believed in the edification of the masses, or lokshikkha as he called it, through theatre.

Binodini Dasi, who, belonged from the prostitute quarters of North Calcutta, lived in a state of impoverishment in her childhood. Her family was limited to her grandmother, mother and little brother, and later when he was married, a young sister-in-law. However, her brother died in his childhood, leaving no male figure in the family. Binodini begins her autobiography by tracing not her ancestral, patriarchal genealogy but instead locates herself geographically, initially foregrounding the lack and absences in her life, negating the conventional patriarchal autobiographical narrative right from the beginning. Almost immediately, she establishes her success, juxtaposing it to her former conditions with: "However, there was no prosperity, only want… That house, No. 145 on Cornwallis Street, is now in my possession."

Binodini thoroughly establishes herself as a celebrated professional actress by including all details regarding salary, performance reviews, as well as explaining her roles and how much she worked hard to achieve perfection. She is fully cognizant about her unparalleled acting skills, and while she juxtaposes it with her "lowly" and "fallen" status, she stresses upon the fact that acting demands severe hard work and persisting perseverance. She says that "Acting was not mere fun in a playhouse, but something to be learnt and to be initiated into as a dharma," (91) establishing acting as a serious profession and herself as being completely devoted to her work at once. She reclaims respectability for acting as a profession by mentioning her diligence and accidents such as during her performance as Britannia in Palashir Juddha, wherein she was "descending from mid-air…when suddenly the wires snapped and [she] crashed to the stage," (154) Then her hair got entangled in a cable while she was being lifted by a crane while she was performing in Nala Damayanti as a result of which her hair had to be snipped off. Binodini's self-fashioning documents praises from contemporary newspapers like The Statesman and The Englishman where she is called 'Signora' and 'Flower of the Native Stage' which reiterates her competence as an actress. In fact, the event in which Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, mesmerized by her performance, blessed her, marks what is today called the sanctification of the theatre. It gave the theatre a new respectability that it earlier did not have. Shambhucharan Mukhopadhyay's review in Reis and Rayyet which confirmed Binodini to be "at the head of her profession in India" called her "a Lady of much refinement" and "one of inimitable Grace" quoted with flourish in her autobiography, accords to the text its dynamism. Binodini

elaborates on how she would perform multiple roles in a single night, easily slipping into each character without compromising on either, but she also underlines the fact that it was a very difficult job- for example, portraying Chaitanya in Chaitanyaleela, who was a divine saint, as well as Bilasini Karforma in Bibaha Bibhrat, which was the role of an urban, educated, high society woman, in the same night. When she played Manorama in Bankimchandra's Mrinalini, the author had praised her for her lifelike performance, which too Binodini quotes as:

"I had created Manorama's character only in a book. It had never occurred to me that I would see her manifested in flesh and blood. Today, on seeing Manorama, I feel that I am actually before my own Manorama! (81)"

She was adept at doing her own makeup and she speaks of this with pride. She introduced modern techniques of stage make-up through blending European and indigenous styles. Amritlal Mitra is reported to have said "Binod's taste in costume and make-up is superior in every respect to everybody else's." Even before the Star Theatre was built, people were in compliance that if Binodini were to leave the theatre, nobody would come to watch plays anymore and the theatre would suffer heavy losses.

Of the linguistic registers, she forgoes the colloquial chalit bhasha in favour of the more refined, formal and literary sadhu bhasha to script her autobiography. Binodini displays her knowledge of theatre and literary culture with ample references to Bankimchandra, the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, Sanskrit shlokas and David Garrick. In spite of her use of self deprecatory statements, Binodini expertly marshals her lamentations about her diminished, insignificant life and incoherent ramblings balancing it with her proficiency as an actress and an author. Accordingly, it is evident that her mentor's assertion that Binodini's autobiography is a collection of her "mad, black scrawls[7] " is anything but. As Gupta states, "It is the autobiography of a barangana-abhinetri, a prostitute-actress, who was marginalized from respectable society, yet her voice resounds with all the linguistic expertise befitting a bhadramahila."

