EDITORIAL

It is with great pleasure that I write the editorial of this issue of MZU Journal of Literature and Culture Studies.

Initially beginning with an annual publication, a new era unfolds with regards to the procedures and regulations incorporated in the present publication. The second volume to be published this year and within a short period of time, I am fortunate with the overwhelming response in the form of articles received.

This issue covers various aspects of the political, social and cultural scenario of the North-East as well as various academic paradigms from across the country and abroad. Starting with The silenced Voices from the Northeast of India which shows women as the worst sufferers in any form of violence, female characters seeking survival are also depicted in Morrison's, Deshpande's and Arundhati Roy's fictions. First hand personal experiences and anthropological analysis of aspects of Culture, Society and Hegemony in Contemporary society, as well as scholarly research that portray themes of the heroic, identity, subversion and trauma comprises this issue. The academic understanding and decisive approach displayed anticipates the development of literary genre forms and cross-cultural comparative study of literature of the region which has been the thrust areas of the departmental project undertaken under DRS-SAP I. As a department, it is our hope that this journal will continue to serve as a valuable forum in enriching literature of the region and enable us to attain the level of Department of Special Assistance (DSA).

K.C.Lalthlamuani
Editor

MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies

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The silenced Voices from the Northeast of India: Women during Political Violence

Dr. Sumi Daa-dhora
Prof. Sivasish Biswas
Department of English
Assam University Diphu Campus, Karbi Anglong

"Of all the vogue words of the late 1960s, 'violence' is very nearly the trendiest and the most meaningless. Everybody talks about it, nobody thinks about it."

(Eric Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People* 299)

Violence in the 21st century has turned out to be an inevitable and unfortunate part of national and international politics and religious fundamentalism threatening the cultural beliefs, practices and bondings. The armed interventions in the recent decades have resulted into cases of barbaric atrocity, terror and disorder. With the rise of the armed conflicts within the state the whole concept of warfare has changed drastically. With the gaining impetus on regionalism and sub-nationalism after Partition, the post-independence India has been witness to serious threats of secessionism and insurgency from the states of Northeast India apart from the places as Hyderabad, Punjab, Kashmir and Telengana. Situated in the margins the Northeast has always been a distant and remote location for the rest of the country. The political violence in the region down the decades is no more a mere temporary issue with its people paying the price of freedom with blood-bath and shedding tears and the plight becoming a part of daily life. The armed conflict of insurgency and counter-insurgencies has led to severe violations of human rights in general and life in

particular. The reality of the situation is best reflected and challenged in the literary narratives of the region that speak the unspeakable and the inhuman side of violence. The writers being a part of the collective experience of the pain and loss try to lend voices to those unheard and silenced through their writings.

This paper is an attempt to show women of the conflict zones as the worst sufferers in any form of violence. Women are not only affected due to their gender but are also subjected to various forces that stereotype, objectify, violate and dominate them. This creates a close connection between the politics of gender and politics of imperialism. For this, the paper is focused on three major texts from three states of Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram – *The House with a Thousand Stories* by Aruni Kashyap, *These Hills Called Home* by Temsula Ao and *Zorami* by Malsawmi Jacob.

Political violence has undergone a drastic change and rise under the influence of global terrorism. Despite the high record of human rights violations in the region and violence, matters still revolve around the dilemma of identifying the actual sources and agencies behind its cause- whether it is the insurgents as the armed sons of the soil themselves or the armed men of the Indian Army deployed for the security of the region violating and creating havoc of violence in the region in the form of "extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, rape and torture and other ill treatment." (Amnesty International India, Sep. 2013) Among all, the most controversial issue has been the Armed Forces Special Powers Act enforced in the parts of Northeast especially Assam and Manipur on 11 September, 1958 and in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990. The Act was supposed to remain in force only for one year, but it has been in power since the last decades never being repealed, rather came with certain amendments of getting the right to declare certain areas as 'disturbed'. Passed by the Houses of Parliament,

it was a strict law to curb secessionist movement and armed struggle of low intensity war along with other issues as drugs and human trafficking and other crimes related to border areas. The Act provides extreme liberty to the soldiers in handling the law and order situation such as the power to shoot at sight and kill and to arrest and search without any warrant which is also accompanied with various other atrocities. The socio-legal and psychological violence of this emergency law imposed on the region shows its destructive impact on the people where women are seen as the worst sufferers either directly or indirectly, which makes such laws fail to realize the position of women and equality of gendered space. Insurgency has become one of the most common and significant manifestations of the power equations in a society. Appropriating power and unleashing violence to subvert the state machinery insurgency has come to be established as the happening presence in the Northeast since 1947.

The justification of violence inflicted by the armed struggles and the Indian army deployed under security reasons in the region is dealt with complexities in the textualization of violence in the narratives- where the legitimacy of violence granted by them in the form of gendered violence, increased control over sexuality, freedom and rights and traumatic impact are being explored at various levels. The militants with the support of the common people indulge into general and common forms of protests and retaliations against the Central power. The decisions are carried out in the form of road and railway blockades, strikes calling for commercial *bandh* (total shut down), dislocation of railway tracts to derail trains and cause accidents, bomb blasts at public places and public transports, boycott of central meetings and celebrations.

Whatever were the consequences, women emerged as the worst sufferers in any form of violence. The ethnic mobilization on

rise in the region among different ethnic groups for separate spaces has been using violence as an aid to fulfill their motives. This is very well realized in case of the Bodos in Assam demanding a separate Bodoland. The Bodos form the largest plains tribe in Assam. The Bodo-Muslim conflicts, Naga-Kuki attacks, Dimasa-Karbi conflicts, all these conflicts and counter-conflicts have indulged in great human rights violation acts like rape, molestation and murder. Women are being subjected to various forms of injustices not only during these conflicts but they also suffer at the hands of the armed forces imposed by the government to control the situations. The last few decades have seen this marginalized region been carrying the extra burden and pain of another marginalized section in the society comprising of widows, single mothers, unwed mothers and orphans. Apart from this the mentally bruised women as a result of traumatic experiences and sufferings exist in great numbers. The control over the women and their bodies through violence is a form of implementing power and control by a major group on a smaller group.

The concept of power is crucial in the understanding of the subordination of women as a marginal category. Feminist theorization of power is a result of influence from Foucault and Gramsci in general. Foucault viewed power as a pervasive regulatory system with the participation of individuals and social institutions, for social control. Gramsci explained it in terms of hegemony. Hegemony is a form of dominance on majority of the people in a society which prevails from a moral persuasion and consent given by the ruling class/elites. Feminists further theorized power as "an essential feature of society and one that maintains relations of domination and subordination between groups of people." (*Peace and Change*, 342) The relationship of power in society is judged through gender. Based on biological differences gender is a socially constructed dichotomy and power relationship

which according to the feminists, constructs the perceptions of any other form of power relation. Thus, gender seems to be a systematically constructed concept in society that shapes gendered meanings. When violence is used as a tactic of subordination and control, it too becomes gendered. Feminist Shulamith Firestone considered the sex dichotomy as the most fundamental division in a society and oppression of all forms are inflicted on women by men. And Firestone recognized the oppressed section in a society comprising of women and children as both are intertwined with each other. "Women need children in order to have a place in the patriarchal system but children also learn the rules and roles of patriarchy from women." Therefore, Firestone "advocates social, economic, and sexual liberation of children as well as women." (Scholz, *Feminism* 21) Women are not only affected due to their sex but are also subjected to various social forces that stereotype, objectify, violate and dominate them. This creates a close connection between the politics of gender and politics of imperialism.

Aruni Kashyap tactfully merges the political issues of the region with domestic lives of the characters of his novel *The House with a Thousand Stories* (2013) where amidst the "…heady theatre of tradition and modernity hovers sinister shadow of insurgency and the army's brutal measures to quell militancy." At the very outset as the story unfolds, Kashyap maintains the equilibrium in narrating the personal as well as the political with gripping details. The blending of the historical fact with fiction and memory and trauma as a major feature of postcolonial fiction, and authors of diverse nationalities like Mulk Raj Anand, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Chinua Achebe, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou have used the same to devastating effect in their writings. Violence in its extremities became a part of normal life in the Northeastern part of India. Assam was declared a disturbed area under the Assam Disturbed

Area Act in 1955. The Nellie massacre of 18th February, 1983 saw one of the most frightful bloodshed and violence in independent India where in a six hour attack 3,300 people were killed and 14 villages devastated according to official record.

Set during the turbulence of the secret killings in Assam (1998-2002), when the state had gone through the darkest period of its political history, the novel shows the rule of political dominance in every sphere of life. Through the adolescent narrator, Pablo, Kashyap has woven stories true to life in conflict ridden Assam. The whole novel revolves around one particular situation, that is the wedding of Pablo's aunt (Pehi) Moina for which people and relatives gather at the Bishoya house at Mayong. Fragmented in its narration the author shifts situations as he is caught up between the family upheavals and the disturbed political situation outside. Through the character Moina-pehi and Mamoni, the author has tried to show the problematic life of women in conflict zones- the interference of the public into the private; the political into the personal. Moina-pehi, already aging being thirty two and turning into an issue of concern and burden of the family whom they could finally fix a groom of forty-five for marriage, rejects her marriage but fails. The cause of her rejection arises from a rumour spreaded that the the groom's brother is a member of the insurgent group ULFA. She tries to kill herself consuming phenyl the night before the wedding but didn't die then.

The fear and trauma of women in Assam during such times is inevitably complex and tensed which disturbed the very equilibrium of social life. They meted out atrocities on men and women which violated human rights in the name maintaining law and order and following government directives. At the most, women were the worst victims. As Moina-pehi 'dribbled' and 'retched' after the dose of phenyl, she cried,

" 'Better to die than to get married into such a family,' she moaned. 'Let me die please, I don't want to be killed by unknown assassins! You can shoot me dead here, right here in my head- in this house!' " (189)

As the narrator describes the situation, he refers to the character, Mamoni, who is a rape victim at the hands of the Indian army- "she had been raped by four military men when she had gone to wash clothes in the Pokoria River last year". (112) This results into Mamoni's insanity that is revived at the sight of army men or uniformed gunmen, when she reacts numb losing control of her body and its systems as she urinates later and faints after screaming like an insane. As Moina-pehi sits beside the sacrificial fire for the wedding rituals, the narrator describes,

> "She didn't die. She looked weak, but everyone thought she was fine, she'd get better. Thought she was no longer concerned if the groom's brother was an ULFA member. If she would be raped during combing operations by army men, whom she feared more than death, more than the taste of phenyl. The signs of which she had seen on the bodies of women in the village. One of them was, of course, Brikoder's sister Mamoni who had screamed and fainted, leaving behind a pale yellow trail, when she had heard the sounds of boots marching girip-garap. When she saw khaki dresses, when she heard the men in uniform speaking in Hindi." (191)

Women as the soft targets in conflict ridden areas are always subject to violence- they and their become the space or sites of violence. They become the ultimate tool of control for exertion of power where not only their bodies are ravaged but their conscience also killed. Women like Moina-pehi and Mamoni are not just victims, rather they represent the many layers of silences or the silenced

voices of women caught in conflict and under the pressures of patriarchy. Moina-pehi's story ends with her death on her wedding night and she is brought back home the next afternoon and she is further reduced to victimization when the groom refuses to light the pyre according to the rituals. Her death is regarded as 'an accidental death' and therefore not even "mourned for twenty-one or eleven days" as they used to do for other deaths in the family. Her corpse is described as to be "like a log of wood, like garbage, like a dustbin." (194) The narrator later narrates stating the end of the story,

> "Her story could have many different names. 'The Old Maid Who Didn't Want to Marry Since She Want to Be Raped During Search Raids' or 'The Bride Who Died under Mysterious Circumstances'. Etc.

> It is difficult to explain how scared she was- like many other women in Hatimura Village- of khaki dresses. After all, till this day, mothers in Hatimura scold their children saying, 'Don't cry, or else the army will get you.' After all, they are always more scared of the government than the insurgents. Actually, they are rarely scared of insurgents. At least the insurgents speak their own language and address women as baideo, pehi, khuri and borma, with respect."(196)

The rejection of marriage by Moina-pehi and her preference of dying than living a life of fear being married to a family where a member is an insurgent, itself is the breaking up the stereotype. Where in a society a woman must marry and that too according to the choice of the elders in the family, Moina-pehi tries to break the rule and preferred death than suffering. Mamoni's insanity is a kind of silent resistance- resistance of power, of men who represent the patriarchy and the Centre. Her loss of control on her system of the body such as the failure of controlling her act of urinating is a kind

of refusal- refusal to be the tool of control at the hands of men, to be the subject of violence and marginalized. Her refusal can be defined with the idea of the point of departure which Freud called as 'leav[ing] the site'. When women and their bodies are processed to be territorialized by various external forces and forced to get erased of their own self and identity, women seem to fail to deterritorialize themselves and their bodies. Their resistances and the outcome of them rather turn out to be pretensions. They are never fully realized of their efforts as they tend to get silenced, unheard and erased. Already pushed to the margins by various forces in the society and patriarchy in particular, women in conflict areas as Assam and the Northeast as whole, suffer additional problems and are deprived, making their lives further complicated. Though they try to break through the rules and the stereotypes, yet they succumb to the lost battles of survival in the world of atrocity. Their voices go unheard with their silent resistances.

The long term struggle of militancy and the armed security system have violently degraded the women of the region. The egalitarian tribal society where in most cases women possess traditional autonomous powers and rights has been contaminated by the mainstream values brought in by the soldiers from outside the region. Now the people of the Northeast relate these to be mainland Indian values. The freedom of movement and economic enterprise of women have been curtailed to a great extent. Many incidents of violence and human rights violations remained unreported under threats and fear of punishment from the army and police. But considering the incidents with women, it was more pathetic as they were under the dual pressure of social values and stigmas on one hand and the patriarchal pressure of society and military power on the other. In other words, the AFSPA was empowered to commit grave human rights violations, in the form

of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture- both physical and mental, rape and other degrading ill treatments. Amnesty International India has been urging the Government of India to repeal this low profile yet enormously destructive law of AFSPA, 1958 and 1990. And on the other hand the Government of India has denied amendments as it faces serious opposition from the security forces who regards the Act as strictly essential to combat insurgency and border issues. There is also a strong possibility of the army being engulfed with accusations and lawsuits if the Act is repealed. Any reports or complaints of violence against women by the army are considered as an attempt of de-moralizing or de-valuing effect. When militants have already become an outcast in the region, the armed security men have been labelled 'occupying forces'.

With the concept of women becoming more complex and problematic in theoretical studies and contemporary approaches in literature, the women of the Northeast of India have found a special concern and place of representation in the literature of the region. They have emerged powerful voicing the silences of victimization and experiences of the past few decades. Their lives being embroiled and traumatized in the unending conflict of insurgency and counter-insurgency have made them rise as women of the conflict zone. Women due to their multiple identities suffer further subordination in multiple ways. Temsula Ao, remarks in her Introduction "Least we Forget" in her collection of short stories *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (2006):

> "These stories however, are not about 'historical facts'; nor are they about condemnation, justice or justification of events which raged through the land like a wildfire half a century ago. On the contrary, what the stories are trying to say is that in such conflicts, there are no winners, only victims and the results can be measured only in human terms. (Ao x)

Ao, in her stories makes a strong human rights statement through the experiences of the women characters. The deployment of security forces in Nagaland disturbed the already troubled lives of the people. Under the impact of the wave of Naga nationalism and the mainstream army operations, Nagaland became a battlefield of strife, warfare, killing and plundering.

The violence suffered by women amidst such conflicts mostly goes unaddressed and suppressed under the mass violence of the people together. Women are disproportionately harmed and repressed from any personal, social and economic development and the most invisible part is the harm caused to their psyche. The army becomes the symbol of patriarchy and power exerting its pressures on the women both as subject and object. The masculinist aggression and chauvinism is on display and exercise in the form of violence where women are the targets. Women and their bodies become the principle sites of writing violence. Being the marginalized section in the society these women's sense of tackling such conflicts and resistances find no voice. In the recent times it is these resistances that have found an outburst through literature and various forms of art. Temsula Ao, gives a strong voice through her character Apenyo in the story "The Last Song" where the protagonist Apenyo is a rape victim along with her mother, Libeni at the hands of the soldiers. Apenyo was a singer in the village and was supposed to perform a solo on the occasion of a special programme dedicated to the establishment of the new church in the village. She continues her song even when the act of rape was taking place. Her haunting voice is an open defiance to the so called occupying forces that have entered their (Nagas) land and ravished it and their women. The whole episode is described as such that it reveals the sheer brutal humiliation and utmost inhuman act in performance:

"Very soon the approaching soldiers surrounded the crowd, and the pastor was commanded to come forward and identify himself along with the *gaonburas*. But before they could do anything, Apenyo burst into her solo number, and not to be outdone by the bravery or foolishness of this young girl and not wishing to leave her thus exposed, the entire choir burst into song. The soldiers were incensed; it was an act of open defiance and proper retaliation had to be made. […] …the crowd by now overcome by fear and anger, began to disperse in every direction. Some members of the choir left their singing and were seen trying to run away to safty. Only Apenyo stood her ground. She sang on, oblivious of the situation as if an unseen presence was guiding her. Her mother, standing with the congregation, saw her daughter singing her heart out as if to withstand the might of the guns with her voice raised to God in heaven. She called out to her to stop but Apenyo did not seem to hear or see anything. In desperation, Libeni rushed forward to pull her daughter away but the leader of the army was quicker. He grabbed Apenyo by the hair and with a bemused look on his face dragged her away from the crowd towards the old church building. All this while, the girl was heard singing the chorus of her song over and over again.

[…]

Libeni was now frantic. Calling out her daughter's name loudly, she began to search for her in the direction where she was last seen being dragged away by the leader. When she came upon the scene at last, what she saw turned her stomach: the young Captain was raping Apenyo while a few other soldiers were watching the act and seemed to be waiting for their turn. The mother, crazed by what she was witnessing, rushed forward with an animal-like growl as if to haul the man off

her daughter's body but a soldier grabbed her and pinned her down on the ground. He too began to unzip his trousers and when Libeni realized what would follow next, she spat on the soldier's face and tried to twist herself free of his grasp. But this only further aroused him; he bashed her head on the hard ground several times knocking her unconscious and raped her limp body, using the woman's lungi afterwards, which he had flung aside, to wipe himself. The small band of soldiers then took their turn, even though by the time the fourth one mounted, the woman was already dead. Apenyo, though terribly bruised and dazed by what was happening to her was still alive, though barely so. Some of the villagers who had entered the old church saw what happened to mother and daughter and after the soldiers were seen going towards the village square, came out to help them. As they were trying to lift the limp bodies, the Captain happened to look back and seeing that there were witnesses to their despicable act, turned to his soldiers and ordered them to open fire on the people who were now lifting up the bodies of the two women. Amid screams and yells the bodies were dropped as the helpless villagers once again tried to seek shelter inside the church. (Ao 27-29)

The Captain returns to the spot and seeing the lifeless ravaged bodies of Apenyo and Libeni, order his soldiers to "dump them on the porch of the old church." This was followed by the cruel order of firing on the hiding villagers inside the new church and later was put on fire killing many. The lawfully deployed army thus indulges in the practice of dominant misogynist values of Indian patriarchy. Their aggressive phallic selves seek out women and their bodies as submissive sexual objects. This, in a way is the superimposition of the Centre's policy on the Northeast. The human anatomy is such

that man can rape women but woman cannot rape man which is the root of women's subordination. The patriarchal power structure cannot be just changed through law. The control of female sexuality by men turns out to be a kind of political victory. Sexuality here goes beyond symbolizing the mere physical desire or power and becomes much political. U.N. Special Representative oSn Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallstrom remarks, "While bullets, bombs and blades make the headlines, women's bodies remain invisible battlefields." (Counter Currents, 2010; UN News Centre 2010)

Malsawmi Jacob in her debut novel *Zorami* (2015) has expressed the agonies of sufferings of a woman both physical and mental caught amidst the adversities of conflict. Throughout the novel the character Zorami is portrayed as a matured woman, a serious and calm person who has a troubled past that haunts her at times. Throughout the character is distressed and is silent in her haunted past. Its only towards the end of the novel that the traumatic incident from her childhood is revealed that keeps on coming back to her as memories. She had been a victim of rape and molestation at the hands of an Indian soldier at a tender age of thirteen.

"Twilight is falling. Its nearly curfew time. Everyone else has gone home. She's the last in the queue. Her tin is only half full and it takes so long even to fill the bowl. Its almost dark. The trees and shrubs surrounding the spring are taking ominous shapes. No human voices within hearing. She begins to panic.

"Let it be, I'll fill this bowl and go home. I don't want to be arrested for breaking the curfew," she thinks. "The army men are so scary, with their guns and all." Just recalling a sight of the patrol party fills her with dread. The thirteen year old fixes her eyes on the dripping water, willing it to hurry up. Then she feels someone watching her from behind and turns round.

She freezes.

The bowl drops from her hand. She opens her mouth to scream but no sound comes. With an evil grin the big vai man in army uniform comes forward. He clamps a big hand over her mouth and carries her into the bushes.

The enormous black serpent crawls towards her. She wants to run, to escape. But she cannot move. She is transfixed to the ground. In a vice like grip the reptile coils around her, choking her. It stretches out its tongue and splits into her mouth. A filthy liquid goes down her throat and enters her stomach.

She lies hunched up wounded, bleeding and burning. She writhes in terrible pain. If only she would die! But there is no death in hell" (Jacob 247-248)

The character Zorampari or Zorami is symbolic of the failure of the peace process in the state. Her memories are the demonic presence in her life that keeps her heavy, suffocating and empty inside. Through Zorami Jacob tries to show the political unrest of the lives of women during conflict. She carries Mizo history and her voice bears the traumatic lore of the past. The character tries to sustain through all the traumatic memories of her past to the present. It is the personal and political journey of Zorami that represents the lives of Mizo women.

Considering the violence in the Northeast of India, if we look back to the incidents caused by insurgents, it seems that violence against women and children were not a part of their struggle initially. Women suffered in general in incidents of bomb blasts and other mass killings. Later the movements breaking up into ethnic conflicts and making situations volatile, women became the soft targets in the fight of one ethnic group trying to overrule the other. To gain

control over one group, the other first targeted the women of the group as subject to control. With the entering of the mainstream armed security forces the women were under greater threat of being attacked and victimized. These men from mainland India brought with them the culture and practices of their land and this contested with the tribal cultural set up of the Northeast India. Women and their bodies are imagined by men as representatives of their society, community and nation which are to be punished, destroyed and conquered. Rape as a weapon of war preserves "sexual violence as social behavior, as structural, persistent and functional." (*European Journal of International Relations* 19(4), 2012: 816).

The control over women's bodies is the first step of execution of power in patriarchy. Women and their bodies were not only objects of control for men and their power but also were used and exploited for their own benefit - be it physical, economic or political. Such women and their life experiences often remain unaddressed. The women and their bodies serve as objects to fulfill the lusts of men, men particularly from outside the region (army, contractors, etc.). The oppression of women by these men from mainland India has often been perceived as exertion of power and force on the people of the Northeast of India. Violence institutionalized and internalized in the present day has become one of the basic problems overruling human life. It can be rather said that violence itself has turned into a culture – the culture of violence that is cultivated and spread worldwide.

Down the ages violence from within the four walls of domesticity to the political outskirts terror, has facets that have remained silent or are silenced and buried denying recovery. Literature necessitates the unveiling of those buried past and gives voice to them. Thus literature represents and dramatizes violence that exists and can exist in different ideological forms. It is language

that breaks the incomprehensive character and makes it accessible by the self which was unknown of the other. The silencing of the past and its burial to remain unknown to the world along with the unspeakable aspect of trauma and violence creates a complexity between the desire to know the unknown on one hand and the tendency to keep the silence intact on the other. Thus, the ardent desire to explore the unexplored and bring it to the knowledge of the world empowers the writer. Thus, here breaks the wall between the author and the repressed past. The writer recalls, assimilates and chooses fragmented memories and experiences from the past and plays with language challenging the conventional restrictive practices of writing. A writer can be placed here in the position of a witness who according to Judith Herman, "realized the power of speaking the unspeakable, and witnessed first hand the creative energy that is released when the barriers of denial and repression are lifted." (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 2)

The writer as a part of the conflict situation in two ways, both as a victim and a witness narrates his/her experiences and tries to bridge the gap between language and experience. To read an author is one thing, to read it with the knowledge of the issues, conflicts, violence is another. The impact of the writing is important here as of the fact who is the narrator and of what as the writer becomes one of the many voices or many voices merged into one to speak, narrate and represent. He/she is the voice of the marginalized and the silent. The writer retells and recreates stories and events wherein he plays with memory choosing and discarding images and incidents from the past. Sometimes a writer is highly politicized in his/her writings, in giving voices to the characters, basically when they speak about the actual reality and sufferings they have gone through and such narratives bearing the realities are pressurized by powerful political, social and economic forces either to be silent or to retell

the stories. Writing in such conflict zones can be seen as an inevitable process, a spontaneous act that collects, recollects and recreates the history "in the frame of remembered past experiences, 'incomparable' experiences like the Holocaust". (Kali. 8) The author in the process of giving voices to the many experiences becomes a narrator of many stories- or many voices merging into the single voice of the author. This presence of many voices is the result of the complex relationship between the self and the other. Bakhtin explained this through his argument that every individual is influenced by the other and are intertwined in an inescapable way and therefore no voice can exist in isolation.

The writings from the region with the conflict situation as the background become a source of rich history and voice the unheard sagas during the conflict. The writings talking and depicting violence themselves become a ground or site of conflict where language also plays the role of a very powerful tool.

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Culture, Society and Hegemony:
A Review of Culture in Contemporary India

Dr. Kafeel Ahmed Choudhury
Associate Professor of English
Govt. Zawlnuam College: Mizoram

'Culture' and 'hegemony' are perhaps two most highly articulated terms in today's socio-cultural and political discourse. Therefore, before going to discuss these two terms elaborately, it may be worthwhile to throw a little light on these two highly debated terms in theoretical perspective. The following analysis may help us to have a close review and understand the other side of the socio-cultural fabric in present-day India.

We all know that the term 'culture' has much broader meaning today compared to the past half a century ago. It is no longer associated with music, art and literature alone. Today, it covers 'forms of life and social expression,' the many ways of people's behaviour and food habits, costumes, languages, 'rituals of human life in communities' (Rivkin and Ryan 1233) and so on. Besides these, with the advent of Marxism, people started viewing and thinking of culture with political meanings. Politically culture is 'both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination' (Rivkin and Ryan 1233). Today one can see how the ruling class or group try to maintain such domination through various means and one such medium is the use of media, particularly the electronic media. Resistance to such type of cultural domination seems unlikely and futile. Culture has become political these days and it speaks the

language of those who govern. In other words, it has become synonymous to power, the power of the majority. In many parts of the world today the governments speak and act in favour of the majority however democratic set up it might have and this majoritarian authoritarianism is trying to strangle the voices and cripple the culture and tradition of those who are in a minority and lack power. Even the voices of dissents are meticulously suppressed.

If we look beyond the face value of 'hegemony', a theory propelled by Marxist critics and popularized by famous Italian cultural theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), we can underline a kind of hegemony other than economic perspective. Hegemony, for Gramsci, implies not only the power of authority of the ruling class, in the Marxist point of view, but also it refers to the ideas with which the ruling class govern. It is believed that man is not governed by force alone, he is also ruled by ideas. Therefore, hegemony, in Gramscian sense means 'political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class' (Bates 352). Hegemony may also refer to the imposition of ideas of the ruling class to the common mass irrespective of the fact that the common mass or any other group of people may not always accept it that goes against their interest. In a multi-racial and multi-cultural society like India, cultural hegemony or in other words, the imposition of the culture and ideas of the dominant class or the ruling class is bound to give birth to conflicts, socio-economic and political exclusion and marginalization of some group of people and above all, weakening the whole society and its economy by stagnating its growth and development.

A culturally matured society treats all its citizens and stakeholders equally irrespective of their race, caste, colour, language and religious affiliations. Culture can also be connected

with 'shared social meanings' so that in various ways we 'make sense of the world' (Barker 7). In order to make sense of the world and a harmonious society our shared values, attitudes and practices are very important. Most importantly, culture is all about goodwill and execution of proper approach in order to know and understand one another in the right way. In the present era as Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India observes 'it becomes essential that we try to understand one another in the right way . . . The right approach, the friendly approach, is important, because a friendly approach brings a friendly response' (Hasan 236). There is no doubt that if the approach is good then the response is also bound to be good and it is equally applicable to both individual human beings and nations.

Culture is not something static; it is multifarious and dynamic in character. Culture is always synthetic in nature and one can see the synthesis of culture of culture everywhere all over the globe be it India, Europe and even America. No country or society can claim that it is absolutely pristine and unaffected by any other culture. Our Indian culture from olden times is basically shaped by its literature and philosophical ideas, its myths and legends, its scriptures, the rivers, the forests and the great Himalayas. Yet, with the comings of the Arabs (initially for trade which dates back to seventh century), the Aryans, the Turks, the Mughals, the Dutch, the Portugese, the French and the British the Indian culture got tremendously influenced by foreign cultures and there emerged a rich and synthetic culture. It is very evident if we look at the history that when India was open to outside world, its culture and growth flourished. Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, besides being an advocate of native Indian culture, was a great admirer of other cultures. He encouraged his countrymen to accept and absorb whatever good in other cultures. He called India a place of pilgrimage for humanity where different

races and cultures have met and mingled all through the ages into a single body. In his famous poem, popularly known as *Bharat Tirtha*, he writes:

> Hethay Arya hetha onarya hethay Dravida Chin
>
> [Here the Aryans, the non-Aryans, the Dravidians, the Chinese]
>
> Shak Hun dal Pathan Mughal ek dehe holo lin
>
> [The Scythians, the Huns, the Pathans and the Mughals melted into a single body]
>
> . . . .
>
> Dibe ar nibe milabe milibe jabena phire
>
> [Give and take, go back not, mingle and get mingled]
>
> Ei Bharoter mahamanaber sagar tire.
>
> [On the shores of vast sea of humanity of India]   (*Geetanjali* by Tagore 119)

Thus, one must have no doubt that over the past many centuries this great nation could become a place of pilgrimage for all people and cultures.

Cultural growth and harmony can be achieved through openness, shared values, respect for others, and most importantly as Robert C. Young, the notable postcolonial critic very aptly puts it, through 'tolerance for differences' (Young 4). A 'generous system of respect' and 'tolerance for differences' are perhaps two very important aspects towards achieving cultural harmony in a globalized world and most importantly in a multi-racial and multi-cultural country like India. Indian culture and civilization has remained in the centre stage since time immemorial and it has strongly endured the encounters of foreign cultures and civilizations throughout the

past centuries. Even the Indus Valley civilization that is believed to have existed five thousand years ago was basically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture and civilization. The Indus Valley civilization, according to Gordon Childe 'represents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort. And it has endured; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture' (qtd. in Nehru 41). So, the adjustment of human life, respect and tolerance for differences are necessary for a society to be designated as a great civilization where people live in peace and harmony and with matured and refined culture(s).

Indian culture and civilization has never been static and unchanging. Change, we know, is a natural process; and India continued to change and progress as cultural synthesis and assimilation in Tagorian sense of the terms, have been taking place in the melting pot called India, previously called Indus or Hind from which later emerged the names India or Hindustan. Its contact with different races of people with diverse cultures from South-east Asia, the central Asia, the Middle East and Europe has not only enriched the Indian culture but also it enriched the cultures of those who have come in contact with her. This modern India is a cultural factory or in other words, a showcase for diverse cultures. We are proud of our cultural heritage rooted in the remote past, yet we feel proud of our diversity, the diversity of people, the languages, the customs and beliefs, ways of living and above all the diverse cultures that are tied with a thread called our unity in diversity.

India has a composite culture where every ethnic community with its own culture has a right to grow and flourish. The composite nature of modern Indian culture is built on mutual respect and understanding, with the harmonious co-existence of people of different faiths such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs,

Buddhists, Jains and many other smaller religious and ethnic groups. The very composite nature of a society receives setback when the question of nationalism arises. Nationalism at large demands the superiority and authority of the larger and dominant group i.e. majority. Of course, there do exist other regional and smaller nationalisms too. Nationalism in a larger sense brings all the citizens of a country under one umbrella and there is no harm in it. For example, Indian nationalism is used as an umbrella term since our freedom struggle and that call for uniting and awakening was directed against the British oppressors in order to achieve independence. Nationalism, however, becomes challenging and draws conflicts when it is attached to a group of people, obviously the majority with affiliations to a particular faith. The romantic notion of nationalism that looks to construct a nation state on the basis of 'holistic people with a common language, history, culture and race' (Young 62) has never been a success. It has already failed in Nazi Germany. The rise of Hindu Nationalism with its Hindutva ideology and Muslim Nationalism with Mohammad Ali Jinnah's faulty Two Nation Theory on religious lines have already divided this great country sixty nine years ago and have done much damage to its culture and civilization.

'The Hindutva movement in India' as Robert C. Young observes, 'with its ideology of a return to the authenticity of the golden age' has been the most recent national movement that pursues 'the illusions of national homogeneity derived from 19th-century Germanic ideas of authenticity' (Young 62). Its project is the quest for 'authentic Indian-ness, for a *Hindu Rastra*, an ethnically pure Hindu nation, which will eliminate or exclude minorities such as Muslims or Christians, and fix Dalits (untouchables) and Adivasis (tribals) into its eternal racial hierarchy of caste' (Young 62-63). If we analyse the quote cited above, it becomes somewhat evident that the Hindutva ideology guided by

Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) nurtures Hindu Nationalism. It looks for corrective measures against the damages and wounds done to this ancient civilization by foreign invasions and occupations. The Muslim invasions and occupations and their subsequent seven hundred years of rule are believed to be mostly responsible for cultural vandalism in India. The Muslims and Christians are still considered as those whose ancestors have come from outside and whose cradle land is not India but somewhere else in the deserts of Arabia or Jerusalem since their respective holy lands lie there. V. D. Savarkar, the proponent of Hindutva ideology laid emphasis on *pitribhumi* (fatherland) which is to be equated with *punyabhumi* (holy land) and the latter is defined as the 'cradle land' of . . . religion' (Sarkar in David Ludden 274) and hence only Hindus could be the true patriots and not the Indian Muslims or Christians . The magnificent monuments, buildings and gardens including the Taj Mahal built by the great Mughals are seen as pieces of cultural vandalism.

Indeed, if we nurture such beliefs and ideology directed against certain communities, the ethnic, religious and cultural plurality of India will certainly get shattered followed by disruption of peace and harmony. Our culture and civilization is based on diversity and plurality of human identities. An ethnically and religiously singular categorization and perception of having a society with one particular community claiming to be authentic and true patriots on the basis of a particular ideology and a solitarist approach to human identity may lead to many divisions, exclusions, misunderstanding and intolerance resulting into cultural and even civilizational crisis. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen rightly comments on the plurality of culture and human identity saying: 'our shared humanity gets savagely challenged when the manifold divisions in the world are unified into one allegedly dominant system of classification in terms of religion, or community, or culture, or nation, or civilization' (Sen xiv). A

term often used these days as cultural homogeneity is hardly possible in multicultural India. Cultural homogenization is a complex matter and involves many risks. India is a vast country and different ethnic communities in India have their own set of customs, beliefs, food habits, languages and lifestyles. Under such circumstances, if a homogenization of culture is sought, it will never be a voluntary exercise because in this process many smaller ethnic groups and their cultures will definitely suffer exclusion, marginalization and even chances of extinction. Therefore, the idea of cultural homogenization in India is an exclusivist idea which will undermine those who are in a minority both ethnically and religiously. Since past many years, there is a constant pressure on the government to implement Uniform Civil Code in India which has claims both for and against it. The concept of Tripple Talaq of the Islamic Sharia` Law is a highly debated issue these days and we are yet see what the government decides.

Coming back on the issue of cultural plurality in India, we may wonder that many people in India do accept and recognise the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of our country. Majority of the people of this country have general respect for each other's culture and religion. However, there have been several incidents in the past few years on which one may raise finger at such claims, significant among them are: Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradresh) riots in August-September, 2013; the murder of a progressive writer of the south, M. M. Kalburgi in August, 2015; Lynching of a 52-year old Muslim man called Akhlaq over alleged beef eating by a Hindu mob; ink-smearing incident on activist and writer Sudheendra Kulkarni at a book launch by a Pakistani writer in Mumbai in October, 2015; the ban on Pakistani singer Ghulam Ali by the so-called right-wing political party, Shiv Sena; the incidents of 'ghar wapsi;' the return of awards by prominent writers and artists and so on. Subsequent to these reported incidents, many in India and

outside have raised the issue of 'growing intolerance' in India. At one stage situation became so grim that even popular actors like Shah Rukh khan and Amir Khan started believing that there is some sort of 'intolerance' growing in the country. It is observed that whenever there is election in India, be it general election or state assembly elections, there is always a tendency to communalise the environment and polarise the electorates for political gains. Such attempts of communalising and polarising the society to grab power are undoubtedly detrimental to peace and cultural harmony.

Indian democracy is the largest democracy in the world. Our constitution safeguards the rights of all its citizens irrespective of caste, creed and religious belief. Every ethnic community, however small, have the right to protect its own language, culture and heritage. Yet, there are many unorganised group of people living miserable lives in the periphery; nomadic people are one such group of people among them. They have their peculiar customs, art and ways of living. Having detached from the mainstream India and its culture, their struggle for existence becomes more important when talk of culture by others sounds to be a luxury.

People of India want peace and harmony and that can be achieved through mutual respect, coming together of different people, constructive cultural exchanges and also by forgetting the differences. Respect for others' cultures and tolerance for differences are the preconditions not only for communal harmony but also for cultural harmony in any society. We must accept our diversity and plurality of our culture. India is the home of people belonging to diverse race, ethnicity, language, religion and cultural background. It is, in fact, disturbing when attempts are often made to impose the culture and practices of the majority over the culture and practices of others who happen to be weak, powerless and in a minority. Such a tendency is against the principles of our

constitution and our great democracy as a whole. There is no doubt that in a country like India the dominant majority will certainly have a dominant culture and it is reflected everywhere from firms to films, from jobs to jokes, from classrooms to TV showrooms, from news to views and so on. Maintaining peace and harmony between different cultures and communities is the need of the hour.

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Violent 'Summer of 2012' in Assam:
Regional Print Media and Deadly Ethnic Riot in Context

Alankar Kaushik
Assistant Professor
Department of JMC, EFLU, Shillong Campus

Introduction:

The post-Cold War period was hailed as an era of global peace and economic prosperity; a triumph of market capitalism and of 'globalization' of Western democracy (Hoge and Rose.ed, 2002.) This promised peace dividend has not materialized. The 'majority world' full of zones of conflict and host to many a 'failed' and 'rogue' state has largely failed to benefit from globalization. Apart from the wars in the former Yugoslavia, most of the post-Cold War conflicts are intra- rather than inter-state that have taken place in the global South with Africa witnessing at least 19 major armed conflicts. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, out of the 57 major armed conflicts in 45 countries during 1990 to 2001, only three were inter-state viz. Iraq/Kuwait, India/Pakistan and Eritrea/Ethiopia and the rest were internal conflicts over territory or resources (SIPRI, 2002).

Post-Cold War conflicts can be divided into three categories:

a. where genuine geo-strategic and economic interests are involved

b. conflicts emanating out of ethnic and nationalistic politics,

c. and the 'invisible' conflicts, which may have claimed millions of lives wars in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo

but rarely register on international media radars, which tend to cover only the conflicts where the West, led by the United States, is seen to be a peace-maker.

Defining Ethnic Conflict:

The term 'conflict' describes a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible goals. There are two distinct ways in which the term "ethnic" is interpreted. In the narrower sense of the term, "ethnic" groups mean "racial" or "linguistic" groups. This is the sense in which the term is widely understood in popular discourse, both in India and elsewhere. For example, in case of politics and conflict that based on religious groupings, Indian scholars, bureaucrats, and politicians have used the term "communal," not "ethnic," considering the latter term for linguistically or racially distinct groups.

There is, however a much broader definition given by Donald L Horowitz that 'all conflicts based on *ascriptive* group identities— race, language, religion, tribe, or caste—can be called ethnic.'

Ethnic conflicts are one particular form of conflict where goals of at least one conflict party are defined in exclusively ethnic terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinctions. All these conflicts led to a very large number of people being displaced in their homes, countries and becoming refugees in neighbouring countries. Migrants outside their homelands become easy targets of attack everywhere.

Between 1946 and 2001, there have been around 50 ethnically motivated conflicts worldwide and by 2003, all but 16 of them had been settled. (Stephan Wolff, 2006). The question arises that what has made it possible for so many conflicts to be resolved. We have witnessed ethnic conflicts in the Balkans from Bosnia to Kosovo to Macedonia were hailed as successes of

international intervention without border changes, while the secession of East Timor from Indonesia and of Eritrea from Ethiopia indicated that the creation of new states to settle ethnic conflicts was still accepted as a potentially viable solution.

Neither ethnicity nor nationalism in itself causes ethnic conflict. Rather the stakes in the ethnic conflicts are extremely diverse, ranging from legitimate political, social, cultural and economic grievances of disadvantaged ethnic groups to predatory agendas of states and small cartels of elites, to so-called national security interests, to name a few. As organized ethnic group confront each other, to what extent ethnicity is merely a convenient denominator to organize conflict groups in the struggle over resources, land or power.

Understanding the causes of ethnic conflicts will help in some way to explain who fights in ethnic conflicts and how. It is important to bear in mind that ethnic conflicts do not just exist or come into being. They are the product of deliberate choices of people to pursue certain goals with violent means.

The violence that took place in the district of Kokrajhar in the state of Assam during the summer of 2012 can be categorized as a deadly Ethnic riot. To define deadly ethnic riot as defined by Horowitz, 1985 - 'it is an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned, lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership. So conceived, ethnic riots are synonymous with what are variously called "communal", "racial", "religious," "linguistics," or "tribal" disturbances.'

The deadly ethnic riot is a passionate but highly patterned event. In the first instance, such an episode has at least an immediate cause. It is triggered by events-precipitants-that are regarded as sufficient to warrant violence. The ethnic riot is not a random

phenomenon. Once the riot begins, it takes an interpersonal and brutal form. (Horowitz, 2002).

Sanjib Baruah in his book Durable Disorder (2005) argues that as the first generation middle class from the NE comes out, they become objects of racial profiling if not direct hate attacks in the rest of India. At one level, the geographical mobility of some of the communities from the NE region has increased exponentially in recent years, thanks to globalization and the rising demand for labour in other metropolis. But at another level, as they move out and announce their arrival, they become object of hate attack. The ethnic majority suffers from the chronic anxiety of being reduced to a minority in no time (for example 1979-1985 in Assam), ethnic minorities like the Bodos in Assam are in no mood to accept the domination of the ethnic majority. Both the anxiety of the ethnic majority and the stridency of the minority help create in their combination a potentially lethal situation and have actually sparked off many a tragic riot in the region. Riots and violence are stirred by the incredibly powerful and albeit impossible 'imaginary of creating' a homeland of one's own by cleansing and exterminating the ethnic other.

Since the 1980's, the phenomena of ethnic violence in Assam has become anomic in character. There has been a widespread fear in the society that anyone and everyone could be a potential target and the conflicting parties organize and perpetrate attacks against unarmed civilians as part of their strategy.

In the northeastern region, large scale violence have started almost in the year 1980 with Tripura, and also there are horrifying instances at 1983 (Nellie) and during 1992-93 with Kuki Naga conflict.

Media in Conflict situation:

The twentieth century was the most violent century in the history of mankind and claimed millions of lives not only during

the two world wars or mini wars constantly causing bloodshed, but also big or small conflicts in all corners of the globe. (Thukral, 2009).

Everything that we know is learned in one of two ways, the first was us somatically while the vast majority of what we know comes to us a second way and that is symbolically. (Brian L Mott. & Robert L. Mack, 2014). These are things that we know through someone or something. This type of information is mediated meaning it comes via a medium. As a part of the literate society the attitudes and opinions that we cultivate are not always of our own. They are brought to us in one or another way through fast moving informative network, called mass media. The media casts its reflection on the general public through various images that could be accurate or inaccurate, objective or subjective, but their effect is always very important to our perception of the world around.

At the global level, there are several academic studies that reveal inadequate understanding of the global public on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict due to their lack of factual knowledge. At worst, people have no information about the origins of the conflict at all; they are unable to identify the different actors and players in the conflict, and they have limited or no understanding of what is going on. Question arises why is public opinion on this topic so limited, incomplete and often incorrect? Various authors find the answer in the news production processes of the international media. Although the news media cannot be held solely responsible for distorted public perceptions, they do play an important role in the shaping of the public's knowledge, especially as far as international issues are concerned.

It is a commonly accepted thesis that the development of journalism as a professional occupation in the course of the

nineteenth century never fully managed to homogenize the range of the activities falling under the scope of the profession. The development of journalism as a distinct professional culture was a response to the concept of 'responsibility', first conceived during the 1920s, among editors and foreign correspondents (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1964: 265, 267). This found expression in the conflict between journalists, who promoted the ideal of professional responsibility in relation to 'objectivity', and the publicity agents' distorted versions of truth (Bourdieu, 1996: 70; Bovee, 1999: 113; Trice, 1993: 7).

Objectivity, as the concept behind professional journalism as well as the expectations of the public, is in itself inherently ambiguous. As the major signifier associated with the occupation of journalism, 'objectivity' is associated and often confused with ideas of 'truth', 'impartiality, 'balance' and 'neutrality'. For example, a journalist's aim may be to reach the truth (and in order to approach the truth they may need to be impartial), but that does not necessarily imply that the means used or the means that could be used, are objective (Frost, 2000: 35-38). Similarly, balance refers to the equal amount of space and time provided for conflicting sides. It does not follow however, that this makes reporting either 'objective' or 'true'. Neutrality may also be problematic when one considers moral imperatives as part of the function of journalism (Seib, 2002: 85).

The impact of the media on the construction and content of public opinion has been documented from different theoretical perspectives and in a growing number of empirical studies. Starting with the agenda-setting theory in the early 1960s, the content and building of media messages as a determining factor for the construction of public opinion has been extensively discussed (Cohen, 1963; McCombs, 2004; McCombs and Shaw, 1972,

1977, 1993). Other theories, such as priming and framing, adjusted and refined this theory, focusing on specific aspects of agenda setting. For instance, the priming effect (e.g. Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Krosnick and Brannon, 1993; Krosnick and Kinder, 1990; McCombs and Reynolds, 2002; Pan and Kosicki, 1997) is 'especially one of promoting certain evaluative criteria and it plays a part in attempt to manage news' (McQuail, 2005: 514). Framing theory, on the other hand, specifically focuses on journalistic frames in media content and how these media frames influence their audiences in what they learn and how they think about certain issues (Dente Ross, 2003; Entman, 1991; Gamson, 1992; Gamson and Lasch, 1983; McQuail, 2005; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000).

These theoretical perspectives support the idea that the way in which the media represent the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the parties involved has a direct impact on what and how the public thinks about it. The media can represent one party as the perpetrator and the other as the victim by using specific labels, painting vague contextual background, and using only one conflict perpetrator as a source for their coverage.

Assam violence in 2012:

Conflict between different ethnic communities in recent times is always in news globally. This sort of conflict usually takes a violent manifestation claiming lives in various locations. One of the largest ethnic conflicts in the postcolonial India is the ethnic conflict in Assam during the summer of 2012.

According to Stuart Hall, "News is the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selection of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories". The paper will also try to find out how bias among journalist can contribute to escalation of violence and how

a journalist can face an identity barrier' in terms of access to news and sources. Newspapers have always played a significant role in claiming the assertion of ethnic and linguistic groups and there is no point of arguing that their role was essential in promoting the rights of the people in the region. It is also found that there is a lack of reporting in the newspapers and other media on the rights of minorities, especially on those who do not seem to possess the tools to represent their voice in media.

Violence has been endemic in Assam as in most parts of NE India for many decades now. The ethnic conflict of 2012 turned into carnage as the state government has abdicated its responsibility to maintain law and order and protect people from being slaughtered, butchered and displaced. This particular violence in Assam started in May 2012 with sporadic violence and killing of people belonging to both the communities. Violence in Bodoland has acquired new dimensions as the theatre of conflict expanded to Mumbai, Allahabad, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

One of the biggest crises that threaten the northeastern region of India is said to be the influx of immigrants from Bangladesh. The largest crisis took place from 1979- 1985 when a student organization led an influential movement against the foreigner's names in electoral roles and demanded for their deportation.

The northeast is a prominent case in which the indigenous people's rights and immigrant's rights have clashed. However in this region, the latter is almost neglected while intellectuals and the media repeatedly emphasise indigenous people's rights. For example, Myron Weiner, the first scholar who pointed out the problem of immigration in Assam defined the situation as "*When Migrants Succeed and Natives Fall.*" These views come from the fact that a section of immigrants, especially Bengalis, seem to

be more successful than local Assamese. However, Bengali speaking people who have been displaced because of environmental degradation and economic poverty both inside and outside Assam recently. They are often illiterate and suffer from poverty, and problems they suffer are not reported in the mass media since they do not have media that represent themselves.