Throughout the narrative, Binodini expresses her desire for a domestic space, a ghar, a sansar of her own- which she has always lacked- and aspires for the role of the bhadramahila not just on stage but in real life. Having taken birth in prostitute quarters, the rigid line between the concepts of the andarmahal or the ghar and the bahir was absent to her, because their personal space functioned also as their professional space.

In the nineteenth century society, when women were rooted in the private sphere of home, Binodini was performing in public, even traveling outside her native city to other parts of the country and beyond, which is something she feels proud of. Her education in theatre was a parallel to stree shiksha or women's education that catered towards making women better wives and mothers. Unlike other women receiving education in that era, Binodini's

education was catered towards her enhancement of professional expertise. She listened to stories of Sarah Siddons, Ellen Terry and Isadora Duncan and went to watch British plays. She recounts, “I liked very much the stories narrated by Girish-babu about famous British actors and actresses and whatever else he read out to us from books. He explained to us the various kinds of critical opinions expressed about Mrs. Siddons when she had rejoined the theatre after being married for ten years…I did not merely listen to these stories, but absorbed from them whatever I could of their bhava and then constantly meditated on it…In order to experience as many bhavas as possible, I kept my mind constantly occupied, living in the world of imagination.” (80) She also learnt the amritakshar chhanda (blank verse) of Michael Madhusudan Dutt for performing a role in his play Meghnad Badh, such was her dedication to her craft. As someone who never had any formal education, she found it difficult to work on it. She writes on this: “I had to work specially hard to act in this play which had been written in blank verse. At first, it was barely possible for us to even read the play properly, keeping in mind the correct language and the appropriate feelings it expressed.” (151)

For Binodini, the home and the world collapsed and collided into one another. She performed roles of middle class bhadramahila, Chaitanya, Britannia, Bankimchandra’s women with equal elan. Regardless of her exceptional ability to portray characters on stage with such finesse that the audience forgot that she was acting and was not actually the character, let alone that she was a prostitute. Such was her talent that not only was she accepted as a bhadramahila on stage, but also as the spiritually divine characters of Chaitanya and Sati, among others, not just by the common public but by Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa himself, who otherwise known for his strict ideals, blessed her- a fallen woman. This encounter which later on became a noteworthy episode in Bengal’s cultural history began to be portrayed as the patitapaban (redeemer) granting redemption to the patita (fallen woman). Binodini, however, does not glorify the incident. She interrogates the hypocrisy of being respected as the character she plays, but that very respect being denied to her in real life. The theatre which was used as a tool to raise national consciousness and for the moral upliftment of masses could succeed mostly because of the actors. Actresses like Binodini were, then, an important part of this nationalist project but ultimately, they were thoroughly overlooked and ostracised when it came to acknowledging their contribution.

Binodini says that although some ill-fated women “become prostitutes forced by circumstances, lacking shelter, lacking a space; but they too, first come into this world with the heart of a woman. The woman who is a loving mother, she too belongs to the self-same species! The woman who dies in the burning flames with her husband also belongs to that same species!” completely negating the mutual exclusivity of the concepts of the barangana,

bhadramahila and the Sati. She claims to have a tender heart and is aware of the "responsibilities of a sansar" and blames fate for having spoilt her chance of having one:

> "Perhaps people will laugh if they hear that we too are sensible to pain… they would understand that we too are women. When God sent us to this world, he did not send us deficient in the tenderness natural to a woman's heart… does this mean that we have no awareness of the responsibilities of sansar? The tenderness that had once filled our heart has not been completely uprooted—bringing up children is enough proof of that. Do we not desire a husband's love? But where are we to find it?" (85-86)