The reports of the regional newspapers published from Guwahati during the period from May 2012 to Aug 2012 are being considered for analysis to develop the argument of this paper. During the study an assessment was made whether the reports and the editorial column of the highly circulated regional dailies attempted to aggravate the ethnic conflict between the Bodos and the Non-Bodos. The paper is also trying to evaluate the effect of the reporting by the media and the position of the regional newspaper in Assamese society.

Stuart Hall explains the social forces that take part in production of the news. He states that,

> "*the media do not simply and transparently report events which are 'naturally' newsworthy in themselves. 'News' is the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories*".

Reporting conflict in the northeastern part of India has been the greatest challenge for the journalist. There are two prime reasons that make the profession not only difficult but also risky. One is the lack of professional understanding among many media practitioners in the region and the people, second is the problem of free expression in the context of fragmented and ethnically sensitive polity. (Chakraborty Sanat, 2000).

The regional media are of course a lot more engaged than the national media with the news in the North-East. But news reports in the regional media rarely have the power to influence policy or impact changes at the level of the central government in Delhi or even state governments. Moreover, rebel groups often intimidate them. The regional newspapers come under a lot of pressure from these groups to carry their press releases verbatim. Small newspapers do it for survival. If they don't, their reporters are attacked. They are soft targets. From 1991 till date, almost 26 journalists have been killed in the region. Yet there is no perceptible change on the ground. Militant groups threaten the regional media at will. The government also tries to put pressure on the regional media. For this, the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, 1911, has been used in the past. In 1997, Assam police arrested Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, editor of Asomiya Pratidin and Sadin, which are both regional newspapers openly critical of government policies. Bhuyan was arrested under the National Security Act. The charges included abetment in the abduction and subsequent killing of an activist. This was his third arrest. In 1992 and 1994 he had been arrested and in both instances acquitted as there was no evidence against him. In 1997, the courts again found Bhuyan not guilty of any crime. The primary reason for hounding him was his bold criticism of the government. The arrest was the government's attempt to silence him and his paper. Also, if a newspaper is overtly critical of the state, the state government can respond by refusing to give it advertisements. This affects the revenue source of small newspapers and threatens their very existence.

Recently Assam has witnessed some changes in the regional media with the arrival of private television channels. These channels are indirectly owned by politicians or by corporate groups with

political ambition. This style of ownership, which is common across India, cripples media freedom.

During the Assam agitation, the Assamese newspapers are often criticized of being representing only bourgeois and caste Hindu Assamese. It was true that major local newspapers in Assam supported the movement in their reporting. According to Sanat K Chakraborty in his book " Media in Conflict Situation: A Northeast India perspective", the newspapers in northeast sometimes become the tool for ethnic assertion. He states that

> '*it is not really important whether a newspaper is economically viable or not. Rather it has become a forum for self-expression, as no one newspaper could ensure space for all sections of people living in the region. Therefore, we have Arunachal Times for Arunachal, Bodoland Times for Bodos, Tripura Times for Tripura, The Nagaland Post for Nagaland, Free Imphal Press for Manipur and so forth.*'

Modern day violent conflicts are increasingly turning to be information warfare. Major countries spend billions of rupees on what passes on as psychological warfare. This may mean abandoning the questioning stance and highlighting those issues that fit the dominant script. Written and being executed by the parties to the conflict, this script takes over all the roles. (Thukral, 2009)

While reporting on any violent ethnic conflicts, the media is bound to suffer from many infirmities. Truth seems to be the first casualty in any violent situation particularly when a war breaks out. But tragically, as some thinkers pointed out, first casualty of war is not truth, which generally dies before the hostilities begin; it is the language and the media that suffer the damage.

The very fact of the parties involved in the conflict and how the media persons label them reveals the philosophy and the ideology behind the coverage. The highly circulated regional dailies from Assam namely Asomiya Pratidin, Dainik Asom, Dainik Janambhumi, Dainik Agradoot and Amar Asom was taken as a sample to study the coverage, headlines and editorial columns during and after the 2012 Kokrajhar riot.

From the study, it was revealed that headlines such as : (literal translation from Assamese to English) were published in the mentioned dailies

a. This is a Clash between Swadeshi and Bideshi

b. Who is doing the Ethnic Cleansing at Bodoland ?

c. In a bloody conflict, Kokrajhar is burning

d. Behind the ethnic clash there is a newly formed United Muslim National Army

e. Holi of Blood

f. The Gunmen of Hagrama are targeting and killing minorities

g. If you don't stop the illegal migrants, this may take place anywhere in the state

h. Many fleeing away from the city of Kokrajhar

i. This is a clash between indigenous people and illegal Bangladeshi's

Beyond this, the structure and ownership patterns further colour the quality and content of reporting and comments.

Given transformation of the regional mass media into a complex, expensive, centralized and commercial model of communication, it seems almost anachronistic to talk of the intrinsic relationship between an independent media and substantive

democracy. In a commercialized information environment where news is professionally produced as commodity and the boundaries between information and entertainment have collapsed in the race for ratings, it seems out of place to talk of the social and moral responsibility of the journalist. Given the 'power' and 'interests' which inhere in the structure of the new mass media, concerns about manipulation and 'manufacturing consent' seem decidedly old fashioned. (South Asia Forum for Human Rights Report, November, 2002.)

Not only in the countries under military or civilian dictatorships, even in democracies where a nation state is pitted against insurgent movements or militant activities yearning for national elf assertion or other internal movements articulating social or economic conflicts, media by and large becomes adjunct of the national security apparatus. Threat to the nation state is the slogan and most newspapers follow the line given by the political class. The national security mindset of the dominant elite class that characterizes such conflicts as threat to the integrity of nation- state is mostly accepted without much protest. These conflicts are characterized as law and order problem and majority of the mainline media accepts this position. Indeed there are exceptions.

(Thukral, pp. 34)

The debate on public opinion and the masses has two extreme sides proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. One of the theories is known as **media agenda**. Media agenda proposes that media content heavily influences public opinion. The media thus "sets" the agenda for the public, telling them what issues are of importance and what to think of those issues. In the media agenda corporate heads, investors, and news editors determine which stories are of importance and those are the ones covered. The

alternate opposing theory is known as the **public agenda**. The public agenda proposes that it is the public that determines the important issues. The media adjusts itself to the information about which the people want to know. Those who are strong advocates of the public agenda theory deflate the influence of the media and feel that it does not affect how people think about war. In the book *War and Media: A Random Searchlight*, Miles Hudson and John Stanier comment on the public agenda. They argue that although it has some good points it seems against common sense to argue that such is the case with foreign affairs because the majority of the public cannot bring their own experiences with international affairs in order to have their own opinion. Whether advocates of the public agenda agree with this way of thinking, there are some historical accounts that would prove that it is fairly accurate.

Conclusion:

Coverage of ethnic conflicts in the Assam region could be greatly improved if media agencies used local journalists from both ethnic groups in any conflict. This approach might become one model to change the existing framework of media coverage so that it actually contributes to peace and development in northeast India. But for this, media at all levels has to change its practices in covering conflicts. There is lack of newspaper and other forms of media that can offer a common platform among communities in the northeast. Even the most influential media have no significant presence in the other states. It signifies that people in this region don't have opportunity to communicate with people in the other region through the mass media, so their chance to know the opinion in other communities becomes limited. Secondly, the immigrant communities still do not have their own media to represent their opinions. Especially, the literacy is low among those immigrants who engage in blue-color work, and they hardly have any media in

which to claim their rights and interests. Media also need to address the multicultural, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic composite culture of the region; rather, it has continued with the policy of ethnic insularity and ethnic homeland followed by the colonial rulers.

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Remembering Television: Recollection of Memories of First Generation Television Viewers in Aizawl

C.Laldinfeli
V.Ratnamala
Assistant Professor and Head
Department of Mass Communication, Mizoram University, Aizawl.

Abstract

The Mizo culture has a rigid tradition called 'oral tradition' which is 'verbal messages which are reported statements from one generation to another generation' On the other hand, it is rather unfortunate to say that there is no much proper written records of the valuable and interesting history in certain fields of the Mizo ancestors' lifestyles. This research is able to keep in written form the first hand personal experiences of the first generation television viewers in Aizawl city when television was introduced in Mizoram during the 1980s. The research is done through oral method of personal interviews done on 12 people staying in different parts of Aizawl city. This research keeps records of the personal informal narratives that first generation T.V. viewers encountered with.

Key Words: Oral Tradition, Informal narratives, first generation T.V. viewers, Wallpapers, Flashbulbs, Media Events, Key informants.

Introduction:

Mizoram is a landlocked state in North East India whose southern part shares 722 kilometres long international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh and northern part share domestic

borders with Manipur, Assam and Tripura. The capital of Mizoram, Aizawl is always the centre of administration and development. It is also the centre of road network in Mizoram connecting the north and south, east and west. Thus, a set of television first reached Aizawl city in the early 80s than anywhere else in Mizoram and the first generation owners and viewers of television were the people living in the Aizawl city.

A few rich businessmen imported T.V. sets from other states in the early 80s. Only some rich families in Aizawl had thus bought the T.V. sets. Families owning sets of television were put on high pedestals because it could not be afforded by the majority of the society. Many people who could not afford to own a set of television used to go to their nearest neighbours' houses who owned television to watch it. Thus, going to neighbours' houses to watch television programmes especially during night hours became a lifestyle of the Mizo society throughout the 80s.

During the first decade of the introduction of television in Mizoram, Doordarshan remained the only channel to be broadcasted through manually turned antennas along with Bangladesh channel which was tuned in when the antenna received the signal coming from Bangladesh station. So, majority of the households in Aizawl as well as other parts of the state intensely depended on the radio for information as well as entertainment during the 80s.

Gradually with the introduction of Cable Operators in the 90s, people turned to Cable TV for entertainment and news besides Doordarshan programmes and the number of families owning sets of television increased at a snail's pace. About 29 Cable Operators are doing business in the urban and semi-urban areas nowadays. The 'Sky Link' was the first to give Star TV programmes to limited

subscribers since 1991. The LPS and ZOZAM started their own production centres in 1992 and 1994 respectively and Zonet Cable network was established in 2004 by three eminent Mizo Journalists. It was established as a partnership firm in Mizoram. It has now become a fully-licenced Mizo satellite TV channel that provides viewers with a wholesome 24 hours Entertainment, Films, Music, Career and Family based content, as an alternate to the other fancy and sensational satellite and cable channel. (Zonet.in Cable T.V. network, 2007). The two biggest Cable networks in Aizawl are LPS Vision and Zonet currently. Nowadays television in Aizawl serves as the best media in providing infotainment for the whole masses in the form of audio and visual aspects besides the daily newspapers. Though some of the villages outside Aizawl city still rely on the radio for their daily news and entertainment, majority of the people in Aizawl city depends on television for almost all infotainment.

Oral tradition of storytelling allows us to learn about the perspectives of individuals who might not otherwise appear in the historical record. Politicians, activists and business leaders may show up repeatedly in official documents and the media but the rest of us very rarely do. It allows us to learn about history from the people who lived it and allows us to ask any questions we are interested in. Also, it provides people with an opportunity to tell their own stories in their own words and provides a rich opportunity for human interaction. Through oral history, researchers and key informants come together in conversation about a commonly shared interest. *(Baum, 1987)*

Scope of the study:
This study focused on the usage of television and its social impact when it was introduced in Aizawl during the 1980s. We get to know the early usage of television in Aizawl as well as how the

society is being affected by the coming of T.V. sets. The research was done through the use of oral histories, told by 12 first generation T.V. Viewers in Aizawl through in depth interview method- their first hand experiences with the television.

Objective of the study:

The main aims and objectives of this study are:

1. To document memories of people having first-hand experiences with television set and to realise the problems and hardships.

2. To trace back the early usage of television in Aizawl, Mizoram

3. To highlight the status of Television in the past and present situations in Mizoram

Research method:

This study deals with historiography. And therefore can be said to be a qualitative research in nature. Oral history is used as the primary method of data collection. Sample of 12 people from different localities of Aizawl city is taken into account.

People are interviewed using in-depth interview method. The interviewees are given full opportunity to share their early memories and experiences of television.

Research Methodology:

A qualitative method of conducting an interview was adopted as the research is based on the oral tradition. The main objective of the researcher is to collect data openly and straight from the participant in the following areas as mentioned:

•   Individual experiences and memories

•   Recollections of certain events

•   Attitudes and Standards

• 	Opinions and Point of views (Beiber & Leavy ,2011)

The following summarizes the characteristics of the population of the study:

Total number 	: 12
Gender 		: Equally distributed
Distribution 	: Haves and the Haves not (of a set of
		  television)
Age groups 	: 50-85
Place of residence 	: Different localities in Aizawl City

The 12 television viewers are recruited according to age, gender and region of origin i.e Aizawl. At the same time, specific attention is paid to certain socio-demographic characteristics. Since "collective memory" is conceptualized mostly as "national memories", two immigrants from Nepal in order to "control" the factor of national origin as a potential social framework affecting the formation of television memories are included. (Bourdon,2003)

Wallpapers, Media events and Flashbulbs:

Television memories in this research are classified into three categories*: Wallpaper, Media events* and *Flashbulbs*. Wallpapers are memories of habits and routines. Wallpaper memories are related to interactive situations, situations that repeat themselves and are told in the continuous tense (we used to…, we were watching…). The routine is related to programmes. "This type of memory can be defined as the product of a successful connection between a television schedule and a given arrangement of domestic life. (Bourdon, 2003).

The remaining categories-Media events and Flashbulbs are about specific and discrete events. They are related to memories of actual viewing and concern the specific genre of news or current affairs.

Data Interpretation and Conclusion:

i.   The first generation T.V. viewers in Aizawl shared their memories of television through the process of Oral History. This helped the researcher to document the memories of television set when it was introduced in Aizawl. It also highlights the usage of television in communicating and the other roles it played in the Mizo society during the 80s.

ii.   Since interviews were conducted face to face in the key informants' homes which lasted for 30-45 minutes approximately for each person and as it was conducted in an informal way where there was no fixed duration or guidelines, the key informants enjoyed the interview where they were asked to share whatever came to their mind when they recalled a box of television at the time it was a new thing in the society. They cherished sharing all their memories of television and many a time, much more information beyond needed was received. This can be the result of nostalgic feelings of their loved and dear ones and their past lives which the key informants recalled.

iii.   Based on the data, we could also state that Mizo society is a very strong communitarian society which have practices like *'tlawmngaihna'* (Behaviours that is self- sacrificing, self-denying, doing what an occasion demands unselfishly and without concern for inconvenience caused) and such thing as sharing items and goods. This can be observed from the nature of the owners of televisions who were very tolerant and patient in nature. They were always very kind and considerable and never let their doors closed for people who came to watch their television despite the timing of their visits. Also on the accounts of the key informants, we can see that people would offer help to the families who owned the television in return for letting them watch the T.V.

iv.   Since television was an expensive gadget which was not affordable by majority of the people during the 80s, radio still continued to serve as the main source of infotainment for a larger section of the Mizo society because it was much cheaper and as it was very updated with current affairs as well as songs from famous artists in and outside the state. People depended on the radio for almost everything they want to know about. During the early and mid-80s, only a few well-to-do families owned T.V. sets in Aizawl.

v.   During the 80s, Doordarshan was the only channel available from the Indian television stations. Bangladesh channel[1] was also telecasted when the manually tuned antennas received signals coming from Bangladesh. Some key informants also mentioned that they also used to catch signals from Myanmar Station as well. It was only in the early 90s that the local cable operators came into being thus introducing more channels.

vi.   There were few T.V. series that used to be telecasted by Doordarshan National during the 80s such as Hum Log, Mac Gyver, Ramayana and Mahabharata, Chitrahaar and others which were the talk of the viewers at that time. Mizoram being a Christian state, none of the Mizo key informants mentioned about Ramayana and Mahabharata serials which was based on the Hindu epic of the same name. Only two of the key informants who were Hindu and Gorkalis mentioned this particular serial film when asked about what films or shows they loved to watch the most. The grandest occasions that were being watched during the 80s were the wedding ceremony of Prince Charles and Lady Diana on 19th July, 1981

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[1]In the early 1990s the public broadcaster Bangladesh Television (BTV), the sole domestic channel in Bangladesh, also re-broadcast some programmes from the transnational news channels, BBC and CNN (Thomas, 2005).

(Live), the 9th Asian Games Inauguration Function held in Delhi on 19th November 1982 (Live) and the World Cup in 1986, all broadcasted through Doordarshan channel. All these programmes were watched by a big crowd who gathered at the house of T.V. owner's house.

vii.   From the account of the collected data, it is observed that the first generation television viewers of Aizawl were more drawn towards Hindi movies and songs than the western movies and songs as Doordarshan was the only channel telecasted by the Indian State and as Bangladesh station which was also telecasted both used Hindi as their main language.

viii.   From the interviews, we can also conclude that despite the unfamiliar language i.e. Hindi and Bengali, the Mizos still loved to watch any programmes although they did not understand what was being told. They said that from non-verbal visual communication like facial expressions, gestures and postures, they could still get the necessary details enough to draw them to watch any T.V. programmes.

ix.   The lifestyles of the Mizos regarding fashion and food in the 80s were not at all affected by the movies or T.V. series being broadcasted because there were very less in number and viewers just watched them for sheer entertainment with bewilderment and astonishment. It was much later in the 90s that the lifestyles depicted in the movies were being gradually copied, after the coming of the cable operators with more channels and when television began to completely take up the role of giving infotainment to the masses.

x.   From all the interviews, it is obvious that watching television in neighbours' houses was a kind of lifestyles of the Mizo society during the 80s. Also from the interviews with the two immigrants,

it is clear that though they were born and raised up in Mizoram, they felt a little alienated as far as watching television in the neighbour's house was concerned. They mentioned that they never watched T.V. in a Mizo's house and only in their fellow Gorkhali's house and even after they had their own set of T.V., only Mizo children used to go to their house to watch and not the Mizo adults. From the interviews of the Gorkalis, we could understand that there is not much shared social life among the two social groups during the 80s.

xi.   As mentioned in the research methodology chapter, television memories are classified into three categories: Wallpaper, Media events and Flashbulbs. Wallpapers are memories of habits and routines. Wallpaper memories are related to interactive situations i.e., situations that repeat themselves and are told in the continuous tense (we used to…, we were watching)

> *'We used to go to these three houses alternatively to watch serial film (I could not recall the name but I know it was a South Indian film)'*

> *'Kids from the neighbourhood used to ask my father's permission to watch the television, as a condition that they promised not to litter around, not to make any unwanted noise and not to fart'.*

xii.   Media events and flashbulbs are related to memories of actual viewing and concern the specific genre of news or current affairs.

> *'The film that we really loved watching was **'Mac Gyver'** which was a western serial film. The first episode was shown in 1985. It was an American Action/Adventure film. One episode ran for about 48 minutes. We loved the hero Mac Gyver so much because he was a scientist and*

used to solve complex problems by making things out of stuffs. He preferred non violent resolutions and never handled a gun. Every youth especially the males used to talk about him'.

'There was one serial movie that we deeply loved called as 'Chitrahar'. It was a collection of Bollywood songs and they used to show it in the form of a serial every night. The word Chitrahaar literally means 'a garland of pictures.'

xiii. Owning a set of television was a high status in the Mizo society during the 80s. The family owning a T.V. would be very well-known in their areas. Having a set of T.V. was like having a big magnet in the house that attracted all the neighbours to flood in their homes especially during the night hours. It was indeed a 'Status symbol', 'Neighbour's envy and owner's pride'.

The memories of the 12 first generation television viewers during the 80s would be valued growingly. As the saying goes "old is gold", the first generation of television viewers in Mizoram have tremendous memories and experiences of how lives were when television was introduced in Mizoram and they valued these television devices on the contrary to later generations who take it for granted. These generation of television viewers are diminishing slowly and there is a need for us to treasure and document their memories and experiences from their past days.

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SE LU NGE TUMPANG SIAL?[1] :
An analysis of Siallu (and its critique) as an Iconography in Mizo Art

Lalthlanchhuaha
M.Phil in Visual Studies
School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi- 110067

"Art is notoriously hard to talk about"[2] as Clifford Geertz famously puts it, the very nature of art and purpose it serves demands meticulous study and attention to minute detail in understanding them. Like most things, the very nature and purposes of art changes over the course of time, from region to region and from culture to culture. Over the course of time, the study of Art History or Art in itself has assimilated concepts and modes of analysis within other fields of study: notably, social theory and sociology, psychoanalysis, and forms of structuralist thinking developed within linguistics and anthropology.[3] In this article, I want to 'talk' about the culture of Mizoram: the structure of its existence in the past, as well as the modern culture shaped by westernisation. The structural changes can clearly be seen to becaused by colonialism and the recent cultural assimilation from

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[1] Translation for the title wold be as " Siallu (Head/skull of Mithun) Or that of Tumpangsial (wild Gayal)

[2] Clifford Geertz, *"Art as a Cultural System" in Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology,* ed. Clifford Geertz (NY: Basic Books, 1983)

[3] See "Introduction to Part III Historical Methods and Critical Perspectives", *Art in modern culture: an anthology of critical texts*, ed by Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris. The Open University, Phaidon Press Limited, 1992

contemporary popular culture and globalisation and capitalism. These multitudes of factors have formed some of the building blocks and have guided the creative conscious inputs into the creation of visual arts.

Clifford Geertz said "*For an Approach to aesthetic which can be called semiotic- that is, one concerned with how signs signify-what this means is that it cannot be a formal science like logic or mathematics, but must be a social one like history or anthropology.*"[4] On the basis of this comment, this paper is an attempt to have a semiotic anthropological analysis of one of the most widely used symbol in Mizo art -*Siallu* (head of a Mithun)[5] in paintings and as a logo for different organisations and groups among the Mizos (of Mizoram). This study will be conducted by underlining the past cultural significance and the role played by the *Siallu* and placing it in its modern context.

Why *Sial Lu*?

Siallu is one of the most commonly used symbol and have appeared in many paintings either subjectively or objectively. It is also one of the most common symbols among many organisations and Institutions by the Mizos chiefly because the *Sial* had an important place in the cultural past of the Mizos. *Sial* being the most majestic among domestic animals, it is considered to be one of the most prized possession and has been used in different ceremonial sacrifices and festivals. It was the class marker of wealth and social status. The ultimate status symbol and display of wealth

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[4] Clifford Geertz, *"Art as a Cultural System" in Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology,* ed. Clifford Geertz (NY: Basic Books, 1983)

[5] The Mithun shall here on end be referred to as Sial for the purposes of this paper as the Mizo names and terminology would make more sense if the subject of this paper is referred to in this manner.

was constructed through '*Khuangchawi'*, which was a ceremony only a man fit to be a "*Thangchhuahpa*" could perform.

"*Thangchhuahpa*" was a social status given to a man who could perform "*Khuangchawi*" (A kind of festive ceremony) in the case of '*In Lama Thangchhuah'* or complete a set of kill list necessary to attain the status of *Thangchhuahpa* in the case of '*Ram lama Thangchhuah*". It was one of the highest statuses a person can achieve which benefitted him in many ways. In fact, it was the goal of all men- young or old to become a *Thangchhuahpa* and claim their place within the social hierarchy. This served as a brilliant moral guideline to maintain social order and uphold the important social codes of conduct like bravery and *tlawmngaihna*[6] and the spirit of self-sacrifice.

In order to become a *Thangchhuahpa,* one can achieve it by either '*In lama thangchhuah'* or '*Ram lama Thangchhuah*'. 'In lama Thangchhuah' basically means 'to become a thangchhuah from home'; 'in' translated as 'house' or 'home' while '*Ram lama Thangchhuah*' means "Thangchhuah from forest"; 'ram' translated as 'forest'. After a man has underwent all the necessary trials and tests that would qualify him to be a *Thangchhuahpa*, then he was allowed to perform the *Khuangchawi (in the case of 'In lama Thangchhuah')*ceremony which would cement his entry into this most prestigious and sought after title.

The *Khuangchawi* ceremony was by no means an easy ritual to perform. It required a number of very specific rites to be done in

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[6] A moral code which binds Mizos and sets them apart from other tribes. Priority is given to communal well being even at the risk of harming one's own self interest. Mizos take great pride in owning the quality of tlawmngaihna as it is deemed to be the ultimate test of character and honour.

a certain order. This required both wealth and a good standing in society. It is no wonder that this was the final obstacle set before a man in order to complete his journey to becoming a *Thangchhuahpa*. K.Zawla, a Mizo Historian highlights some of the ceremonial procedures in order to be able to perform '*Khuangchawi*' in his book "Mizo Pi Pute leh anThlahte Chanchin"[7] which is narrated as follows. There was slight difference in its procedure from different sect (hnam) but basically involves 4 procedures:

1.   Chawn/Chawnfang: The young Boys and Girls gather in the courtyard of the 'Thangchhuah-to-be's house and grind Flour from Rice together. They drink and dance all night.

2.   Sedawi: Sedawi is a kind of '*Sechhun*'(spearing of a sial Mithun; 'Se' is another word for 'sial'). In order to perform a Sedawi, a *Sialpa (Male Gayal)* of at least 'Ki hmawrhawng'[8] must be used. This is followed by other smaller ceremonies as well.

3.   Sekhuang: Another '*Sechhun*', the difference here is that the minimum requirement of the '*Sial*'used for sechhun must be at least 'Se chalkilainawt'[9] must be used.

4:     Khuangchawi: For Khuangchawi, A 'Sialpa' (male) with '*kilainawt chin*'and 'Sepui'(Full grown *Sial*) must be used. Two '*Seluphan' (a kind of Pole planted for this sole purpose)* were

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[7] Every narrative from the section, 'Why Sial?' is taken from K. Zawla, "*Mizo Pi Pute leh anThlahte Chanchin*" revised and enlarged edition, Assam Publication Board, 2011.
[8] Sial Ki hmawrHawng are the Sial which young and whose horns are yet to develop. They are the minimum required kill.
[9] Se Chal Ki Nawt are the Sials older and grander than Ki Hmawr Hawng but still not a fully-grown adult.

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planted on which the *Sials* were tied followed by the spearing. It was as usual, accompanied by feasting in which the whole village were invited followed by dancing and 'Chawngchen' (also called chawn/chawnfang described earlier) at night.

Being a Thangchhuahpa comes with various attributes:

1.　He can enter *'Pialral'* (Paradise) after death and live on readymade foods. The Mizos believed that the spirit of the dead enters 'Mitthi Khua' (land of the Dead) in which they still have to work for food whereas 'Pialral' is a special place only a 'Thangchhuahpa' could enter where working for food was no more needed, a person lives on readymade food. This says a lot about the economic conditions prevalent at the time as food was scarce, and the ultimate longing for people was a place where one no longer needed to work so hard for their meals. Their vision of Paradise was simple and yet says so much about the kind of life they led.

2.　A *Thangchhuahpa* is considered to be a great and respected figure, pleased by the Chief himself and resected by all. While respect from peers might not seem like much of a reward, a better understanding of the Mizo people and their cultural outlook shows that honour and respect were much sought after positions. Thus, when a man has the ear of the Chief and the respect of the people, not only does it give him certain social status, but at the same time it also gives him political power.

3.　According to the mythology of Mizos, there is a gatekeeper at '*Mitthi Khua'*(Land of dead) called as Pawla. He used to hurl anyone entering the *Mitthi khua* using his catapult. The Mizo traditional Catapult was a kind of Bow made from bamboo using a dried mud ball instead of the arrow in the case of bow and arrow). Now, Pawla's catapult was so huge that it is made from a special type of Bamboo called *Phulrua* and the mud ball as big as an egg.

The impact of the catapult was so huge that the wound inflicted from it lasts at least three years, according to what they believed. A *Thangchhuahpa* is also respected by Pawla, a gatekeeper of *Mitthi khua* and dare not hurl him with his catapult.

4.   A *Thangchhuapa* can wear a '*Thangchhuah puan*' (cloth) only a Thangchhuahpa can wear. Social hierarchal set up was also visible with the kind of attire one can wear and present himself to the society. Like for instance, a *Pasaltha*, (warrior/hunter) deemed fit for the title can wear '*Tawlloh puan*' (tawlloh means not moving). A *Pasaltha* seemed fit to wear the 'Tawlloh Puan' must never turn his back against enemies of from wild beasts. In the same way, a Thangchhuahpa wearing his Thangchhuah puan was easily identifiable. Not only did his attire show his current status, but it also made him aware of his social responsibilities as a man that everyone looked up to.

5.   A *Thangchhuahpa* after finishing '*Khuangchawi*' is fit to be called '*Zawhzazopa*' which literally means 'one who finishes(the required whatsoever)' and can open window as wide as he wishes and can make '*Bahzar*[10]' and '*Vanlung*[11]' if he wishes to. The social set up in Mizo villages were such that there was a certain dicta on how one may construct his house and where this house was to be constructed. There were established rules on what the house could have and what it could not. Therefore, even the addition of a window to the house was a big deal as one look at the house would be sufficient to inform any on looker that the resident was a Thangchhuahpa.

        The person's status is thus determined by the number of '*Sechhun*' and '*Khuangchawi*' he could perform. The Most

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[10]A kind of raised platform attached to a house in the past.
[11]One of a typical Household design used in the past.

important and relevant feature of '*Khuangchawi*' being the '*Sechhun*'. To be able to slay or spear the most majestic animal was really a matter of honour and dignity. Especially a person who could perform '*Khuangchawi*' three times in his lifetime, He is given a high status of being a '*Zaudawhthei*' which permits him to choose the best place to build his Home in a village. A *Thangchhuahpa* who can perform three or more *Khuangchawi* is also fit to adorn his head with '*Zawngchal*'[12] which only they themselves and the *Pasalthas* are allowed to. There are various ceremonial and sacrificial procedures involved while performing '*Khuangchawi*' which were not mentioned in detail above. In order to gain more glory, some *Thangchhuapas* often '*ai*' *Vapual* (hornbill) with pigs or the '*Sawngpui*' *(any kill)* with *Sial* in case of the really wealthy ones. '*Ai*' was an important ceremony for the Mizos, 'To *ai* animals or enemies head (ancient Mizos were headhunters) is a kind of sacrificial ceremonies done to please or ease the spirit of the deceased with sacrificial animals like Chicken, Goat, Pigs or *Sial*. To be able to '*ai*' anything with *Sial* was again something that not everyone could do, but only the wealthy and chiefs could perform.

Another type of *Thangchhuah* is '*Ram lama Thangchhuah*' as mentioned before. To become a *Thangchhuahpa* by this way, one has to go through a kill list consisting of the most dangerous and difficult animals one could find in the wild at the time. The compulsory kill includes Elephant, *Tumpang* (a kind of Wild Bison), Bear, *Zukchal* (Stag is called *Sazuk* in Mizo, *Zukchal* implies the full grown stag with its antler in its full glory), Wild Boar and *Vahluk* (a Kind of Flying Squirrel). Apart from these, it is considered glorious if the kill list consists of Muvanlai (eagle), *Rulngan* (King Cobra) and Tiger. These are the animal in which '*ai*' needs to be performed.

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[12] A kind of head-dress.

Although this concept has been long abolished with the advent of Christianity, the concept is still relevant especially in the study of visual semiology and the history of Mizo Art. At this juncture, one is reminded of the fact that the Mizos do not have Traditional Paintings as such, the earliest form and surviving art forms are through the relief carvings from *Lungdawh* (monoliths)as well as textiles and Weavings(cane and bamboos). The monoliths are erected in honour of the '*Thangchhuahpa*' and every textile had its own peculiar designs and motifs and serves its particular purposes. *Sial* being an important ceremonial sacrifice and also the class marker suggesting wealth, we can see glimpses of the depiction of *Sial* in these monoliths.

Colonialism and Its Implication: Modernity and Cultural Consciousness in Mizoram

Talking about the culture of the Mizos, one can have a clear cut distinction between the pre-colonisation period and the post-colonisation period as Colonisation brings about drastic changes and the transformation was physical, spiritual and also cultural.[13]

Modern Colonialism, like any other colonial interventions, came about to change the social order and thus create new cultural set of system in a society. In Mizoram, Colonialism had a different impact with the introduction of Christianity that transforms almost every spheres of life. Unlike the mainland India, colonialism was rather a missionary intervention rather than an Imperialist mindset and is not necessarily seen as a negative intervention. It was the Protestant missionaries that first came into the Lushai (or Mizo) Hills following the arrival of the British troops to the' Northeast in the early 19th century. Christianizing, as Joy Pachuau mentions in

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[13]Lalrinchhani, '*Why English-A Historical Analysis From a Mizo Perspective*', DMZP Annual Magazine, 2015

her Book, "Being Mizo" is seen as the sum of missionary activities, which included the message spoken, physical travails undergone, and the introduction of education and western medicine; also included were the institutional and organisational developments that took place in the area. In some sense, the Mizos locate Colonialism as Modernism and often referred the period of the colonial rule as Joy Pachuau mentions in her book as" *'sap in min awp lai', or the 'time when white men ruled over us'. 'Awp' is also a word used for a hen incubating her eggs, signifying perhaps the contributory role the British had in 'hatching out' the Mizos."*[14]

Colonialism and the introduction of western culture soon changed our cultural practices. *"Khuangchawi"* and *"sechhun"* are no longer applicable in the post-Christian era. Monoliths with relief carvings are no longer practiced. In fact, almost every form of cultural rituals and sacrifices, dances and customs as well as beliefs were abolished and offered a new set of standard living compatible with the Christian beliefs and ideologies.

Anthony Giddens outlined Modernity as "*… that differ from all preceding forms of social order in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact [...] modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience. One of the distinctive features modernity, in fact, is an increasing interconnection between the two extremes of extensionality and intentionality: globalizing influences on the one hand and personal disposition on the other."*[15]

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[15] Anthony Giddens, 'Introduction' *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age,* Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991

[14] Joy Pachuau, '*Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*', Oxford University Press, 2014

In order to study the evolution of art in Mizoram, one has to ask "What was Modernity" rather than "When was Modernism?"[16] chiefly as Modernism mostly implies time period and to locate 'Modernity' within the context of Mizo art is much a relevant topic as Modernism was two-folded. I like to see modernity as two folds in the context of Art practices in Mizoram as *Mizos* often identify themselves without having any form of traditional painting. The absence of painting as an art form might be because they do not express themselves by the act of painting. Although the use of pigments and dyes are evident in the colourful textiles they produced but as far as historical documentation is concerned, no forms of painting including body painting or tattooing for sacrificial or any other purpose it may serve have survived. So, after colonialism, when the first form of painting along with western education came into being, one can easily attributes its qualities as something modern. The medium of painting itself was modern in its own sense. The first artists who painted paintings used western mediums like oils, charcoal, pencils and watercolours. As mentioned earlier, since the *Mizos* do not have traditional painting as such and the forms and function along with techniques and styles, mediums and purposes were against the traditional order but followed the popular western school of realism. This, I like to see as the first phase of modernity in the context of art practiced in Mizoram (or of Mizos). Giddens said that 'Modernity is a post-traditional order"[17] and thus anything that deviated from the traditional order is '*modern'*. As painting as an art form came about only in the post-colonial period, its inception was seen as modernity as I mentioned before but soon became a

[16] After famous texts on" When was Modernism?" by Geeta Kapur and the same title by Raymond Williams

[17] Anthony Giddens, 'Introduction,' *Modernity and Self-Identity : Self and Society in the late Modern Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991

post-colonial tradition as the transformation after Colonisation was also cultural and brings about changes in the traditional practices including the art traditional practices. Anything that deviates from the 1st phase of modernity might be called as post-modern, here comes the second inception of modernity which I like to refer as the second phase of Modernity which is still in its infant stage in the case of Art intervention in Mizoram.

The two fold nature of Modernity in Mizoram can also be discussed as how cultural consciousness played its role in the artistic creativity as it was innate, something one identifies himself with; at the same time. As Colonialism came and abolished the traditional order, a need to document the past and dying cultural practices caused by modernity itself have always been the agenda for most of the earliest artists from Mizoram. Also, one needs to keep in mind that a need to document also sprung out from the fact that there were not any form of Painting in the past, it was two-folded. What then followed was an illustrative or conceptual representation of the past culture that was Mizo, and often come back to depict what was essentially the most valued concept and highest honour a person can achieve- being *Thangchhuahpa*. The Mizos readily identified *Sial Lu* and *Seluphan* with *Thangchhuah*. As *Thangchhuah* was always the status honoured and highly valued, the innate urge of creativity must have been stemmed up to achieve that status through art. Although the conception and contextualisation of it is adopted differently by different artists, it is clearly evident that a need to highlight one's identity through cultural consciousness.

Another approach to the semiotic analysis of the 'Sial Lu' as an art form is its use as symbols in Logos. I want to take semiology in Logos chiefly because, firstly, in the context of Mizoram, there has never been a semiotic or formal analysis in its artistic terms which is in part, modernity in itself. Secondly, Modernity of it can

be asserted as they are digitally created which suggests the very essence of modernity achieved through globalisation. Thirdly, one tries to impose meanings and inscribe the very function and purposes of the institution which uses such symbols. Fourthly, as some of the organization which I am a part of uses the same symbols- of *Siallu* in its logos, I want to document and made a critical analysis which I believe, will be helpful in realization of the very function of its existence and implies meaningful intervention through it.

Logos as an art form in the context of Mizoram achieved its modernity in such a way that it differ from preceding forms of social order in respect of their dynamism which can be best understood if one realises the condition of Art scenario in Mizoram. In an attempt to understand how most practicing artists from Mizoram perceived logo as art, a semi-research questions was asked to a handful of these practising *Mizo* artists. The question was simple, most of the reply suggested otherwise. Logos were not considered as 'real art' by the polled audience. This is a surprising result as the influences of global exposure are so apparent in the works of art displayed by most of these artists; while at the same time their reaction to the new and upcoming art form, ie. Digital works, seems almost archaic and formalist.

Intervention: Placing *Sial Lu* in the Modern Institution:

MADS (Mizoram Art Development Society) is the only active society or organisation in the field of Art in Mizoram which was created and formed as a Government initiated society in 2012 under the Information and Public Relation (I&PR) Department. It functions as a society which aims at developing the artistic sensibilities and talents by holding workshops and seminars annually and giving away funds for exhibitions in and out Mizoram. Since its inception, it has created many platforms for Artists by holding annual exhibitions in which every member is free to participate. It has since been acting as the catalyst for production of artworks. The

absence of Government Art Institutions and Art Colleges makes it difficult for the struggling artists of Mizoram to make a sizeable income from their artworks. Artists still find it hard to make ends meet. Many of the Artists make their living partly by doing commercial works and commissioned works. Their work is regarded as low profile by the masses and is often underappreciated. The general awareness and art appreciation is still a matter of great concern. The public reception of art and their understanding of artists leave plenty of room for growth. The social scenario as it stands now doesn't help in any way.The Government initiative of forming the MADS society was a revelation for many a struggling artists. It also opened up avenues for artists to explore their creative abilities which was suppressed by the Bourgeois societyas there is no other alternative if artists want to make a living with his artworks.

It is the logo of this society that I wanted to have a semiotic analysis as it entails some of the concepts truly needed for one's revelation in the society in which art has never been seen as something honourable. It brings about the cultural consciousness that almost died with modernisation: the concept of '*Thangchhuahpa*' which was one of the most important factor in bringing about some of the values that entails the characteristics of a person. The artists soon associate it with a need to achieve and gain honour. According to a conversation I had with one of the designer and an executive committee member of the society, the logo may be perceived as-

> The form and design takes up our ancestor's relief sculptural work of *Lungdawh, Seluphan* suggesting Sculpture, and Brush suggesting Painting. The three *Chhurafarep*[18] (the

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[18] According to a mizo folktale, A man called Chhura once skewered up childrens and smoked them. Although, the representation in the monoliths may not be that of the 'Chhurafarep', one quickly identifies it with popular stories.

figures) suggesting Unity and togetherness. The three *SialLus* suggests the need and struggle in order to '*Thangchhuah*' in Art. The ribbon which bears the Society's name and Year of Establishment takes the design and motifs of a *Ngotekherh (*One of the mizo traditional textiles).

Reminiscence of the *Lungdawh* (monolith) which the *Thangchhuah pa*used to erect in honour of his achievement, it is no surprising thatMADS takes the form of pallete as its logo which calls for *modern Thangchhuah* achievable through artistic interventions as also suggested by a person holding the handle of a brush in contrast to *the Seluphan* on the left which was the traditional order. The dying hope and struggle of the status once held so high, is now a growing hope thanks to MADS. The logo also calls for different artistic practices as suggested by the form of pallete and paint brush suggesting Painting and taking the form of lungdawh, which was a kind of relief sculpture and *seluphan* suggesting Sculpture. The three *Sial Lu* in the middle suggests the very essence of what constitutes being a *Thangchhuahpa*.It calls for struggle and the very essence needed to become a *Thangchhuahpa*.The three figures in the middle are of the same length and size which go against how what was represented in the monoliths. Usually, a *Thangchhuahpa* was depicted relatively large as opposed to other figures that suggests the greatness and exceptionality of the *Thangchhuahpa*. In this case, a call for a joined struggle to achieve modern Thangchhuah must be achieved through unity and equality. The use of *Ngotekherh* is also significant, it is, in its modern use, one of the best example in the use of traditional textiles that has no gender boundary. It is worn and sewn into garments both by males and females unlike many of the traditional textiles which could be worn by only by male or female, *Thangchhuahpa*, Chief or *Pasaltha*, in each case.

Another Logo of an organisation I want to analyse is that of The Delhi Mizo Zirlai Pawl (DMZP), a Delhi Mizo Student's Association in which I am a part of.The Constitution[19] of the Delhi Mizo Student's Association mentions its logo/symbol to constitute A *Sial Lu* and two pens along with its Motto, "Tanrual Hi Chakna" (Unity Is Strength) and Year of Establishment (which is 1959) in a dark blue background.

Although there is no written account of what these elements symbolise, the Pen of course symbolises education, which is the chief aim of the Student's association. What the *Siallu* symbolises here is very difficult to determine. A former leader of this organisation once said[20] it symbolises unity and strength (the motto of the association), whichis the requisite qualityfor any studentcoming to studyhere in the capital. Although this might be an implied and self-imposed meaning, the need to portray one's culture and identity must be the purpose of including *Sial Lu* in the logo.

Intervention: The Critique

We have seen how *Sial Lu* gained an iconography suggesting the status of *Thangchhuah*. It calls for a need to have a cultural consciousness and all the values needed in the struggle to achieve it. Having said these, my critique and problem is with the *Siallu*. It does played an important role in the cultural pasts and the very essence of *Khuangchawi* needed to achieve *Thangchhuah*. The critique here is that it associated with the 'In lama Thangchhuah' which was in reality an achievement not everyone really could achieve. Moreover, it is obvious that the two modes of becoming a

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[19] The Constitution of Delhi MizoZirlai Pawl(DMZP), as circulated in the DMZP Whatsapp Group.
[20] In a facebook comment on a DMZP group.

Thangchhuahpa is taken as one unity. One must never forget that the two modes of becoming the Thangchhuahpa- 'In lama Thangchhuah' and 'Ram lama Thangchhuah' are never the same and the kind of struggle involved in achieving it is quite different. My critique with *Sial* and its association with the '*In lama Thangchhuah*' doesn't stand strong as a symbolic quality encompasses for all as it is also a social class marker, it is at the same time biased which brings about the marginalization of the suppressed and the lower class within the society. '*In lama Thangchhuah'* was never an achievement achievable by all, it is only the well-to-do and relatives of the Chiefs that could really achieve the 'In lama Thangchhuah'. Moreover, *Sial* being a domestic animal, it suggests that one often confines himself at the comfort zoneand often operates within the known and tamed environment.

On the other hand, 'Ram lama Thangchhuah' offers an equal opportunity for every individual and is an appropriate concept. Although hard to achieve, anyone with a determination and passion strong enough can achieve the status through 'Ram lama Thangchhuah' as it provides equal opportunity for every individual. It was a call to the wild, a place no one ever encountered before, A *Pasaltha,* in his hunt for honour ventured into the untamed wild, he is equipped not only with his killing tools but with determination and perseverance. He is also wrapped with humility and patience as the Hunt is not always easy. With years of venturing deep in the wild, he tames the untamed, reaches the impossible and attains the Status. It is not just the status that he aspires to become, with the search for honour, he is driven and equipped withthe much needed values that makes him more a better and honourable person and his exactly is what the *Mizos* need to identify themselves with.

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The Hero in Mizo Folktale

Judy Lalparmawii Khiangte
Ph.D Research Scholar
Department of English, Mizoram University

All over the world we find folk heroes in tales, myths and legends. The name of Hercules, King Arthur, Robin Hood are known commonly over the world by their tales of adventures and heroic deeds. The study of hero myth goes back to at least 1871, when the Victorian anthropologist Edward Tylor argued that many of them follow a uniform plot, or pattern: the hero is exposed at birth, is saved by other humans or animals, and grows up to become a national hero. This has been followed by Austrian scholar Johann George von Hahn and Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp. Not only the structures, but analyzing of the origin, function and subject matter of hero myths have been done by Otto Rank, Joseph Campbell and Lord Raglan to name a few and these studies are spurred by the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Jung (Segal 12-3). Since then hero studies have been made in relations to certain cultures and ethnicity and folklore have provided the ample requisite for such studies.

The typical beginning of a folk/ fairy tale transport listener to another realm of reality. It takes him to the land of the marvelous, the fantastic and initiates him to the realm of valor and bravery, into the world of beautiful maidens and demons. The tale weaves itself around heroes who undertake hazardous journey to obtain objects of their desire. The hero of these tales may be royalty or a person

of humble origins. He may be a brave knight or a helpless orphan. Whoever he may be, the tale takes him to a journey that ultimately transforms the hero forever. This transformation may be physical, social or spiritual. Klapp has stated that "existing studies of hero myths and legends show that heroes tend to conform to a type" (2). Hence, many studies have shown that much of hero myths of various cultures seemed to be composed of stories from a common repertoire, conforming to common features and presenting common motives.

The Mizo folktale comprises of myriad of heroes and heroines and could be classified according to Klapp's classification. There are types of heroes who are very strong, always winning over opponents, and seemingly invincible; there are also hero type known for their wits and outwitting opponents through trick and cleverness. The victory of the clever hero is the perennial triumph of brains over brawns. Then we also have the unpromising hero type, the role of the ugly duckling, the poor and unfortunate, or unknown person who achieves success. The unpromising hero succeeds by some other means than cleverness, usually luck, miraculous assistance or modest toil. These hero types all embark on a journey to perform certain roles as in a quest, feat, contest and test.

The first hero type- the formidable hero could be seen in the tales of *Kungawrhi* and *Thailungi*. Phawthira, the hero rescued Kungawrhi from the Keimi (a being who could transform into a tiger), and after a series of adventure finally married her in the end. Here the hero Phawthira is endowed with good physical attributes aided by bravery and strength. His quest "definable as a prolonged endeavor toward a high goal, usually involving a series of feats, contests, and tests, before final attainment" (Klapp 20) made him conform to the world- view folk hero. This defender/ deliverer hero is found all over the world in tales and real life. According to

Rohrich, the inner realities of folktale are made sharply visible by the polar oppositions between characters and their contrasting attributes (210). So one of the most common tensions depicted is from the social realm, the nobody becoming a hero or accumulating wealth in the end. Rohrich brings us to consider the finer nuances of this situation: the social differentiation comes as a challenge, as an artistic tension to move the story, but the hero must prove himself before becoming rich. He must actually give and sacrifice and only then shall he gain. "All success in folktale is connected to tests of worth" (212), and these tales may be of different kind, but always based in reality. The hero sometimes win with the help of supernatural (as in the case with Phawthira here), which does not point to his weakness, but the support that he has from the supernatural is proof of his righteousness. *Pathian Nupa* (heavenly couple) considers Phawthira worthy to be rescued from the clutches of the antagonist Keimi. The question of reality in this Mizo folktale is not in the matter of the brute forces of the hero, the supernatural elements or the fantastic quest or the reward. Instead its main motif is the representation of reality symbolically through the fearlessness, which leads to human refinement and maturation. The promise of reward too is symbolic for the folk hero as Rohrich has rightly commented,

> The folktale's use of marriage to reward great deeds or accomplishment of difficult tests corresponds to the trials required to attain manhood in tribal societies. Before a young man may marry in these societies, he must prove himself at hunting or at war; he must bag a certain animal or kill a certain number of enemies. These tasks the suitor must undergo embody a basic folk idea: A woman can, and must, set conditions before she gives herself away; a man must prove his masculinity to the woman, he must be capable of bringing offerings even if he risks losing his life (96).

The story of *Thailungi* depicts another adventure of the hero adventuring alone to rescue his sister. Unlike the hero Phawthira, he is just a boy and knows nothing about combating opponents. But what these heroes share as a similar trait is the bravery and the will to finish their quests. The young boy is formidable and the unknown world does not prevent him from accomplishing what he seeks. Phawthira may defeat his enemies by combat, violence and magic, while Thailungi's brother achieve his quest by doing the impossible three tasks put forth in the three encounters. The sequence of events- departure from home to a journey and then attaining the designation - is uniform in these tales. The reward in *Thailungi* story is the unification of the siblings, not marriage as in *Kungawrhi*. In his classification of folktale, Stith Thompson has said that of all the qualities which bring about universal admiration for a character in fiction, none is more compelling than faithfulness. Thus he has classed "faithfulness" as one of the important motifs of folktale and the quests of such heroes are found throughout the European continent, the British Isles and in Iceland (107-113).