Although she begins in a position of absolute insignificance, as what Spivak would call the perfect subaltern, she ultimately achieves fame and financial success. Her self-fashioning is thus the telling of a success story. She is uninhibited in her approach to writing about her success. Binodini Dasi or Nati Binodini as she was later called- the former suffix- Dasi- was representative of a lowly status, while the latter "Nati" although literally means "female actor," was a comment on sexuality as Rimli Bhattacharya testifies[8] - writes about her life unabashedly. She claims that the scripting of this autobiography is not intended for the edification of posterity, but is solely dedicated to the manifestation of her cathartic process. She does not care for sympathy or mercy from the reader but expertly manages to represent herself when "history and culture have denied her the existence of a self." Binodini attempts a very complex negotiation in the autobiography, where she portrays herself as a self-assured confident woman, but on the other hand, represents herself as a naïve, inexperienced, unfortunate girl-woman as well.

When she writes, "You call us fallen women, prostitutes, whores, but who is responsible for our fallen state? What if we want to transcend it?" Instead of succumbing to individual ignominy and shame, Binodini projects society's double standards onto society itself causing their collective ignominy. She does not really yearn for social acceptance but from her position of absolute marginalized nothingness, she cannot help but question the polarized constructs that have denied people like her any agency. Ultimately, Binodini only strives to be Binodini the actress, saying that she could never be detached from it, acting being the "treasure" and "mainstay" of her life, although her acting career only spanned twelve years. Today, Binodini lives on because her autobiography lives on. Her narrative woven entirely by her is the only living testament that has outlived her. One of Bengal's finest actresses, Nati Binodini remains unparalleled as the "Lady of much refinement of feeling…[and] inimitable grace," etched forever into the spirit of the Bengali stage[9].

Keya Chakraborty, who played the role of Binodini in Nandikar's production Noti Binodini (1972), in interview with Surajit Ghosh, says that "To be a good actress in this society is one of the most difficult things to do in the world. (Ghosh 182) From a position of an extreme nonidentity then, Binodini not only accomplishes this "most difficult thing" but

also registers her voice and scripts her own testimony resisting bourgeois, patriarchal normativity, claiming empowerment for herself even after being wronged repeatedly. Not only this, Binodini effectively creates a space for posterity after earlier explicitly stating that "people [would] feel [no] compassion for [her]." She writes, "The talented, the wise, and the learned write in order to educate people; I have written for my own consolation, perhaps for some unfortunate woman who, taken in by deception, has stumbled on to the path to hell". (107)

As Hindustan Times rightly wrote, "বাংলার সেই প্রখ্যাত অভিনেত্রীর জন্মের প্রায় ২৬০ বছর পরও তিনি কেমুন যেন একই ভাবে প্রাসঙ্গিক থেকে গিয়েছেন।" (Bengal's most celebrated actress at one time has remained consistently relevant in the same way as before, even almost 260 years after her birth.) This confirmation elevates Binodini's tale of consolation and lamentation from the position of a Subaltern to that of one who has not just generated a discourse by reclaiming her voice and agency but also immortalized her narrative against all contemporary and contesting narratives in the process.

Notes

[1] Binodini in her autobiography mentions Girish Ghosh's prediction as, "Girish-babu had said that the theatre alone was my route to success, that his teaching could be realised only through me, that the stage brought one fame, respect and honour…if a theatre was set up because of me, then we would spend the rest of our lives as members of one family." (84-85) (emphasis mine)

[2] Binodini's patron or hridoydebota, to whom she dedicates her autobiography, calls her writing the "mad, black scrawls" like those of a child. In the preface to Amar Katha, Binodini recalls the incident as, "When the book had first been written, I turned to the person for whom this preface has been written and asked him, I shall write my life story and dedicate it to you, shall I? Smiling, he had replied, Well, since I bear all your cares, I will bear too the burden of these mad, black scrawls." (emphasis mine)

[3] The politics of memory has become a fashionable and important object of scholarly investigations in the last thirty or so years, particularly in history, sociology, cultural studies and journalism. The sociology of memory may be construed as an attempt to come to terms with the need to study situations when there is "a will to remember… Without this intention to remember, lieux de mémoire would be indistinguishable from lieux d'histoire." Thus, sociology studies the social mechanisms involved in the emergence and organization of this intention to remember. (Michael Berhard, Twenty Years After Communism)