These tales seem to echo and reinforce the dominant beliefs and social psyche of the Mizos which is highly patriarchal. The adventures taken by the male to achieve their destination involve going out in the open unknown world, tackling oppositions and rescuing captured maidens. Likewise, mostly this type of tale (of adventures and quests) involves the male's journey even though the title denotes the name of the rescued women. Societal roles which demand the male to work and venture into the wild while the women are expected to be at home in the Mizo society is reflected here. Hence, when the woman is displaced from her role, it is the task of the male to 'rescue' her and bring her back to her familiar place. The trials and adversaries met by the male hero conclude his male prowess, the asset that society deemed a must in a male.

The folktale serves to stabilize the common law, values and norms, but at the same time challenging, overcoming and subverting them. This is why this type of hero cross borders as they are basically the representatives of patriarchal dominancy, preservation of rules, domestic life and public spheres as well as being the symbols of allegorical figures of courage, bravery, honesty and justice. The details of the inner reality are the reasons "we get inner satisfaction from the folktale" (214). Folktale is not religious in the sense of a particular religion, but deals with religious ideals as ethical questions. "The folktale is religious in the broadest sense, and it is no coincidence that collectors frequently claim that the guardians of folk tradition are usually pious people" (214). In Rohrich's opinion, "human fate is the theme everywhere, even if the events are completely fantastic … the folktale's content is always general reality, timeless events that everyone has experienced or can experience" (215). The folktales as a genre is so focused on the fate of humans that "everything in the story relates to people, thus folktales do not depict the landscape and the nature" (214).

Likewise in the Mizo tales of *Liandova te Unau* and *Mauruangi* a common motif is present. These are the type of folktale heroes who are the underdogs and the mistreated, and who finally achieve their happy endings after series of events. However, unlike the first hero type, these heroes presented in the tales are not superior physically, but passive and could be classed under the unpromising heroes. Liandova and his brother as well as Mauruangi are orphans, mistreated and bullied by society (by the village people in Liandova's tale, and in the case of Mauruangi, by her step-mother and step-sister).

It is interesting that the plight of orphans could be imagined from the folktale, and what the folktale presented is not favorable. It is of the assumption that being a poor tribal society, the Mizo

people could hardly afford an extra mouth to feed, hence the orphans are left to their own fate, without familial protection and the reason why the step-parents always seemed to favor their own children, mistreating and abandoning their step- children as they imply extra weight to their economic condition. The orphan tale is very common in all parts of the world. The structure and motif too are similar in many instances. The orphan tale usually begins with the death of one or both parents or the expulsion of the child from the parent's home. The tales themselves are many and varied, but they share as their central core the journey and the impossible tasks that the orphan must accomplish along the way to happiness. According to Max Luthi, "The blind, the disinherited, the youngest child, the orphan, the lost – these are the true heroes of folktale, for they are isolated and are thus freer than anyone else to engage in what is truly essential" (65). In many folktales, the hero is outcast from those around him because of social status, poverty or a deformity. This isolation is far from being unique but is reflected in tales from across many cultures. The orphan is the quintessential outcast, operates in isolation, and thus makes the perfect hero. Similar to the first hero type, the orphan (the isolated hero) receives gifts. Miracles are at the service of these folktale heroes, not that they seek for it but are at their disposal when needed. The story of *Liandova te Unau* includes wisdom and care from a kind old magical woman while Mauruangi receives care from her enchanted deceased mother. However, the central representative of isolation and universal interconnection in the folktale is the hero. While all figures depicted in the folktale, objects as well as persons, are isolated and capable of entering into any kind of relationship (64), the tale shows the narrow path taken by the hero. It shows him to us as he moves along in isolation, and to him (the hero), the tasks, torments, difficulties and dangers that confront him is nothing but opportunities toward his fate.

The orphans in these Mizo tales underwent obstacles and alienation from society. They are outcasts in the open world and have to fend for themselves. The isolation and alienation of the orphans according to Kimball represents the "eternal Other" (2). For every culture, the orphan tale depicts a reflection of man's inner fear and abandonment, as well as striving for an identity, a home to find oneself. The way in which folktale places demands on the hero reflects attainment of maturity for an individual as Kimball has stated,

Orphans are a tangible reflection of the fear of abandonment that all human experience. Orphans are outcasts, separated because they have no connection to the familial structure which helps define the individual. This outcast state is not caused by any actions of their own but because of their difference from the 'normal' pattern established by society. Orphans are the reminder that the possibility of utter undesired solitude exists for any human beings (2).

The next hero type is the clever hero, a type somehow different from the previous hero types. He may be a trickster or a rogue outwitting his opponents with a trick or either vanquishes or escapes from a formidable opponent by a ruse (Klapp 20). However, there is a narrow gap between the definition of clever hero and trickster tales as Carroll has commented, that modern scholars tend to use an extremely broad definition of the term trickster itself, in that they tend to apply this term to any character who makes extensive use of deceits. Although such a broad definition does lead to the conclusion that tricksters are ubiquitous, it does so at the expense of blurring together at least two- character types that are actually quite distinct. What Klapp called the 'clever hero' is a character who consistently outwits stronger opponents, where 'stronger' can refer to physical strength or power or both, while a trickster's activity is oriented toward the gratification of his enormous appetites for

food or sex, and sometimes being a buffoon for his stupid actions (3). So the next study will be in accordance with Klapp's "clever hero", the type that outsmart their opponents and are rewarded for their intelligence and wits. For this type, the Mizo tale of *Belbingtea* and *Chemteii* seems fitting.

The form and nature of these tales are similar with other culture over the world. Unlike the first hero type (the formidable hero), these heroes do not rely on their physical strength but on their wits, and sometimes with help from outside through their journey or adventure; nor are these heroes passive and meek like the second hero type (the underdog hero). They are distinct in their treatment of their oppressors or opponents. However, the signification of their quests and adventure remains all the same. The journey taken by the heroes are journey of self- discovery. But unlike the orphan tale, here the hero (as in *Belbingtea*) left the comfort of his home to go on an adventure and returned home with wealth and fame. He left for the north one day to attack another clan and was aided by talking animals to defeat their chief. Next he slept in the cave of demons whom he outsmarted with his wits and the frightened demons ran for their lives. And in the cave lies the wealth of the demons which Belbingtea happily took home, being richer and popular more than before. At the very beginning, the hero is displaced from his own domain and is thrown into the wilderness. Free from the constraints of moral and ethical codes of social and cultural domain, wilderness becomes a site for self-awareness and self- realization (Kaushal 68). The hero here overpowers the forces that rule over the unknown through common sense, wit and cunning. The success of his quest lies precisely in his ability to maneuver, manipulate and negotiate his position. But this is a tale of a hero, who desires to return, and is anxious to be reincorporated in his own society. These encounters with the outside forces fetch him

the status of a hero upon his return (69). On the other hand, the tale of *Chemteii* is situated not in the wilderness but in their village. Due to a dispute between her father and uncle, the chief was approached for justice. The chief on the other hand imposed difficult and tricky questions/ riddles for the brothers, which Chemteii managed to provide answers for her father each and every time. Impressed with her cleverness, the chief eventually married her. The contest happens within the village itself thus the heroine does not need to venture out for a journey. Her journey lies within the realms of the four walls of the chief to prove her worth. Like Belbingtea, Chemteii succeeded in proving her worth through common sense and wit and is rewarded through marriage. Rohrich has said that "people in the folktale often marry for practical reason" (95) where we find the chief marrying Chemteii for her wits and not love. Rohrich also went on to say that 'a peasant must take economic factors into account when choosing a wife who will provide important help with the work" (96). Interpretation of the tales once again takes us to the initiation rights for men and women to prove maturity and finding their place in the world. The man proves himself by venturing into the unknown and accumulating fortune and return home a changed man; the woman proves herself worthy to be the chief's wife through her cleverness and attain her rightful place near the chief. The search is completed.

The clever hero has two distinct characters as been mentioned before, and the latter is the trickster who is even hailed as culture hero in many cultures. According to Thompson, the characters of a trickster are inconsistent. Parts are the result of his stupidity, and about an equal number show him overcoming his enemies through cleverness. And such a trickster may appear in three different roles: the beneficent culture hero, the clever deceiver, or the numbskull, and the series of adventures are likely to be a succession of clever

tricks and foolish mishaps (319). There is a dual characteristic attributed to the culture hero/ trickster and because of that he may be "a bringer of culture" (Bacwaden 332) because he took part in the creation myths, he has a role in creating the world as nearly all mythologies tell of the way in which various experiences of the Culture Hero result in changes of the contour of the land, the creation of mountains, rivers and lakes. Thus there are frequent stories of the origins of certain mountains or some other features of nature because of the adventure of the culture hero. Likewise, nearly everywhere one can hear stories of marking on rocks which have been left by the culture hero in his wanderings (Thompson 310-13). The other characteristic is the trickster, the ambiguous and fascinating figure, a cruel lecherous cheat, an epitome of disorder but nevertheless the culture bringer also. He appears in many guises, both animal and human (Campbell 273). Trickster is "at one and the same time, creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes and is always duped himself"' (Abrahams 161). The complexity of this character has gained attention from scholars and attempts have been made to explain the merging of the paradoxical nature of the trickster/ culture hero.

In the Mizo fokltale, one such figure stood out by the name of Chhurbura. Myriads stories of Chhurbura existed which either proves his stupidity or his cleverness. One of the most favourable characters in Mizo folklore, Chhura as lovingly called was even been claimed to exist. The adventure of Chhura is one of the earliest folktale told to children and one that leaves a lasting impression till adulthood because of its humour and silliness.

Chhurbura could be considered a culture hero by the fact that he was regarded responsible in shaping the world, by beating and hitting the solid earth with his big stone club, leveling parts of it, thereby creating hills, mountains, plains and valleys. According to

this myth, he was responsible for giving humans an inhabitable land. Like the characteristic of a pure culture hero, with supernatural element, he could be regarded as a god.

> Culture heroes and tricksters are paradoxical. They bring the gifts of civilization, and yet they break every taboo and shatter every moral boundary that civilization sets up. While bearing the gifts of fire, and with it reason and enlightenment, they represent as well the principles of inevitable chaos, disorder and the irrational (Bacwaden 338).

Likewise most of Chhura's identity is formulated on the trickster category, producing humour either in his stupidity or his cleverness. From these adventures of the trickster, the dual characteristic is the expression of ambiguity and paradox of a confusion of all customary categories. The existence of human beings is confined with needs, both positive and negative. Social restriction and laws are made to curb the inner gratifications of men's desire. Hence, the trickster tale express what human are capable of- stupid, comic, cruel, cunning as well as witty and clever. According to Abrahams,

> The clown or trickster epitomizes the paradox of the human condition and exploits the incongruity that we are creatures of the earth in that we have need of clothing and spiritual ideals to clothe our nakedness, of money, and of language – of human institutions. Further he embodies the fundamental contradiction of our existence: the contradiction between the individual and society, between freedom and constraint (160- 61).

From this point of view the culture hero is the source of needs for mankind, while the trickster represents the contradicting nature of mankind itself. The early Mizo society is altruistic in character and thus attributes such nature at a high esteem. So psychologically,

the tales of Chhurbura could represent the suppression of the other egoistic and self- centered nature. Chhura does whatever needed to satisfy his desires using wit ends and sometimes cruelty to achieve his wants, which is opposite to the morality preached in the Mizo culture, be it the acquisition of wealth/ power or fulfilling his sexual desires. Through the trickery, that is negation and violation of his customs, Chhura condemns himself to contingency and unpredictability. It could also be the symbol of representing the generative situation of ambivalence and contradictions that the basis of culture engenders as Abrahams has stated that the trickster figure is, "created in response to a present and constant perception of opposition, of difference essential to human constructs"(164). The significance lies in the projection of the duality- god and human, life and death, good and evil, law and chaos. Even when some of Chhura's bravery and wit are accepted, and himself hailed as a pure culture hero because of his boon towards humanity, it is his comic side that stands out, not pure stupidity, which makes Chhura merely seem less god- like and more human. The duality runs throughout the tales of this culture hero/ trickster and it may be because of this that they are central and popular in every culture's folklore. Recognition of these made people embrace the trickster as their reality is more reflected prominently in this ambiguous character as Zama has commented in her "re-reading" of Chhura tales,

> So Chhura as trickster and clever hero, is seen as unbeatable in display of wit, resourcefulness, deceit, impudence and sense of humour. One wonders how he got away with it all. Values are rearranged in these tales and we see crime becoming comedy and being "wronged" means being made a fool of. As the culprit he gets away lightly. The key to this immunity seems to be not a callous indifference to moral values on the

part of the observer, but that people love a good joke, even when it is on them – occasionally. We may further venture to state that like other tricksters, Chhura too fulfils, and serves specific psychic need. He evidently provides more than comedy, for any fool can do this. A more important function seems to be to provide a release valve for all the anti- social desires repressed by men who tell and listen to such tales, be it greed, avariciousness or forbidden sexual desires. His actions represent a way of getting around, or evading social taboos and other restrictions without actually upsetting the social order. In this manner, tricksters like Chhura help man to expunge the pressures that might otherwise destroy both his ordered world and himself. The trickster takes on what we would in reality shirk from, yet applaud, for we see a reflection of our dark side in him (213).

From all these kinds of folk heroes, the rivalries and the struggle of the hero in folktale emphasized the hero quest on the transformation of his physical being, either physically or in awakening his inner self. Each hero begins his journey alone, and each has a purpose; each arrives at his destination through different resolutions. For some it is an adventurous journey, for others it is a tale of suffering and for some it is a journey towards self-realization. These are journeys which all human kind will undertake during our lifetime. The reason for the presence of vast array of hero tales in every culture have been aptly put forwarded by Seal for,

They represent our own fears and insecurities and provide a vicarious expression of how we would like to be able to handle our own problems, both personal and communal. It matters not whether folk heroes are portrayed as lords and ladies or as humble peasants or whether their victories are against serpents, ogres, or

other monsters. Beneath the superficialities of character, plot, and story are the deep global structures of tale and ballad, the recurring motifs of conflict and confrontation. Tellers of tales and singers of songs select from these ancient motif menus to combine and recombine them into stories that are ever- changing in response to new and different circumstances yet remain powerfully consistent across centuries, continents, and culture (Seal & White xxvi).

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The Dormitory system of the Minyong of Arunachal Pradesh

Nirupoma Kardong
Research Scholar, Department of Folklore Research
Gauhati University, Guwahati – 781014, Assam

Abstract

Arunachal Pradesh known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), is the homeland of a large number of tribes with distinctive identities spread over nineteen districts. The state is also known for its cultural diversity. The Minyong is a sub tribe of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. The tribe mostly inhabits in East, West and Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Minyongs, like other Adi tribes of the Himalayan region have traditional institutions, which is called dere has been continuing from time immemorial. This paper deals with the importance of dere (Dormitories), it's certain rules and how it plays an important role among the Adi Minyongs society. Both primary as well as secondary data are collected for this study.

Key words: Arunachal Pradesh, Adi, Minyong and dere.

Introduction:

The traditional institution, dormitory is one of the most important social institution found among the tribal people across the world. In India such institution is found among the tribes of east, north east, south-western and central India. In North east India, a good number of tribes are reported to have dormitories, such as, Naga, Kukis, Garos, etc. (Gurdon 1914). Roy (1915)

has reported the presence of dormitories, *Jonkherpa* for boys and *Palerpa* for girls, among the Oraons of Chota Nagpur. (Guha 1964) *Ghotul* of the Murias, *Morung* of the Nagas and *Moshup* of the Adis. Dormitories have some common features and they reflect various features which are culture specific. Elwin (1991) reported that the *Lynngam* of the Khasi Hills were having male dormitory which is not found among the other sections of Khasis of Meghalaya

Mill's (1926) description of the tribes of North East India was followed by Elwin's (1959) elaborate study on the tribal people of Arunachal and Nagaland. Haimendorf (1962) has reported the dormitory known as *Patang* among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh. Sachin Roy's (1966) comprehensive report on the Adis (padam and Minyongs) of Arunachal Pradesh establishes the vital roles played by youth dormitories *dere* (for boys) and *rasheng* (for girls). He mentions the function of youth dormitories as "an effective economic organization, a usual seminary for training young in their social and other duties and an institution for magico-religious observances". Lowie (1920) has depicted the important functions of youth organizations and age-grade systems of different tribal people. Haddon (1924) surveyed several tribes of India and described the functions of the dormitory as the central spot in the socials.

In Arunachal Pradesh, traditional institutions play an important role in the life of the Adis, Wanchos and Noctes. Among the Tangsas, Apatani, Singphos, and Khamptis has completely vanished. Each tribe called in different term to similar institutions. Again the institution is called by different names by the different sub- groups of the Adis. The Minyongs call it *dere,* the Padams term it *moshup,* the Milangs and other allied groups called the institution as *ngaptek* and among others the Boris and Ashings call it *bango*.

This paper concentrates on the dormitories of the Minyongs focusing on the importance of Dormitory, it's certain rules and how it plays an important role among the Minyongs society. The study is based on the field work done in Raani, Oyan, Balek and Todang village in the East Siang district of Siang valley and various publications based on the Minyongs.

It was assumed that, rapid development, urbanization, education and various activities etc. have played an influential role in changing the functioning of traditional dormitory in the state. The dormitories are consequently disappearing in the present day. Scholars like Haimendorf (1982), Roy (1987) and Majumdar (1985) show that, the dormitories in North East India have been are replaced by modern youth clubs and unions.

Arunachal Pradesh:

Home to indigenous peoples Arunachal Pradesh is the state where almost 110 sub tribes and 26 major ethnic indigenous groups inhabit (People of India survey, ASI, 1997). Arunachal Pradesh is a hill state in the lap of the Great Himalayan mountain range. This region was declared as Union Territory in January 20, 1972 and emerged as a full-fledged state from 1987 was earlier called as NEFA. Being the home of many different indigenous communities, Arunachal Pradesh is known to be one of the magnificent multilingual tribal areas of the world and make Arunachal Pradesh vivaciously vibrant in the realms of their different culture. The whole state is covered with the eastern Himalayas and borders are Tibet and China on the north, Burma on east and Bhutan on the west and Assam in the south. The East Siang is situated between $27^{\circ}\,43^{\circ}$ and $29^{\circ}\,20^{\circ}$ north latitudes and $94^{\circ}\,42^{\circ}$ and $95^{\circ}\,35^{\circ}$ east latitudes.

The Minyong:

The Adi tribe, like other major tribes, is divided into two sub-groups; Padam Minyong group and Gallong group, which are in turn divided into various sub-tribes. They are concentrated over the Siang districts and a part of the land between the Siang and the Yamne river of Arunachal Pradesh. The Adi tribes are known for their amiable and simple nature. The way they carry out the job of administering people, depict their democratic nature. Each community has a mother village and it comprises a number of villages. There are a good number of sub-tribes under the Adi and most of the sub tribes have their distinct language and culture.

The Minyongs who constitute the core of the study, inhabits the east Siang district. Borgohain (1995, 3) writes," They are strong and courageous people mentioned in the history of British-Adi relation and known as one of the most progressive tribes having a great village solidarity". The Minyong belong to the Mongoloid stock. The Minyong language comes under the Tibeto Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. The Minyongs is a patrilineal tribe. The Minyong live in pile houses constructed with bamboo and wood. The Minyongs are agriculturalist and their day to day life is dependent on jhum cultivation. Beside jhuming, they also practice gathering, fishing, hunting and domestication of animal. Minyongs girls are expert in weaving. Local disputes are generally solved through a social council (*kebang*) as per the customary rule in practices. Rice is their staple food and they consume home made country liquor called *Apong*. Most of their rituals and festivals are integrally attached to 16 cultivations.

Dere:

(Guha, 1953, 83) "There are two undying principles on which the institution (*dere*) is built, namely the creating of habit of discipline among the children in their formative stage of life and in developing

a spirit of co-operation and collaboration so that the tribe can act as a unit, and fissiparous tendencies within the body politics of the tribe may have very little room for growth". Sachin Roy's (1966) comprehensive report on the Adis (Padam-Minyongs) of Arunachal Pradesh establishes the vital roles played by youth dormitories. The dormitory is usually constructed in the centre of the village from where different approaches to it can be watched and guarded. "The Minyongs society has mainly three types of dormitories – for the boys it is called *Dere* and for girls it is called *Rasheng* and *Retek* for the old person" (Srivastava, 1990, 111). Dormitory is a house for the unmarried boys which are constructed by the villagers. The bachelor dormitory is a very important institution in Minyong society. It is not only a training centre for all practical purposes but also the centre and upholder of cultural traits. Like some other tribes of Northeast India, the Minyongs too have dormitory systems for young males, females and old man, called "*Dere*", "*rasheng*" and "*retek*" respectively. These social institutions play an important role in developing the youth to responsible human beings by teaching them about discipline, co-operation, culture and customs. More importantly, as scholar Col. Ved Prakash observes, "It is here that they are initiated into secrets and romances of life". The boys from different dormitory are permitted to visit *rasheng*; and the courtship often leads to happier alliance. A boy or girl is free to choose a partner for life (Srivastava, 1990). The dormitory is usually constructed in the centre of the village from where different approaches to it can be watched and guarded. There are many different *merom* in the dormitory according to clan wise in some villages. Roy observed "The village with huge populations have more then one merom. Each member belong to a particular *merom* and sleeps in it" (1966, 195). The dormitory provides a place to learn the art of living in an informal manner. They believe that this system develops the spirit of co-operation, mutual respect and

adjustment and fellow feeling among the children. The children of ten years and above can become member of the dormitory. Dormitory is used as a sleeping house by all young men from the age of 10 till they take wives to their homes. The dormitory is also used for holding different types of feasts, festivals and meetings, especially those of the kebang.

The Minyongs have a dormitory for girls called *"rasheng"*. *Rasheng* is comparatively a small and is constructed in the corner of the village. It is in the *rasheng* that the girls choose their husband. A girl also learned weaving in *rasheng*. A girl retires from *rasheng* after she gets married and goes to live with her husband. A senior girl becomes the in charge of this house. During the day time it is generally vacant but at night spinning and weaving is carried out here. It is a small comparative to *dere* with only one square room with a fireplace in the centre, where the adolescent and unmarried girls of the village sleep in night and return to their respective houses early in the morning.

Retek is another institution for old man found in the Minyong village. It is an individual dormitory made attached with the house. Here they do other small work which require less time like making basket, fishing traps, bow and arrow.

The Minyong celebrate their prime festival, *Solung and Dorung* (the hunting festival), between in the first week of September and January every year in the dormitory. In *Dorung* festival the hunters stay over night in *dere* before going for hunting and make necessary arrangement. After return from hunting the hunted animals were kept in the dormitory for whole night and next day all the hunters and the village elders gather in the dormitory and distribute the meat among themselves and the villagers. *Solung* is a harvest festival performed after the sowing of seeds and

transplantation, to seek for future bumper crops. *Ponung* songs and dances are performed during the festival whole night in *dere*.

Culture of the Minyongs and Dormitories:

Dormitories play an important role among the Minyong and certain rules are observed. There is no formal initiation ceremony to admit the boys into the dormitory. A male can visit the dormitory of a female, although he is not allowed to stay overnight. At times, guardians will have to be around to guide the youngsters. In the *dere* and *rasheng* the young are under the supervision of a senior and experienced boy and a girl respectively who maintain the discipline and are empowered to punish any defaulter. For girls, *rasheng* is the training institution for spinning, weaving, dancing, singing and discipline. Young boys from different dormitory come and join the girls in the *rasheng* at night and selected mates. In the Minyong society marriage succeed with the selection of a life partner by the boys and the girls during their stay in the *dere* and *rasheng*. During some festivals, girls are allowed to dance inside the boy dormitory. This *rasheng* is purely secular in nature and has no religious significance. The dormitory has its advisory board comprising of the old and experience people of the village. The board advised the young people on the matters of community life, hunting, fishing, etc. The old man and members of the village come to dormitory in day time together and gossip.

Festivals and dances in the Dormitories:

The fairs and festivals of the Minyong tribe reflect their rich culture and heritage. Their main festivals are Aaran, Dorung Etor and Solung. Songs and dances are performed, huge feasts are hosted, offering are made to different deities on various occasions all through the year. The Minyongs tribes are very fond of dances. They perform group dances. Popular dances are the *Ponung*, *Delong*, *Yakjong* and *Tapu* dances. The Minyong celebrate a

number of festivals, in particular *Solung*, in first week of September for five day and *Dorung* after harvesting in third week of January. The *solung* dance is performed in group lead by a main singer (Miri). The *solung* dance and song is called *ponung* and this *Ponung* songs and dances are performed during the festival at night till morning for five days. It is a harvest festival performed after the sowing of seeds and transplantation, to seek for future bumper crops.

The *Tapu* dance is called War Dance, this dances vigorously re-enact the actions of war, its glory in details and the triumphant cries of the warriors. The *Tapu* dance is also performed in the dormitory at night. These dances have led to certain forms of dancing which jointly narrate a story. The dancers are male, they wear traditional costume like coat, war helmate, sword, etc. and this dance is performed for one night in *dorung* festival after meal.

Roles of the Dormitory:

The traditional socio-cultural, political, economic and religious life of the Minyong people is very much shaped by the code and conducts the dormitory. It is the center of Minyong tradition and culture. The roles of the dormitories, which are present in the area till recent past, were very much important in the socio-cultural and economic life of the people. The origin of the dormitory among the Minyong is attached with several mythologies. The dormitories were used as the sleeping house by the youngsters of the village. Usually when a boys attaining ten years he can be a member of the dormitory till his marriage. The younger members have to obey the elders in the dormitory. The elders used to teach them the art of using bow and arrow, the skill of hunting and war fare. At night some elders narrates myths and folktales while other teach folk songs and dances. Dormitory is directly related to village protection, group work including hunting, fishing, teaching of art and craft to the new

generations. Thus, the younger people learn a major part of socio-cultural life in the dormitories. The vital role of the dormitory life was of the sexual life and the art of love making. It gives an opportunity to young unmarried boys and girls for courtship prior to selecting a life partner. The Guests and visitors are also entertained here and the kebang are held in dormitory.

Continuity and Change:

The dormitory is still found in every Adi village like any other Minyong village in Arunachal Pradesh. The institution of *Dere* (dormitory) is still playing the crucial role in various aspects of the Minyong culture. The dormitory is maintained by the local village people in every Minyong village. The village and community festivals, rituals, kebang are still held in the dormitory. In the celebration of the festivals, rituals, ceremonies, kebang the dormitory plays the most important role. However, with the changing currents of time, some changes and innovations have come in the structure and function of the dormitory. The size of the dormitory is reduced and the *merom* is decreased in the present day even though the village is largest village and inhabitant of various clans.

There are various changes found in the dormitory from past. The building structure of dormitory is changed. The participation and gathering of people in the dormitory are also decreasing in the present day. Earlier Dere was made of Bamboo and wood and other local materials like thatch. Now it is made of concrete with brick, C.I. sheet, and in small size. The *rasheng* bachelor (dormitory for unmarried girls) and *retak* (dormitory for old people) is almost vanished in the present day in the Minyong society. Still in every Minyong villages dormitory are found with *merom* (hearth) and in the extreme left side of the dormitory the ordeal or oaths place called *Bango* is built. The used of *bango* is very much important in kebang in proving once innocent. This reveals the

persistence of traditional practices in the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it is evident that both boys and girls dormitories provide lifeline of the Minyongs. These are the institutions trough which socialization takes place and as a result people become aware of the various norms and values of their society. Thus the *dere* and *rasheng* of the Minyongs are the central institution where the boys and girls receive practical training in traditional mode of life. It works as a centre of traditional knowledge like making bow and arrow, fish trap etc. and transmission of such indigenous knowledge to the younger generations. The sharing of collective responsibilities are discussed in the dormitory the village level, regarding the agriculture, religion, traditional polity etc. thus dormitory play a very crucial role. However, like many other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh the Minyongs are also passing through the process of transition. And as a result of such vibrant and dominant traditional institution is at the crossroads. Undoubtedly emergence of Christianity is one of the main factors but there are many other factors too like urbanization, education, etc. which have cumulatively remained responsible for such an emerging reality. On the issue of the relevance of *dere*, *rasheng* and *retak* today there is no doubt, but it is however difficult to predict about their future.

Notes:
Interviewed, Tamuk, T, Raani Village, 28.12.2015
Interviewed, Jamoh, T, Raani Village, 28.12.2015

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Psychological study of the Legendary character Pawngvina

Lalrindiki T.Fanai
Associate Professor, Deptt. of English,
Mizoram University

Abstract

Pawngvina is a well known Mizo legendary character for his hot-temperament. His personality to this day denotes uncontrollable anger accompanied with abuses and violence. In the Mizo society, the name Pawngvina refers to one who is hot-tempered and violent. This article is an attempt to study the psychological aspect of the legendary character Pawngvina for which some of the basic psychoanalytic theories are used in order to highlight the character's psychology. The role of the id – the unconscious, which engages a person's deepest recess, is dynamic but at the same time it is ignored or either forgotten, and the role of the ego that alters a person's id in order to present one's desire to a socially acceptable form is studied as this aspect denotes the workings of the human psyche.

Keywords: anger, id, ego, repressed,

Pawngvina gives various instances of the workings of the id as he portrays his severe temperament. Psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Jaque Lacan opine that he unconscious which is dynamic controls a person's mental state and makes the person unaware of certain situations or instances that cause his anger. The following

passage from *The Legend of Pawngvina* shows Pawngvina in his state of anger:

> Mizo men in the past used to carry fire-wood in a bundle over their shoulder and would drop the bundle in the court-yard of the house. If dogs or chickens were around, they would first them to avoid hurting them. Pawngvina would never do it. He would just drop his bundle sometimes leaving a dog limping away in pain. (161)

The passage denotes that Pawngvina in his fatigue from work seems to depict an individual who is unconscious of his surroundings and though he is physically present, yet he is mentally absent in the situation as the deeper recess of his mental activity is in a latent condition. In *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory* (2006), Rob Lapsley in his critical essay, "Psychoanalytic Criticism" expresses:

> Not only is there an unconscious, a part of the mind to which we have no conscious access, but unconscious irrational forces inform our thought and behaviour in ways of which we are unaware. We know not what we do. (67)

The above passage is applicable to Pawngvina and his state of unawareness of the injustice that he has performed on the poor dog in his state of anger. He is mentally unable to present himself to his present situation as he has no command over his unconsciousness- the id. This may be the reason for which he is unable to pay attention to his natural surroundings and the reason to why the bundle is dropped on the poor dog that limps away. Yet the information of the sight is related to the mind by the consciousness – the ego, which often results in unprofitable mindless activities such as 'leaving the dog limping away'. Pawngvina seems to re-live the incident of his fatigue that causes his uncontrollable anger

and violent actions. The deepest desires, conflicts, inexpressible fears, and past experiences are contained by the unconscious which is well depicted by Pawngvina. *The Legend of Pawngvina* in the following passage states:

> Once in the valley of Saikhua on the banks of the Tiau River, a "tumpang" was sighted and the villagers wounded it. A wounded animal was (is) considered ferocious. No one dared to go near it. Pawngvina was asked by the villagers to find the wounded animal and kill it. At such times, what Pawngvina would do was to work himself up to anger and muster up his courage. He was able to kill the animal through this strategy. (161)

Pawngvina's uncontrollable anger and violent actions are often his sources of courage. In order to counter attack the ferocious wounded animal, Pawngvina summons his anger and when his anger reaches an uncontrollable point, he becomes fearless and he is able to kill the "tumpang". In the preceding passage Pawngvina uses his manifest anger to kill the wounded "tumpang". It is amazing how his anger can cause both pleasure and pain: pain to the wounded "tumpang" that is killed and pleasure to the villagers who are delighted at the death of the animal that has haunted the village. Pawngvina thus builds up his anger to achieve the master plan created by his ego and he catches his prey unaware.

Further, in Dungtlang village Pawngvina uses his anger to chase away a tiger as denoted in the following passage from *The Legend of Pawngvina*:

> A tiger killed one of the villagers named Lianruma. The tiger would not let go off the body and sat on it. Many attempts were made by the villagers to somehow make the tiger move away from the body but failed. This broke Pawngvina's

patience. In anger he started ranting, cursing, yelling and finally the very volume of the sound of his anger frightened the tiger and it ran away. (161)

The passage shows how Pawngvina exercises his ego in his state of anger. Pawngvina's ego seems to alter the desires of his id and presents his desire in a socially acceptable form; his anger that chases the tiger away. In the given passage, one is again confronted by the workings of the unconscious which is the latent content but repressed, and at the same time it surfaces when it is least expected; in the form of anger and the "ranting, cursing, yelling and finally the very volume of the sound of his anger…". Rob Lapsley's comment of Freud's theory on the ego in "Psychoanalytic Criticism"; states:

It has to find a form of expression acceptable to the mind's censor: what Freud, at this juncture, called the ego. (67)

Pawngvina's excited state of anger seems to be true to what Lapsley has commented. The intense anger that he builds up is directed towards the tiger and he is able to scare and chase the tiger away. He thus manages to bring peace and calm to his community and his violent anger becomes acceptable to the people around him. Further, Lapsley in "Psychoanalytic Criticism" states:

The repressed always returns. This is most evident in slips of the tongue. In the business of living people often say something other than what they intend. (68)

For Pawngvina, the repressed is often evident in slips of the tongue, and it occurs in the form of meaningless utterances and repetitions that is stated in *The Legend of Pawngvina*:

"Hei ha, hui ha!" is a sound uttered by the Mizo when they are exhausted in order to ease the tiredness. But Pawngvina at such times would say "De de dei dei dei!" (160)

The often used expression "Hei ha, hui ha!" to denote fatigue and tiredness is changed to meaningless repetition and utterance of "De de dei dei dei!" by the repressed anger in his self. The story further states:

> Pawngvina was sowing beans and people passing by asked him what he was sowing, he responded normally in the beginning and said "Be chi". But when the same question was asked more than once by others who were also passing by his jhum, he could no longer control his temper and said, "Be chi, be chi, bechi!!" with great irritation.

The repressed that remains dormant in Pawngvina's unconscious realm emerges, to his consciousness; the ego, as he finds a possible acceptable means to express his feelings of anger. The two successions of utterances "Be chi, be chi" means "Bean seeds, bean seeds", but the last utterance "bechi" is meaningless although it depicts Pawngvina's anger and irritation. Pawngvina's manifest anger aptly highlights the workings of his ego at its shrewdest level.

The unconscious realm of the human psyche; the id, seems to be aptly illustrated by Pawngvina when his temperament undergoes extreme conditions; anger, irritation, and other excited conditions. The role of the id – the unconscious, which engages a person's deepest recess, is dynamic but latent and therefore it is aroused when a person is at the extreme point of excited state. Simultaneously, since the id – the unconscious is in a dormant state, it is mostly ignored or either forgotten. Yet this study shows that the id compliments the ego as the role of the ego is to alter a person's id in order to present one's desire to a socially acceptable form and this aspect denotes the workings of the human psyche. Although Pawngvina has been known as a man with extremely hot-

temperament, yet his story is one among the Mizo legends that shows best the workings of the id and the ego.

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Questing Female Space : Toni Morrison's *Paradise*

Dr. K.C.Lalthlamuani
Associate Professor
Department of English, MZU

Abstract

Articulating values and structures of feeling, literary texts are embedded in the social and ideological discourse of the time. Essentially a resistant discourse black writing has been reclaiming an identity and narrative voice has been important to the black writer in countering centuries of dispossession and misrepresentation.

Subjugated by the dominant, the African-American woman has been silenced, undervalued, misrepresented and relegated to a marginal place within American culture and literary tradition in order to maintain its power structure. This paper examines how Toni Morrison in Paradise depicts her female characters as subjects who seek survival. With her emphasis on inner feelings and sense of fulfillment rather than physical appearances, Morrison shows her concern "with celebrating the unique feminine cultural values that black women have developed in spite of and often because of their oppression"(Mori, 30).

Key words: African-American woman, other, space, subjugation, self, survival

I write for black women. We are not addressing the men, as some white female writers do. We are not attacking each other, as both black and white men do. Black women writers look at things in an unforgiving/loving way. They are writing to repossess, re-name, re-own.

(Morrison, in McKay 46)

Edward Said maintains that "Narrative is the representation of power" (qtd in Webster 120). Traditionally, the world of African-American Literature in the United States has been a world of men's literature where male protagonists were portrayed almost exclusively and the complexity and vitality of female experiences fundamentally ignored. Though involved in the development of literature since its inception, no pre-twentieth century African-American women writers are treated as major contributors but have been doubly invisible. Their records "lie buried, unread, infrequently noticed and even more seldom interpreted" (qtd. in Bhongle72). The African-American woman writer chose to make a discourse of her own experiences. According to Barbara Christian "a writer could construct a world of her own, affected by her developing vision, yet tempered by reality and informed by social change".

Toni Morrison belongs to an emergent group of black women writers concerned with the conditions of black women. Morrison along with Alice Walker, Paule Marshall, Audre Lorde, Toni Cade Bambara, Maya Angelou, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni and Gayl Jones directs her gaze on subjects previously marginalized in literature i.e. black women and their worlds. Offering space to explore representation and articulate resistance, her novels view "boundaries and limits…as signifying spaces in which cultural, political and economic power are contested , negotiated or reaffirmed" (Peach, 172-173). Considered the "other" in African-American discourse, Morrison is aware of the relatively silenced

voice of the black woman. Her work reflects her 'self'': born a woman and a black and expresses her intention of recovering the buried lives of African-American women. She attempts to take possession of the voice denied them by imperialism, racism and marginalization; recuperating the neglected subjectivity of their ancestors from patriarchal oppression. According to Susheila Nasta:

> "the post-colonial woman writer is not only involved in making herself heard, in changing the architecture of male-centred ideologies and languages, or in discovering new forms and language to express her experience, she has also to subvert and demythologize indigenous male writings and traditions which seek to label her"(qtd. in Peach 13-14).

Toni Morrison's works go even beyond inverting the stereotype with her recurring concern with black, female-headed households where survival is dependent upon 'self-inventing'.

The first novel Toni Morrison published after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, *Paradise* (1997) is the final work in what Morrison considered a trilogy that begins with 1987's *Beloved*, followed by 1992's *Jazz*. Originally titled War and changed as an editing decision, the novel opens as a group of men invade the Convent, an "embezzler's folly" converted into a Catholic school for Native American girls and later as a refuge for wayward women, with the intention of killing the women who live there (3). The five women living there at the time of the raid are Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, Pallas, and Connie, one of whom is white. The men "have set out to rid their town . . . of the evil that has infested it, and they believe—or have convinced themselves—that these women are its source" (Reames 22). Morrison starts her novel in a horrifying manner ''They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time. No need to hurry out there.'' (3)

The core theme of Morrison's writing comes to reader's mind at the very beginning of the novel are: the treatment of women and the gender discrimination of black and white women.

Set in mid-1976, amid the national trauma following the Vietnam War, *Paradise* presents the gradual death of Ruby, a community of fiercely proud black people, due to the refusal of its patriarchs to excise the cyst of an isolationism related to the circumstances of Ruby's founding. Around 1889, nine freed African-American men, their families, and some strays from Mississippi and Louisiana band together in search of a settlement site in the Oklahoma Territory. They reach a town called Fairly, a settlement of fellow African-Americans, and appeal to be allowed to join them. The request is rejected; the citizens of Fairly provide the migrants with victuals and ask them to move on. The migrants identify the cause of the rejection as color, later to be known as the Disallowing. While the people of Fairly are lighter-skinned, the patriarchs and their families are darker. Stung by this rejection, they trek on until they establish their own community, called Haven. Haven thrives for decades but later suffers during the post-World War II depression. Descendants of the founders embark on another migration to a better land and Ruby, named for the woman who apparently died as a result of the demanding trek, is founded.

Ruby, an isolated town, "ninety miles from the nearest O for operator and ninety miles from the nearest badge" (13), is incidentally about 17 miles from an old and obscure building housing a Catholic institution, Christ the King School for Native Girls, referred to as the Convent. Now in disrepair and no longer a school house, the Convent is inhabited and governed by the Mother Superior and her ward, Consolata, an orphan whom the nun has adopted. The Mother Superior dies at the beginning of the novel. Devastated by her death, Connie allows the Convent to sink further

into ruins while turning it into a haven for women with various troubled histories. The persons and events in the Convent intersect to form the narrative of Paradise.

The book is structured into nine sections. The first is named "Ruby" after the town on which the book centers and the rest are named for women implicated variously in the life of the town and the Convent. The Convent women are Mavis, Grace (known as 'Gigi'), Seneca, Divine (whose name is actually 'Pallas'), and Consolata (also known as 'Connie'). The Ruby women - or children, in the case of Save-Marie - are Patricia and Lone. Though the chapters are named for specific characters, in telling their stories, Morrison tells the parallel histories of the town of Ruby and the Convent and how the men of Ruby become intent on destroying the Convent women.

Paradise narrates the story of two very different groups in exile, following their own visions of a kind of paradise. In Ruby, the social order is maintained precariously through discrimination against and exclusion of light-skinned blacks, as well as the rigid surveillance and policing of women's behavior. There is a generational divide between those who perceive the role of God as an enforcer and those who perceive themselves as part of God's benevolent, divine plan. At the neighboring Convent, a group of mostly black, troubled women forge a kind of refuge community for themselves. The Convent becomes a place in which they can live removed from the oppressive circumstances of their past and the judgmental eye of society. The two come into conflict when the leaders of Ruby, battling against the tides of change, decide that the Convent is the source of the town's troubles.

Paradise is told through various characters and gives brief histories as to how they arrived at either the Convent or in Ruby.

Ruby is a community of African-Americans who have established the town with the hopes of creating their own version of the Garden of Eden or a utopia. During the years that Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas live at the Convent with Connie, their experiences in patriarchal societies both unite and divide them. The five women are united in their collective strength earned from overcoming their negative experiences in romantic, familial, and violent relationships. They have developed tough exteriors to keep others away from them as a means of self-protection and survival. In addition to the internal protection of defense mechanisms, the effects of this self-defense are manifested in the women's physical bodies. Cut off from their emotions, the women have lost the ability to cry at different moments. Although they each have internal pain and outer defensive behaviors, the women find collective solace in comforting others in both emotional and physical ways through affection and nourishment.

The divisions between the women are related primarily to differences in their personalities that cause tension. These personality differences affect the kinds of patriarchal symbols they bring into the Convent, which causes additional conflict. The clothing, behaviors, stories, and relationships that the women bring to Connie's male-less sanctuary are the patriarchal symbols to which each woman clings, and these can cause disruption in the harmonious silence for which Connie longs. As the women grow more comfortable in their Convent life, Connie uses her experiences to teach each woman in a personal way that also links them with the other women. Therefore, Connie (and each other woman) is connected to each individual based on a common female experience, though the specifics of each narration differ. The role that each woman identifies with most clearly is the obstacle that keeps her from reaching empowerment, and it is Connie's task to dissolve their ties to patriarchal confines in order to merge their

spirituality with their physical being so that each can find her balance of personal power.

Mavis's narrative initiates the theme that perception is not a straightforward activity, and that seeing and recalling what one sees are subjective senses and activities for each person. During her stay at the Convent, Connie teaches Mavis the value of her talents and her intuition by encouraging Mavis to try and allowing her to observe, through which Mavis learns that personal talents and experiences can be redeeming even if people are flawed. The senses Connie develops and encourages in Mavis undermine the stressed values of linear and visual perception valued by male society, and Mavis's personal development represents her female empowerment as she finds an alternative to the oppressive existence she has led until finding acceptance at the Convent.

Originally named Grace, Gigi arrives in Ruby on a bus, an ethereal vision to K.D. and the other men that keep perpetual watch outside the Oven. A vision of overt physical sexuality in "pants so tight, heels so high, earrings so large they forg[e]t to laugh at her hair," Gigi's physical appearance appeals to the men's visually-based comprehension of the world and women's primarily sexual place in that world (53). She represents the role of sexual awakening and all encompassing physical desire. Gigi's physical excesses of sexual promiscuity and drug use mediate her experience in the patriarchal world, and when she begins her affair with K.D., Gigi becomes a threat to Ruby's social hierarchy because not only is she purposefully tempting male characters away from their responsibilities in relationships with Ruby women and children, she is successful in her persuasion. However, Morrison undercuts Gigi's power over men through the eyes of her lover K.D., symbolizing his control over her even as he seems to be controlled by her and his desire for her. Gigi is not a real person to him but a fantasy

object. She represents the problematic devotion to physical lust for males and females in a patriarchal system. Seen through a male perspective at her introduction in the novel, her experiences indicate that sexual prowess, while a powerful motivator for men, is not real female power and should not be confused with genuine empowerment. Gigi searches for power through patriarchal means participating in Civil Rights demonstrations and indulges her sexual appetites with boyfriend Mikey and his stories of Wish, Arizona, where he claims a rock formation in the shape of two lovers exists. In her search for the formation, Gigi ends up in Ruby, "coughing at the dust blowing into her eyes and mouth, symbolizing her obstructed senses when she arrives" (67). Gigi's presence at the Convent introduces overt sexuality into the dynamic created by Mavis and Connie, which enables greater connections with the violent nature of patriarchal sexuality. Defensive and finally separated from her relationships with men, Gigi undergoes Connie's teaching to gain further understanding of herself.

Seneca, is a broken "girl whose heart was breaking," when she arrives at the Convent. As a beaten down victim, "not knowing where she is headed (126) Seneca symbolizes the perverse power that can be found in welcoming pain and inflicting pain on one's self. Like other forms of superficial power the Convent women have, self-mutilation and victimization prove unsatisfactory as ways to achieve power in patriarchy. Seneca's loss of her sister early in life and her experience of habitual abuse by people she trusts makes her powerless to male figures. Physical and mental exploitation characterize Seneca's life. To cope with the way she is treated by all representatives of masculinity and patriarchal authority, Seneca cuts herself to displace the pain she feels. Continually undervaluing herself and her power, she cannot find an alternative to her mindset until she arrives at the Convent and begins to take on new roles in

life that nurture her. Seneca's choice to follow a woman to the Convent further signals her transformation into an independent person and contributor (138). As Seneca lives at the Convent, she learns how she can help others in need instead of inflicting pain on herself. Though unnamed and insignificant in her past life, she is immediately welcomed by Gigi and Mavis who act comfortably with her and show interest in her name. The simple act of being called by her name represents the way that the Convent women value individual worth in a way patriarchal society does not. Still unused to people caring for her, Seneca feels exhausted and nauseous when she is asked to nap until the dinner of fried chicken Mavis suggests. For the first time, she is cared for in even the smallest ways of being asked to sleep, eat, and stay at the Convent, and begins to contribute to the relationships the longer she stays and learns about the dynamics of the relationships of the other women.

When the crying, abused and raped Pallas arrives, Connie's caretaking is the only influence that can soothe her. Her story and the comfort she finds during her stay at the Convent are significant because her narrative expresses an immediate serenity found at the house of women. Introduced to the Convent by Billie Delia as a place where she "can stay for a while," Pallas stays at the Convent and, like the other women, shares her experience with Connie (175). Pallas represents the injured childhood experiences of all the Convent women and the destructive possibilities of severed mother-child bonds. Billie Delia's recommendation of the Convent as a place to find comfort proves true for all the Convent women and Pallas particularly as it concerns her pregnancy because there are no questions asked. Visitors are instead given the time and space they need to collect themselves and "think things through, with nothing or nobody bothering [them] all the time"; Billie Delia continues that the Convent women will "take care of you or leave

you alone – whichever way you want it" (175-76). The freedom to do what she feels she needs to do instead of what is expected heals Pallas and helps her come to terms with her painful life experiences. As with the other women, Pallas' story shares similarities with Connie's life. Connie tells Pallas that she can stay as long as she wants and can "tell [her] the rest when [she] wants to" (176). The "loose, relaxed" Convent attitude can be found in Pallas's narrative because of how little Connie and the others require of newcomers before they accept them (176). As the final female to arrive at the Convent, Pallas's childlike presence helps complete the types of roles available to women in patriarchal society because she seems completely powerless, unable to care for herself at all or even stop herself from crying once she has begun.

The four women's narratives show the process of travelling and re-establishment in a place to create a home. The process of relocating can be challenging, but each woman seems driven to find a new place and eventually does. As antagonists of patriarchy in basic, physical ways through religious chastity and forming personal relationships with women that cannot be mimicked by male-female relationships, Connie and Lone first resist patriarchy in their lives and then continue the work of teaching others.

Consolata, known as Connie, exemplifies how the women learn from each other to be self-dependent. She teaches other women how to be independent of men and free from the restrictions patriarchy imposes on women's lives. In addition, Connie frees them from the demands of a culture that devalues womanist ideals. Connie's experiences allow her access to many emotions, and her ability to see beyond physical realities makes her the representative of understanding and intuition to guide the other women in the Convent. As the chief illustrator of Convent values, Connie teaches the other women through her actions, her counsel, and her approach

to living. Through watching Connie and later being directed by her, the women learn that valuing human life and multiple perspectives is the only way to effect positive change in one's own life and in the larger society, a revelation that is never fully grasped by the male characters.