[4] In Amar Jiban, Rassundari Devi records her domestic life, consistently talking about God and his omnipotence and omniscience but at the same time describing her unending difficulties. She elaborately discusses the colossal household responsibilities she had to undertake alone, be it cooking for twenty five people twice every day, to taking care of her children. She discusses how after a whole day's cooking and serving others, no sooner than she sits down to eat herself, she is interrupted by a guest, her husband and then her children, in the end having to do without food. Ultimately, she says, Anyway, let us not talk of all that. It's not worth mentioning, I am ashamed even to bring it up' (Words to Win 164). When she speaks about how she was not allowed to even go see the body of her dead mother, because there was nobody to take care of the household in her absence, she dismisses it saying that it was what God had wished and so there was nothing to do about it.

[5] In his preface for Binodini's autobiographies, Girish Ghosh critiques the personal and

uninhibited aspect of the narratives. In Srimati Binodini and the Bengali Stage, he writes: “I have also explained to her how difficult it is, in my understanding, to write an autobiography and explained as well, the numerous strategies that many have been obliged to use when writing their autobiographies…Binodini has written a bitter critique of society in her book…it would have been better if she had not brought this up in her own life story in such a harsh manner.” (emphasis mine)

[6] Kshetra Nath Bhattacharjee in Education Gazette, 1872 wrote, “The more such theatres are started, acting will be improved and dramas composed in competition…Some of the prostitutes are trying to receive education. If a few of such educated women are secured, happy consequences will outweigh any mischief done.”

[7] In the original Bangla text, the phrase is written as “paglami-r kali-r aanchorguli.”

[8] Piyali Gupta writes, “Brajendra Kumar Dey’s production is named Nati Binodini, where the word ‘nati’ meaning actress recognises Binodini’s profession but is also a reminder of the popular perception of Binodini as a public woman. Rimli Bhattacharya reminds us that ‘Nati in nineteenth century writings in Bangla, increasingly becomes a comment on sexuality rather than a primary indicator of occupational identity.’”

[9] Based upon Binodini’s bedonagatha, several adaptations have been materialised in popular culture. Brajendra Kumar Dey’s jatra by Natto Company, Nati Binodini (1971) became sensational and was awarded the Bishwarupa Prize for the best pala and Bina Dasgupta who played Binodini was given the West Bengal Best Actress Award in 1973. Nati Binodini, a play based on Binodini’s autobiography, Amar Katha was first presented by National School of Drama Repertory Company in 1995. In 2006, noted theatre director Amal Allana directed a play “Binodini" which premiered in Delhi. Tuhinabha Majumdar’s documentary Aamaar Katha: Story of Binodini won the National Award for the Best Biographical and Historical Reconstruction film and Best Cinematography (Non-fiction) trophies at the 62nd National Film Awards, 2015. In March 2024, Binodini Opera, another play on the Nati was staged with Sudipta Chakraborty as the lead. Apart from these adaptations, one might also mention, Utpal Dutt’s Tiner Talowar (1971), Dinen Gupta’s film Nati Binodini (1994), Natyaranga’s Binodini Katha (2010), Smaranik Bangalore’s Nati Binodini (2016) and Rituparno Ghosh’s award-winning film Abohomaan (2010).

The overarching narrative in most of the representations has been that of the fallen woman being redeemed by the redeemer Sri Ramakrishna. Gupta highlights that “Binodini was iconised as a cult figure, the moment of her iconisation frozen in several plays, biographies and documentaries repeated through the ages, reiterating with equal vigour, every single time, of the injustice meted out to her and of her redemption at the hands of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa.” However, Binodini remains in the cultural memory of Bengal as an icon, given the innumerable adaptations of her life, based on her autobiographies.

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