As a representative of the female community at the Convent, Connie is responsible for indirectly and directly, causing changes in the other women. Her influence encourages each woman to achieve her own sense of 'self' through looking at the world in multiple ways. By listening to the women, and giving them importance she enables them to recognize their worth and contributions. Connie's philosophy of life is distinctly contrary to the patriarchal society outside the Convent. Instead of a world of absolute physical truths, Connie imagines the world in terms of presences and spirituality. Examples of her ability to sense include a "great hovering foot" that she imagines will kill her in her sleep and her ability to transcend boundaries of life and death through her mystical powers encouraged by Lone DuPres (221). She often sleeps in the basement, in a small space "tight enough for a coffin," but ventures upstairs occasionally, "at night or in the shadowy part of the day" and walks outside, annoyed by the other women's chatter (221). Already living a half-dead existence, Connie's talents to revive the dead and dying allows her a unique perspective on life that others, even the women who stay at the Convent, do not at first appreciate. Initially, Connie's philosophy on life is not appealing to the women who are at first confused and uncomfortable. Eventually it becomes a comfortable system because the Convent women know what to expect; though at first are perplexed, after their transformation learn to understand her perspective. The reason Connie's perspective on life is altered from the normal patriarchy adhered to is a direct result of her own previous excessive faith in the physical world and

the pain it causes her, which leads her to separate herself from the world that has hurt her. Given that Connie is not concerned with the specifics of worldly life and grows increasingly immersed in the spiritual life that disregards all of the values of the distorted Christian and race centered religion of the patriarchs of Ruby, "drift" might mean that someone has drifted from their history or their spirit, allowing their inner desires to depart from their actions, and losing touch with their internal direction. Because she can identify and empathize with the pain of the women, Connie becomes the Convent mentor who encourages their development through her own example and unorthodox teaching methods.

The ability to help others see is intricately tied to Connie's negative experiences with men that led her to the Convent to find a refuge from the dominant modes of patriarchal vision. Connie introduces her educational pedagogy and life philosophy to the women to teach them how to free themselves from patriarchal control. She represents society's watchful observance of women and pressures the women not to deviate from her instructions; they do not because "none wished to be the first to give in before those pale watching eyes" (263). Through Connie's monologue, each of the women in turn remembers the stories of her life; "Half-tales and the never-dreamed escaped from their lips . . . it was never important to know who said the dream or whether it had meaning" (264). Through the dreaming, they understand each other's stories; "they step easily into the dreamer's tale," showing that they can empathize with each other's struggles (264).

Furthermore, in *Paradise* "loud dreaming, monologue is no different from a shriek; accusations directed to the dead and long gone are undone by murmurs of love" (264). The loud dreaming represents the painful emotional wounds that the women have

endured which the shared love of their female community has the ability to heal. While not able to erase the painful dreams and memories, the shared stories are essential to claiming personal empowerment in an alternative, woman-centered theology of acceptance. The women's transformation after Connie's intervention is all encompassing and changes their perception of the world completely:

> "With Consolata in charge, like a new and revised Reverend Mother, feeding them bloodless food and water alone to quench their thirst, they altered. They had to be reminded of the moving bodies they wore, so seductive were the alive ones below" (265).

Changed so greatly that they relinquish entirely the bodies that have been controlled for so long under the confines of male desire and male expectation, the Convent women are able to fall in love with their own spirits. They are seduced by the very element that has stifled and beaten them (the men), and, in being seduced by a new kind of love, are able to bring that love to reconcile with their pasts. Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas learn to value themselves in a world dominated by male constructs of power that devalue women. In finding the motivation to value themselves, the women develop and practice a womanist philosophy that ignores the problems patriarchy invites and instead focuses on different kinds of loving communities people can create. "Womanist," defined in Alice Walker's preface to In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, denotes

> "A black feminist or feminist of color . . . Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior . . . Loves music. Loves dance . . . Loves the Spirit" (xi-xii).

Therefore, a womanist spirituality refers to the spiritual philosophy that develops in black female communities similar to that of the Convent women's. As opposed to the conflicts developed by patriarchal social systems, "operating within the constructs of an Africana womanist paradigm . . . grounded in three key interconnecting components—the centrality of family, the love for each other, and the commitment to the liberation struggle for ultimate survival," allows for individual freedom (Hudson-Weems 83). As such, the values listed require the ability to adapt to particular places and circumstances.

Analyzing the "roles assigned to African-American women by their families and the dominant culture, the persistent stereotypes about black women, the combination of race with gender, and recognition of diversity among women" is "empowering" because people "discover truths" about themselves (Mitchem 23). These personal truths pave the way for further personal growth. Female characters learn valuable lessons from each other that allow them to subvert the patriarchy ruling Ruby. The ability to "see" in literal and metaphorical ways differentiates people in the town between those who understand the changing intricacies of life and those who wish to remain firmly planted in a faltering ideology. Men in the novel are more indicative of the ability to see that is based entirely on physical senses. Characters that can see in a different, spiritual, sense are adaptable and capable of creating their own agency. By being able to understand the power of one's own story, the female characters at the Convent, led by Connie, are able to find agency and mature independence as "they c[o]me to see that they c[an] not leave the one place they [are] free to leave" (262). The four women show that recognition and reconciliation with their pasts are the only ways to understand the necessity of change. The learning process that leads to this understanding is difficult but

rewarding, and through learning, they emerge more aware of their individual power and better equipped to enable change.

The possibility for change that Morrison uses in her pronouncement that paradise is an earthly undertaking requires a thorough re-seeing of life for the women and readers. The process of acquiring and following intuition can be painful and difficult because it requires vulnerability, but ultimately it leads to self acceptance, responsibility, and empowerment. The arduous work is detailed as a learning experience the Convent women undergo in order to develop themselves into citizens of paradise instead of oppressed women in a patriarchy. The trappings of a patriarchal-based value system, particularly the emphasis on physical certainties of seeing and acquiring material wealth, and by extension, power, serve men and aim to control women. Learning in the Convent occurs as the direct result of the oppressively narrow roles ascribed to women who are all searching for something different than they know, since all of them have, for various reasons, elected to leave their homes for the freedom of uncertain wandering. Without a variety of options, women are forced into living in ways that leave their spirits neglected, their bodies bruised, and their overall being ignored, abused, and deemed worthless of anything other than scorn. The social options for women exemplified in Ruby are the same debilitating options available to the women who stay at the Convent; the only difference is that the women who stay at the Convent (as opposed to those from town who visit periodically) are less successful at thriving in traditional female roles. The roles include mother, sexual tempter, pitiful object, and victim, and prove too limiting for any of the Convent women. Though Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas each fulfill these roles to differing degrees in their respective lives, as characters they become symbolic of these four roles. Connie, as the woman who teaches, has experienced

each role in some capacity as well, and she uses her personal experience to help the women see beyond those roles and deeper into their own personalities. The work of the women's learning is quite different from that of the male characters'.

To the male patriarchs, lineage and history are important to the extent that all changes are subject to utmost scrutiny by the men in power, predominantly Steward and Deacon Morgan and other male church officials. As the descendents of the founding fathers of Ruby, the male characters have a stake in maintaining the social power structure which gives them continued monetary and social advantages. Like the white society that will not accept them because of their skin color, the black founders of Ruby have replicated the same measures of discrimination to ensure their power over others. The fear that underlies their rejection of certain shades of skin and any degree of change also applies to anything that strikes the ruling men as strange, uncontrollable, or progressive.

Based on the early description of the Convent from the perspective of the males that invade it with the intention of killing its inhabitants, the men of Ruby do not understand anything about the Convent or what occurs there; their only reaction is disgust and fear of the building and the rumors describing what happens there. They think the women are ". . . detritus: throwaway people that sometimes blow back into the room after being swept out the door" (4). They bring "rope, a palm leaf cross, handcuffs, Mace and sunglasses, along with clean, handsome guns" to eradicate the women, never realizing that all these items are useful for only physical, not spiritual, control (3). The desire to control completely the physical bodies of the women highlights the profoundly superficial and fearful motivators that have brought the men to the Convent.

The open female sexuality and sensual spirituality are the embodiment of the men's fear of female freedom that leads to their violent attack, foreshadowing the connections throughout the novel that connect violence and freedom, especially sexual freedom. The dread of female independence is linked to the male desire to control the social hierarchy based on dark skin color ("8-rock"), and the fear becomes so strong that the men feel they must eradicate the source of their anxiety. However, through life-long oppression, the Convent women have learned from their individual experiences that men cannot always be trusted to recognize women's worth. Thus, they must learn to find their own worth in each other and in their collective learned power to prosper. As they work to find fulfillment, the Convent women begin to identify with an alternative style of living, which includes unorthodox behaviors deemed odd and strange by the citizens of Ruby.

All the women characters in *Paradise* have varying degrees of intuition and flexibility to change. Because women are perpetually disadvantaged in Ruby, the Convent women's means of subverting the power structure cause disruption that male characters, with their insatiable yet subdued and lazy desire for control and power, have no sensible way of appreciating and instead turn to eliminating the offensive women. The men cannot comprehend that the underlying worldview of patriarchal hegemony complicates and perpetuates the problems. The problems of patriarchy's narrow sight have drawn Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas to the Convent, and the process of learning a new value system different from everything they have ever known is their daunting task.

The Convent women threaten Ruby because they disregard patriarchal values and embrace their own, which profoundly frightens the men. By telling her own story, each woman "claims

her story and establishes her own boundaries [and] . . . the telling of one's story and finding comfort and power in that story are essential for healing and transformation" to show "the importance of one's personal and cultural history as well as the impact of one's family of origin on one's choice making . . ." (Boyd 199). By refusing to sacrifice 'self' and spirit to institutionalized social mandates, the Convent women are able to overcome the physical conditions of their lives to understand life and love in more complete, life-affirming ways. They have come to the Convent in search of fulfillment. The patriarchal society has few available routes for women to choose, and all which lead to a powerless existence. The alternatives available to Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas range from mother, mistress, whore, and child, but none of these roles adequately stimulate the women's needs because the stereotypes of "[a]moral Jezebel, safe Mammy, and castrating Sapphire . . . construct some negative form of black women's sexuality" (Mitchem 139). In the face of incomplete social options, the Convent women fail at the expectations of each respective role and remain powerless. Through the development of a "Christian womanist sexual discourse of resistance, based on human- and God-created goodness," they "destroy the power [of stereotypes] . . . over black women's self-image and esteem" (Mitchem 139). Until they are conscious of the powerlessness of appropriate female roles, they are trapped in the patriarchal system; once they pursue alternative avenues of expression, they are finally free to obtain real power, and are so satisfied by the new power that they do not want to leave the place once they have found independence. They reclaim aspects of their respective personalities and emerge from the darkness of the basement into the dawn of morning on the very day that the men have chosen to hunt them down for transgressing the patriarchal confines.

As a black woman writer, Morrison represents suppressed realms of social experience from a "womanist" perspective which is more attentive to black women and their role in the larger racial struggle. Using the model of womanist theology and Womanist Care as a means of understanding the Convent women's alternative lifestyle is helpful because it emphasizes both aspects of Connie's teaching First, the Convent women are able to gain understanding of their history; second, they tell their own stories, claiming power in their lives and reaching a comfortable balance between 'self' and 'other'. The place of balanced understanding is the manifestation of paradise Morrison seems to encourage because the women acknowledge past, present, and future truths in order to work for equality and power in a (still) patriarchal hegemony. The critical commentary that constitutes *Playing in the Dark* demonstrates that Morrison has launched the cultivation of a new space for African-American women. In the preface, she explains the necessity of presenting this book:

> The kind of work I have always wanted to do requires me to learn how to maneuver ways to free up the language from its sometimes sinister, frequently lazy, almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains (*Playing* xi)

Moments and characteristics such as Mavis's Cadillac theft, Gigi's evocative wardrobe, Seneca's simplicity, and Pallas's defiance enrage the men because they cannot be suppressed, just like the women whom they describe. These vehicles of female power, be they action oriented or a physical trait, are attempts at earning personal freedom. With the help of Connie and each other, and the separation from male influence, the women learn more about themselves and their own histories. As the women learn to find positive alternative outlets of expression instead of rebellious

ones, they gain greater agency. The positive outlets of expression include dancing, singing, storytelling, growing food, cooking, eating, caretaking, enjoying nature, changing one's circumstances, and recognizing the unique power of an individual, though there are many other examples of empowering expression. By exemplifying traits that outline a new, nonconformist power that the Convent women celebrate, Morrison shows that the women are successful in their flights from oppression and free to move as they please. Though the male characters seek vengeance in the end, the women succeed in their creation of an alternative to the patriarchy that controls and condemns Ruby.

Paradise, therefore, offers rewarding insights into the possibility of change in race and gender relations in America. Womanist ideals seen in the novel, indicates the importance of progressive social change and the continuing interest in developing new alternatives to oppressive and limiting patriarchal social hierarchies. By developing an understanding of their worth, the Convent women learn to realize that they have the power to escape and live the way they feel. Morrison's exploration of the complicated relationships portrayed in the novel, proposes various alternatives to many of the problems created by Ruby's patriarchal power structure. Magali Cornier Michael contends that the novel "seeks to reimagine agency as a function of coalition processes that are communal and caring in impulse . . . that complicate and finally gesture away from dominant conceptualizations" described in Ruby (643). As the plot unfolds, the agency developed by female characters is more "accommodative, caring, and loving, rather than exploitative, and that [is] aimed principally at survival and at moving toward a new, alternative form of non-hierarchical justice, rather than at maximizing power and winning" (Michael 644).

Thus Morrison in *Paradise* has been self-reflexive, attempting to produce authentic black experiences while emphasizing personal quest as a means of "wresting the black subject out of anonymity, inferiority and brutal disdain" (Willis 213)

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Re-Deconstructing Multi-Polarized Gender World & the Visionary in Mahesh Dattani: An Anthropological Approach

Dr. Gunasekharan Dharmaraja
Associate Professor of English
Tamil Nadu National Law School, Tirichirappalli

Abstract

Men community with their own interest constructed the culture of women but on a contrary to it, they themselves got constructed their own culture, gender limitation and gender description. Whenever they knowingly or unknowingly deconstruct their limitation and description they got the negative result and that was mocked at; but women folk got the positive result when they deconstruct their gender limitation and description since women folk were not responsible for their construction. It becomes heavily the owner's responsibility to maintain their own constructiveness otherwise they themselves get exposed. The male dominated gender world constructed by masculine gender themselves is constructed in such a way that it is not ready to open its space up to accept various upcoming genders. Since the gender world we foresee deserves lots of changes both in Hegelian mode of base and super structure of society. My research will focus not only on the deconstruction of the prevailing society but also on the reconstruction of the gender world, where gender rights are respected equally.

Keywords: Re-Deconstruction, Gender world, Transgenders & Mahesh Dattani

Background & Introduction:

Once the new democratic revolution is finished, the working class will come to power. When the class society is monitored by the rich class, no democratic rights are given to people, especially to the subaltern society, the marginalized class, that is what the preaching done by progressive forces say. But on the promises to liberate all the oppressed classes from their culturally, socially, economically and psychologically bonded class chains, the progressive forces will come to power by the new democratic revolution. But after the new democratic revolution is once and for all finished and communists, the representatives of people head towards the socialist revolution, the first problem they face is gender issues, such as seen with the Nepal communists. Can you imagine deconstructing your university toilets to build up three toilets separately for male, female, transgender and some times more?

Reconstructing and deconstructing the multi polarized gender world does not confine itself only with mental construction but also the physical construction. Lenin, while in the new democratic revolution of USSR, told his comrades to not demolish the Kremlin palace of King Tzar because it was built by the working class and it could be used as such for future also. But in the gender revolution, the Kremlin palace and even our Indian parliament have to be deconstructed to have separate toilets for multiple genders.

In Nepal, Maoists and the so called think tanks of present day revolutionary Comrade Prachanda, (Nam de guerilla, meaning the fierce one) who happens to be the present Prime Minister of Nepal called people to concentrate on the class war and he told that striving hard to the new democratic revolution is the major step of class war. So talking about the gender rights, especially sex and its various roles, while the professional revolutionaries struggle for new democratic revolution is nothing but revising the path of

revolution and diverting the mind of the people from the vision of revolution that can solve the class fight and will make classless society.

It is even being told among the communists not to speak about love and sex and their pleasures, at least until the democratic revolution is up. Age old communists or so called rigid communists used to quote the words (He asked people to concentrate on class war than these tiny gender issues) of Lenin which he had delivered to Rosa Luxemburg, the late and renowned female comrade and former general secretary of Communist party of Germany, when he was questioned by Luxemburg in Communist International plenum about organizing and fighting for the rights of Sex workers.

When people are asked to just look into the problems of gender, they asked the gender rights fighters to concentrate on food and shelter. They said that once and for all, if these activists helped finish the food and shelter problems, then they would come to gender issues. But in Nepal, (where transgenders are branded as Western imports and not a proletarian culture), once the food and shelter problems were believed to be solved in the new democratic revolution, transgenders were brutally beaten up in the streets.

Karl Marx in his monumental work titled "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" published in 1972 says,

> "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances directly chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, revolutionary crisis they anxiously

conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language." (437)

This perception would have been told by Karl Marx, having the understanding of political economy in his mind. But it is accurately suitable to the gender relations' aftermath of a new democratic revolution. It is always impossible for the people.

Linguistic barriers:

Linguistic barriers should be broken by the people. For example, to prove that language is male dominated language, language has too many evidences. Man represents the human beings. Mankind too represents the same. Chairman represents the leader from both genders but it was addressed by a male word alone. Such are the proverbs like Practice Makes Men Perfect, as well. In this proverb 'men' does not mean male gender alone but both the genders. Really it is not surprising that one would be all for struggling for equal rights for women. This is submitted because women played a significant role and even a dominant role in the pre communal society. So it is a confirmed struggle for the womenfolk in all arenas and especially in the linguistic arena. Nowadays they are addressed as sportswomen, etc. So the struggle of women folk in all is like a struggle to confirm their own berth, which was once occupied by women folk, but they were then chased away by the men folk.

Thus one can have the understanding that Women are fighting for the space they once had. And it is damned sure that they would gain it as per the historical materials. But as far as the subalterns like Transgenders, and other genders like MTF and FTM are concerned, there are no social, political, economical, cultural and

psychological spaces for them. When a new gender world is going to be constructed, it has to be first deconstructed virtually and then re constructed psychologically. For example He is for male and She is for female and nothing is for transgender. They are addressed by It and It is the word that is used to address the animals and unanimated things. Since the beginning the problem starts that some word has to be framed for transgenders and that it has to be brought into usage. That sort of flexibility, a language should have. That sort of psychological flexibility, human mind should have, to form a new word for transgender and other genders.

Male dominated language is being broken by the womenfolk and one could smell few changes in the language; for instance, Chairman has been adjusted/changed to Chairperson. Now in the era of deconstructing the multi-polarized gender world, Bi-gender dominated linguistic space has to be broken and it has to be changed into the space where the space for all genders should be available. Bringing that sort of linguistic space in human mind psychologically is always a Herculean task for the entire progressive linguists but a multi-polarized gender world demands it.Here the words of Dattani's words can give wonderful prescription to the multi-polarized world.

The following is an E mail interview of Dattani by me.

Gunasekharan Dharmaraja in his email dated 04-06-2009 asked:

"Sir,

Now I am doing my research on the different language for transgender.

For example He for masculine, she for feminine, but no word for transgender, the third gender. Language is made up of double gendered domination. But in Tamil Sangh literature

only one person tried his level to find out a new language for transgender. Herewith I have attached details about him and also about his book.

"AruvakaiIllakkanam" (Six types of Grammars) written by Vannasarapam Thavathiru Thandapani Swami. He is little bit lenient towards Transgender than other grammarians. He formed separate wording for Transgender. For example he used the weapon letter ('ak' sound in Tamil). He named weapon letter as transgender letter. He is the one who tried free hand to make exclusive linguistic terms for transgender. But he slung mud on them by categorizing transgender strictly in the category where the animals and unanimated things fall. Except these few handfuls of books, others valued Transgender as untouchables.

For Example

Avan- masculine

Aval-Feminine

Athu-In animated things and animal.

He found out that Akthu is for transgenders

So, like avanvarukiran or avalvarukiral or athuvarukirathu …

Akthuvarukirathu is for **Transgender is coming**.

Sir, though like other grammarians in Tamil, he did not value Transgender as human beings, he tried his new hand for separate wording for them.

Sir is it Interesting?"

Dattani in his email dated 09-06-2016 responded:

"Hi Dharma

Using the pronoun 'it' suggests ignorance and a phobia towards the third gender. How about using the plural? Like using 'they' instead of he or she even for the singular.They, them, theirs. One way of looking at the third gender is that they are both male and female rather than defining them as neither male nor female.

regards

Mahesh"

But here even gender visionary Dattani tried to put prevailing genders and also the de facto prevailing genders into the bipolar gendered language. For example Dattani preferred "they, them, theirs" (Plural pronoun for the male or female or unanimated things or animals) for transgender. This is like occupying someone's space instead of creating their own space. My argument is nothing but about creating an exclusive space for the transgender or the other genders. Language and speakers should be made flexible to create exclusive spaces for various genders.

Multi-genders:

Truly, one should appreciate the passports of India. Because they are the carriers of first Indian step-up in revolutionary activity of multi-polarizing the genders. This may be because of the influence they gained from the European countries where the mode of production is capitalism, which is a better system comparatively to India's semi feudal and semi colonial mode of production. In Indian passport applications there are three choices given in the gender perspective. They are male, female and transgender. Really it is an appreciable activity that transgender are at least recognized at last in the paper; but not practically. Bipolar gender dominated human minds are anyway compromised or at least developed and trained

in such a way to accept the reality, that the other one gender is apart from rhetorically acclaimed male and female genders.

But still miles are there to go past. If you read the argument put forth by Sunil about multi-polarizing genders are concerned when author of this paper interviewed a FTM (Female to male) named Sunil. She (For the note of Linguistics concerned, I am using she, the denoted word for female gender since there is no exclusive or separate word for FTMs) explained. To make my point clearer, herewith I have attached my e mail conversation dated 18-05-2009 with Dattani.

Gunasekharan Dharmaraja:

"Sir

When I met you, I asked you about the space of Transgender (Whether they want to be identified as Third gender or some other. Hope you remember that). You told me that they want to be identified as third genders. But when I had a word with PriyaBabu, the transgender and friend of mine from Chennai about this, she told we have passed through all the curdles because of desire to be females. So she wanted to be identified as female instead of third gender.

But when I had a discussion with Sunil (an FTM), He told me There are only two genders in this world, but he wanted to be called or identified as per their own sexual orientation.

Though He dresses like male, he neither thinks he is a female (since he was born with female organs) nor he is male (since he dresses like male).He wanted to be identified as in between these both genders.

Same time whatever his gender may be, but his sexual orientation is attracted towards female.

Interesting, but too confusing.

Am I right sir?

I assure when India is going to face the social change, this gender related question will hang in front of the social changers and ruling people. But I personally feel giving free hand to those people who feel uncommon (Sunil advised me not to use the word unnatural to his sexual relations since he feels when all the people are used with heterosexual relationship, it can be addressed as common but cannot and should not be addressed as natural) in their sexual orientation is the real freedom of human beings.

Dharma"

In his response to my email, Dattani said in his email conversation dated 18-05-2009

"Hi Dharma

I agree with you and Sunil that there are common and uncommon orientations, all of them natural. Ultimately it is the freedom to be oneself that we all fight for.

Yes it is very confusing and that is why your research is very important. I myself, in spite of several years of study feel I have not understood the complex issue of sexuality.

I wish you all the best. This is really good work that you are doing and I am extremely proud to know you!

Regards

Mahesh"

Mining Out & Documenting the History of Transgender:

"Lately it has become fashionable to deny the existence of this initial stage in human sexual life. Humanity must be spared this "shame"". -Frederick Engels

Genders have their own histories. Working class men have the history of pain and agony. Women have history of gender biased oppression and also the history of oppression which the masculine genders too experience and succumb. One cannot imagine a human being without his history. But this is a bitter but 'want to hide' fact that a historical gender has nothing as the recorded history of its own. Though the transgender's history dates back to the origin of human beings, the present ruling class makes the people feel that transgender are the products of western's free sex culture and this is the problem of just a decade of liberalization, privatization and globalization. In Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu, when the lands to construct houses for Transgender were allotted, the near-by villagers opposed the move of the district collector. Their main allegation against the transgender is their so called way of living. People firmly believe that transgender are all for sexual desires, so the transgender cannot survive without sex. People's minds are molded and stereotyped in such a way that transgenders are not supposed to live among other normal human beings. People believe that transgender are instant sex tools and they are not of the normal human being kinds. The present history what we know about transgender is nothing but the mythological stories which do not directly have the authentic evidence to prove themselves as they are not approached and recorded historical materialistically.

Transgender history bounces back to hunter gatherer age but it is not documented. For example most of all transgender believe that following story is the reliable one of them. In Hindu Mythologies Aravan in Mahabharata is known for his sacrifice. To defeat

Kauravas sacrificing a young man in the full moon day is customary. So when the hunt for the sacrifice is on, Aravan, a complete man, son of Arjuna came forward. He is suitable young bachelor. But for the sake of Pandavas he is ready to sacrifice his life. When everything was ready for his sacrificial ceremony, Aravan has a desire to live married life for at least one day. So Lord Krishna took the female role and marries Aravan and when Aravan is sacrificed next day, she (Lord Krishna) becomes widow. Thus Lord Krishna is Aravani, the wife of Aravan. Here Aravani led a sacrificed life of appeasing the marital desire of a young man Aravan by sacrificing her entire life ready to be widow. This is a mythological reference from Mahabharata. Most of the transgenders believe this as true and every year they travel all the way from various places to Koovagam of Tamil Nadu. But this Aravan story is purely mythological. The direct outcome of this story is not scientific. But this story indirectly speaks the hidden history of transgenders. So the researchers are forced to move all over India especially to Tamil Nadu, where the lonely temple of Aravan exists and also to villages of the northern and middle part of Tamil Nadu where the historical background of Transgender exist in every villages.

Real Deconstruction:

"Deconstruction is an approach (whether in philosophy, literary analysis, or in other fields) which rigorously pursues the meaning of a text to the point of undoing the oppositions on which it is apparently founded, and to the point of showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable or impossible. The term was introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction has close intellectual links to critical theory. Deconstruction generally attempts to demonstrate that any text is not a discrete whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings; that any text therefore has more than one

interpretation; that the text itself links these interpretations inextricably; that the incompatibility of these interpretations is irreducible; and thus that an interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point. Derrida refers to this point as an <u>aporia</u> in the text, and terms deconstructive reading "aporetic." <u>J. Hillis Miller</u> has described deconstruction this way: "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently-solid ground is no rock, but thin air."" (https://profalokekumar.wordpress.com/philosophy/)

Deconstruction of genders is the need of hour for making a violence free gender world. Deconstruction is an approach which rigorously pursues the meaning of a text to the point of undoing the oppositions on which it is apparently founded, and to the point of showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable or impossible. Deconstruction just contextually needs mental setup alone. Deconstruction in casteism means the so-called upper caste peoples have to deconstruct themselves and have to come down from their superior mentality and oppressed people should go up from getting deconstructed downwards. Before these all, deconstruction in socioeconomic level is very much needed. The state with the dictatorship of proletarian is needed to equip the oppressed poor class economically. This change in the base of the society will be the predominant factor for the change in superstructure of the society. The governorship of proletarians on the productive tools will make the changes and deconstructions possible. This change in the base of the society and in the productive system of the society will be the reason for the gradual change in the superstructure of the society.

The material changes happened in the base of the society will go for the mind change of the society. It may happen side by side but gradually. Any way changes in the base of the society will

predetermine the changes in the superstructure. But in the gender arena, since productive system is the fundamental contradiction to be sorted out once the productive system is changed, a mental change also will happen, but it does not stand with those changes alone. It needs further deconstructions. That would be the real re-deconstructions in pursuit of the dream of a perfect gender world. The sitting arrangement will be rearranged as male, female and transgender. If the attendance register is written by gender wise, then there would be too many columns which are to be written like male, female, transgender and MTF and FTM and some others also in future. In future human beings will be trained to use the same toilet without any partiality among the genders. Man will not look at female very eagerly and sexually [in reactionary sexual context] as most of the men do today. That sort of equilibrium will prevail among the genders. These common toilets will have separate block that will protect the privacies of people like separate blocks in gent's toilet.

Summing Up:

If one is addressed by his or her sexual orientation, then everyone has to be addressed by their sexual orientation. For example if someone is addressed as Homo for his sex with man or bisexual for his sex with both man and woman, then man or woman for his or her sex with woman or man will be addressed as heterosexual. But anyway in the social aftermath of gender revolution, people will not be addressed by their sexual orientation.

Dattani has written sixteen plays for giving ideological support to the thoughts of deconstructing multi polarized gender world. His plays such as "Seven Steps Around the Fire", "On a Muggy Night in Mumbai", "Do the Needful", "Final Solutions", "Bravely Fought the Queen", "Tara", "Dance Like a Man", "Thirty Days in September", "Clearing the Rubble", "Mango Soufflé", "The Swami

and Winston", "Morning Raga", "Uma and Fairy Queen", "Ek Alag Mausam", "The Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child" and "Where There is a Will" speaks very well about the forthcoming gender issues. It predicts the future's major problems the human beings are going to face. They are gender issues. His plays prepare and broaden the human beings to digest the gender shocks. They prepare a platform to discuss the forth coming gender issues. This is because Multi-polarized minds alone can prepare for a Multi-polarized gender world.

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Identity of women vis-a vis family:
A study in Shashi Deshpande's The Small Remedies

Prof. Sivasish Biswas
Department of English, Assam University, Diphu Campus
Jewelina Chowdhury
Department of English, North Gauhati College, Guwahati

Abstract

Shashi Deshpande has emerged on the Indian fictional scene in 1970's and has carved a niche for herself in the galaxy of Indian women novelists in English. Her novels mirror the multiple roles played by and expected of women within domesticity and the complexities of the many familial relationships which women daily deal with in their family life. Being in a network or a web of relationships with others, her every action and ambition has ramifications and consequences. Women's sense of individuality has matured by the introduction of education and they have been struggling to define themselves and achieve greater degrees of free will. The changing times have affected the roles of woman outside the home, but the familial and socio-cultural practices remain traditional in India.Raymond Williams observations on the complexity of a culture seems pertinent in Indian context as he argues that there is in any society a central system of practices, meanings and values which are dominant and effective. These are not merely abstract, but are organized and lived ones. It thus constitutes a set of reality as 'absolutes' beyond which it is difficult for the members of society to move. These concepts of 'dominant', 'residue' and 'emergent'

envisaged by Raymond Williams help us to reach at a much deeper understanding of culture and society in relation to the familial terrain. In India, though educated and at times seem to be liberated woman of the contemporary times are even today not free from their traditional roles of mother and wife. Deshpande's novels provide a platform to unveil the 'dominant' patriarchal cultural politics at play which are embedded in the collective lives of the people and which, also act as support to the inequities prevalent in the contemporary socio-cultural scene. Small Remedies is an unconventional novel that portrays women like Savitribai and Leela who aspire to transcend the narrow confines of domesticity in their quest for identity.

Key words: Women, familial roles, 'dominant' patriarchal politics, 'residue' of absolutes and 'emergent' aspiration, quest for 'self'.

Introduction:

Identity is one of the very complex issues that several theorists and philosopher s have displayed their prolonged engagements with since the past. But recent studies register a change in perspective from the previous thinkers. Earlier theorists considered identity as a fixed attribute which exists as a uniform and natural constituent of a person. But recent studies adopt an unconventional approach as it considers identity as social and cultural construct. Such studies revealed the crucial workings of society and culture that contribute powerfully towards the formation of an individual's idea of self as "there are links between the society the society in which we live and limitations offered by the roles or parts we play in that society..." (Woodward 15). The 'self' seen as a construct then rests on the internalisation of the ideologies held by others. One needs to bear in mind that performance enacted by the self while facilitating its apparently stable structure, is actually patterned along the societal norms laid down in the society within which the individual is situated.

Culture plays a vital role in the construction of the self within a given familial set-up situated in a specific socio cultural environment. Cultural analysis, then, starts with the society that surrounds us, the social experiences that shape our identities and the identities of the various groups to which we belong or with which we associate. John Storey in his *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* asserts that Raymond Williams' influential claim that a given social formation consisted of *dominant*, *emergent* and *residue.* These concepts can give us a framework for understanding the complex and dynamic ways in which a culture operates as it continuously attempts to maintain stability and balance in the face of ever-changing views. While one perspective tends to be dominant at a given point, other perspectives are also contending for meaning, some older or more residual, some newer or emergent. The 'dominant' are the ones that are embodied in the majority of the society (hence the term, dominant). Within the dominant values of any culture, there are many elements of the past, or residual elements, but these elements of the past are being filtered-"reinterpreted, diluted, projected", discriminating inclusion and exclusion—that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident. "The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present." (Williams 122) Residual beliefs often remain dominant long after the social conditions that made them dominant have disappeared. Some residual practices are so old that they are archaic, though their presence may still be felt. Within the 'dominant', there are also 'emergent' elements, that elements are substantially alternative to the 'dominant'. These must be distinguished from those that are simply novel elements of the 'dominant'. 'Emergent' practices are those that are being developed, usually unconsciously, out of a new set of social interactions, as societies change. They

often are very different from and actively challenge the 'dominant'. They may themselves become 'dominant' eventually, but that is not an inevitable process. They start at the margins of society, and may eventually become less marginal. But they may not ever become central. All 'dominant' practices were once 'emergent'; not all 'emergent' practices become 'dominant'. Hence, the notion of identity does not emerge in oblivion. It is important to keep in mind the social and collective inputs that significantly influence an individual comprehending of self.

Identity is one of the most frequent premises in Indian English literature and most of the instances women novelists are concerned with a sense of attempting to make their women voices heard over a cacophony of long-standing stereotypes and expectations. Indian women writers like Kamala Markandya, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Shobha De and Anita documented female resistance against a patriarchal maintained Indian culture. Shashi Deshpande is also one of the women novelists who has carved a niche in Indian English literature presenting the voices of women regarding their femininity. However, the most common approaches that the critics tend to adopt towards Deshpande's novels are that of feminism and post-colonialism through which her novels re-analysed and examined. In most of the studies which adopt only a feminist approach, the characters in the novels predominantly the female characters are studied to reach at an understanding of the pain and suffering they experience while located within a patriarchal set-up and their attempts to liberate themselves. No doubt, her protagonists attempt to free themselves from the bindings and in this sense she employs a feminist stance. But the critics tend to overlook the deeper significance of the novelist's art which she employs so as to conduct a critical examination of the ideas related to femininity within the familial context. Irrespective of the significance of such critical

studies, one also requires to contemplate on the undertone of family and familial relationships which keep Deshpande preoccupied novel after novel. Thus in studying the construction of identity within the family, one needs to deliberate on the vital ways in which familial roles, relationships and subjectivities provide their hue in developing an individual sense of identity.

The significance of reading Shashi Deshpande's novels in the familial perspective cannot be undermined since she locates her character and events in the familial and social context which are predominantly cultural constructs. Her heroines, always members of the urban middle-class· and the highest castes in Indian society, find themselves at decisive crossroads in their lives. Thrown into a momentary void, they begin to question their subject positions as wives, mothers, daughters and professional women and develop strategies to cope with the fragmented self they experience.

Objectives:
This paper aims to examine through the novels of Shashi Deshpande highlight how Indian socio-cultural life with its patriarchal set-up codifies women's roles and identities. It aims to examine through the novels of Shashi Despande how her women construct, endorse and preserve their identity vis-à-vis the family. The paper takes into account Deshpande's *The Small* Remedies(2000) to explore factors related to identity within the familial arrangement.The present paper proposes to present the Indian middle class women within the vortex of marital domesticity, who are brought in a traditional environment and empowered with education struggling to liberate them from the stereotypes and construct their identity. The concept of identity will be discussed keeping in view the roles, relationship and subjectivity woman has to play within domesticity.

Methodology:

The paper employs key ideas drawn from Feminism and Cultural Studies that would provide the broader framework for the present study. The present study follows the interpretative analysis of the primary text and the investigation would mainly rely on secondary sources available.

Analysis and discussion:

The institution of marriage is one of the fundamental social and cultural arrangements culturally defined and specificities in terms of roles and identities are differently shaped for the man and the woman located within domesticity. The Hindu scriptures emphasise the doctrines of marriage which form the fundamental support on which the stature of the family rests. Traditionally, it is believed that

> God has assigned the duties of subservience and devotion to women, and those who fall in line are 'good' women…Understandably, therefore, the primary male-female relationship which in all traditional societies constitutes marriage, has been seen as a justifiably unequal one. (Nabar 107)

Moreover, within this cultural model what is passed for as "the tradition", "the significant past" is in fact a "selective tradition"grants her very little breathing room as a human being. This happens because, as Deshpande observes "the meanings of words have been built round the interests of men" (Writing from the Margin 95) and thus embedded images and stereotypes remain in a kind absolute statement in the collective consciousness that seems to be prejudiced against the woman. In Indian context, patriarchy being the 'dominant' ideology for individual positioned within the family and society is built around the interest of man. Situated within such an asymmetrical relationship the woman then

becomes the subject of control, her very existence and identity takes shape according to the sanctions set by the canonical texts. These instructions stay as 'residue' that wields an overriding sways on the popular imagination even in contemporary society. These canonical texts are replete with images and stereotypes which provide the role for individuals to imitate. For a woman then the ideal role as advocated in these texts is that of a dutiful daughter, a dutiful wife and a loving mother. These roles very often inclined to deny the woman the very right of selfhood. Deshpande objects to this kind of straitjacketing of the identity of woman as a mother or a wife. An insightful analysis of cultural reality of Indian society, Sudhir Kakar and Kathrina Kakar identifies that despite the rapid urbanization in the last few decades, Indian society continues to thrive on a "hierarchally ordered" stable network of relationships (*The Indians* 15). Such study indicates the activeness of this principle as 'residue' of the past that is still active in the cultural process as an effective element of the present. These observations on the role of family and marriage in the formation of identity have been used as a cue for a discussion of how women in general fare in the patriarchal society.

Small Remedies, an unconventional novel of Shashi Deshpande portrays women like Savitribai and Leela who aspire to transcend the narrow confines of domesticity in their quest for identity. The two young women, one obsessed with music and the other a passionate believer in the communist world-view, break away from their families to seek an identity outside the family life. Deshpande in this novel adopts the structure of a biography within a biography. Madhu Saptarishi, the protagonist, has been commissioned by a publisher to write a biography on a famous classical singer, Savitribai Indorekar, the aging doyenne of Hindustani music, who transgresses the norms of marital domesticity

prescribed for women to pursue her genius. Besides, Madhu narrates her own life story and those of her aunt Leela and Savitribai. In the process, Deshpande through Madhu reveals the tension of the Indian woman trapped between the 'emergent' aspiration for individuality and the 'residue' of the forces of patriarchy which confine her.

Shashi Deshpande in *Small Remedies* employs memory as a narrative device in developing the characters of Savitribai and Leela through Madhu's vision. The scattered pieces of memory empower Madhu in the construction of Bai's identity and to some extent Leela's identity too. Madhu's memories unveil Savitribai's past life which intersected with Madhu's in Neemgaon. It is not the heroism of Bai that attracts Madhu; it is the mother in Bai, the woman in her who suffers in silence, struggles and triumphs through her life's journey that is far more revealing than the singer who eloped with her tablist guru for love. Infact, it is the story of all those who defy, suffer, endure and yet stand up to face life; all those who realize the "imperfectability" and yet "move forward to self-knowledge and acceptance of a flawed' self, past mistakes and future failures"(Jain,2003,280) While interviewing, Bai discloses to Madhu about the facts of her struggles in the pursuit of her ambition. She had the support and encouragement of her father-in-law- a radical step for a man of that class to let her daughter-in-law learn music. But Madhu recollects from her past now "In Neemgaon she was 'the singer woman' and there was something derogatory about the words, yes, I can see that now, about the way they said them." (29) The socio-cultural life has some pre-described boundary lines for women and by opting for a musical career which was so far the male domain Savitribai has transgressed that line. Located within such context transgressing limit is not an easy scheme for women as they have to overcome the impediments

to realize what they aspire. Madhu remembers the gossips surrounding Bai in Neemgaon. There was a Station Director who frequented Bai's house and got her many contracts with the radio, and was believed to be her admirer and lover. Bai has led the most unconventional life as compared with anyone in her society but Bai was ready to talk about her public success but did not wish to divulge the details of her private life. Bai denies the existence of any lover while recounting her story to Madhu. Madhu's dilemma highlights the contradiction between the writer who wants to present the truth and the subject, Bai, who refuses to relinquish her present status as a great singer with no controversial past. This struggle to reveal the real Bai acts cathartic for Madhu who fails to understand how a mother could forget her child:

> I can take over Bai's life and make what I want of it through my words. I can trap her into and image I create, seal her into an identity I make for her. The power of the writer is the power of the creator…I can make Bai…The feminist who lived her life on her terms. (166).

Bai's success as a singer was supported by Ghulam Saab, the tablist and her lover with whom she elopes and has a daughter, named Munni born out of wedlock. But she remained completely silent about him. Having fulfilled her dream of becoming a successful singer, Bai sought to reclaim the lost respectability, "A respectably married woman. Both Ghulam Saab, her lover and Munni, her daughter no longer part of her life". (167) revealing her anxiety to cover up her youthful indiscretions in order to present a picture of respectability. K.K.Sunalini comment on Bai's attempt to seal their names stands pertinent:

> Perhaps she thinks that this denial of her lover and daughter is necessary to attain fame and success. It is in the hands of

Madhu, the writer that Bai emerges as a rebel, the great artist who struggles and sacrificed everything in the cause of her art; the woman who gave up everything a comfortable home, a husband and a family- for love. (Sunalini196)

In a patriarchal society like India for a woman wifehood and motherhood remain the ultimate roles . But Deshpande through her characters objects to this kind of straitjacketing of the woman into a singular identity of a mother or a wife as she feels that there is a need to question as it denies the woman the very right to personhood. But in *Small Remedies*Deshpande presents Savitribai's as taking a bold step in moving out of the confines of domesticity by rejecting the traditional notion of wifehood and motherhood in her quest for a musical career that raises questions about her femininity. Situated in such context it is quite obvious when people in Neemgaon gossips concerning her, "A woman who'd left her husband's home-what morals would she have, anyway!" (223).Savitribai also understood that it was very difficult for a woman to rise to the top, "how difficult it is for her to break through the barrier"(224) to achieve that position. So it is quite natural that though Savitri Bai led an unconventional life but is apprehensive of acknowledging the skeletons in her closet due to socio-cultural pressures. SavitriBai the courageous woman, who revolts against tradition in her quest for identity and leaves her husband's home to pursue her career; seems to develop cold feet when she realizes the price she has to pay for it. Success cannot compensate the loss of respectability for a woman and she now hankers after reviving the respect once again. In her desire to regain her lost reputation Bai turns back towards her original self and this is symbolic of her realization that in the lives of women dreams are achieved at the cost of good reputations.

Madhu links the story of Bai to her aunt Leela, another strong character in the novel. It is she and Joe who bring up Madhu after her father's death and helps her get a job with Joe's friend. Leela tries to fulfill desires of her true self all her life irrespective of the limitations of tradition. In her personal life too she revolts against tradition and being a Brahmin widow she falls in love with a Christian. She works as a social worker and looks after T.B. patients. She is a woman who is committed to the communist ideology and participates in the Quit India Movement. Women like Leela who participated in the nationalist movements were likewise prone to justify stepping out of their narrowly prescribed roles in the name of patriotism and self-sacrifice for the nation. Madhu finds parallels between the lives of Savitribai and Leela. She thinks:

> I have begun thinking that in writing about Bai, I am writing about Leela as well and my mother and all those women who reached beyond their grasp. Bai moving out of her class in search of her destiny as a singer, Leela breaking out of the conventions of widow hood, looking for justice for the weak, my mother running in her bare feet, using her body as an instrument for speed – yes, they are in it together. But they paid their price for their attempts to break out." (283-284).

She notices that *"both were courageous women that both were women who worked for and got the measure of freedom they needed, that both were ready to accept wholly the consequences of their actions.* (284)Madhu recalls that Leela was a strong woman who never complained about the problems in her personal and professional life, "In her work she never reached the top of the hierarchy, while men who'd worked under her got there, she never complained" (224). Even Bai rarely complained about the obstacles in her life because, "To her, these were part of the road she had chosen, they just had to be endured"

(224). In an interview with VanamalaViswanath, Deshpande observes:

> It's necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this no further, then one becomes unhappy. This is what I have tried in my writing. (236)

Madhu's constant anxiety is replaced by appreciative confidence and a desire to reassess her life in the context of different relationships**.** Madhu could understand the patriarchal pressures and the compromises that Bai has to make and conceal a great deal in order to reach a level which very few women in a society achieve. UshaBande observes:

> Both Bai and Leela had dreams and both learnt to realize those dreams despite social barriers. They were women who dared to dream and translated those dreams into reality. Shashi Deshpande does not resist women dreaming but she resists the structure that does not allow them to dream. Her protagonist may not be very brave heroines, as some may assert, but they are strong women struggling to find their own way and own voice. (Naik201)

In reading the lives of Bai and Leela one would notice that these women reinvented themselves through a redifining of their roles in an effort to choose for identities beyond socio-cultural sanctions and which does not evidently conform to the approved culture specific codes. As Bai moves out of her class in search of her identity as a singer, Leela breaking out of the conventions of widowhood. In writing the stories of Bai and Leela, Madhu is engaged in the act of self-discovery. These women form a guiding and mentoring Madhu to face life and discover her true self. Leela

had been an embodiment of strength while Savitribai led an unconventional life to achieve her dream of becoming a singer. Madhu realizes that she had seen herself only as a mother and sobbing on her son's death could not believe that Bai being a mother could discard her daughter, Munni from her life. But eventually understands that Bai had privileged her career as a singer over her role as a mother. Though Bai has succeeded in her pursuit but at the same time she is aware of the limitations of her freedom. After attaining success she realizes that severing the familial ties brings disrespectability for a woman in the society she lives in for such acts lay outside the prescribed socio-cultural norms. So she maintained a stoic silence about the presence of her daughter, Munni born out of wedlock and her Muslim lover as she did not have the courage to acknowledge them as the tradition and moral values are still cherished in contemporary Indian society.

Conclusion:

In the novel Shashi Deshpande shows her concern for the lot of women in Indian society and her writing is inseperable from the milieu she describes and the reader for whom she writes. Not being a militant feminist she does not attribute to man the cause of being the sole cause of women's problems. The novelist has skillfully articulated their doubts regarding the age –old institution of marriage and family recognizing them as constructs that gratify culture's need to provide social consent to the prevailing prejudices. As seen in the novel Deshpande's women are subjects, socially constructed through discursive practices but as Vinay Kirpal says,

[Women seek] from inherited patterns of thought and action in favour of new modes, arrived at independently after much consideration of the various aspects of the problem keeping also in view the kind of society she lives in.(Kirpal148)

Through her novels Deshpande lays bare the socio-cultural politics at play in the construction of identity in the context of family. While dealing with the issue of identity vis-à-vis family necessitates an insightful analysis of the various hegemonic familial practices that convey an influential stance to this vital issue. Deshpande's protagonists being educated are aware of the prevailing prejudices towards the female but the 'residue' of the socially constructed discursive practices continued to be 'dominant' within them. She being a writer rooted in India is aware of women's position in Indian society and thus she does not advocate for radical feminism. Deshpande critiques the cultural prejudices as she observes that, "I believe that women are neither inferior nor subordinate human beings…I believe that women (and men as well) should not be straitjacketed into roles that warp their personalities, but should have options available to them."(Writing from the Margin 83)The protagonists being educated contemporary women respond to the 'emergent' practices as society develops out of a new set of social interactions and actively challenge the 'dominant' practices. Such effect of the 'emergent' social interactions no doubt provides space for women in other roles.Moreover, the study of the novels ascertain that as "they move out of enclosures and experience a wider world; they grow in stature and move outside the limited confining categories of oppression and aggression"(Jain 60). But these feminist 'emergent' practices are not able to become the 'dominant' in the Indian context. Deshpande's uniqueness is that "her protagonists are not rebels but they learn in the course of their encounter with the harsh realities of life to generate in themselves the power to cope with the male-orientation" (Pandey74). And her protagonists being aware of these changes reclaim their confidence in themselves as a human being and not gendered self that become cultural sculpts to be engraved upon. Moreover, her

protagonists located within marital domesticity mature herself and tries to understand the roles and relationships with regard to herself as well as the shared experience within the family and society at large. It then becomes apparent that identity of women is not unified within a coherent 'self' as one cannot deny the significant role played in its construction by the socio-cultural dimensions that acts as 'residue' of the past within which she is situated.

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Challenging Power Structures; Infringing love-laws: Ammu-Rahel's rebellion in Roy's The God of Small Things

Dr. Soumen Mukherjee
Associate Professor of English
Presidency University, Itgalpur (Rajanakunte),
Yelahanka, Bengaluru -560 064, Karnataka, India

Abstract

Marginalization is often based on such concepts as religion, gender, culture, race, caste, socio-economic position or class, and terrestrial location. Inher Booker Prize winning debut-novel The God of Small Things (1997), Arundhati Roy, while portraying the quandary of the Indian women, where the mêlée against gender oppression are enunciated through the scrutiny of the conjugal and inter-gender relations of its female protagonists Ammu and Rahel, pledges to show a path for the Indian women for repelling indigenous along with universal discernments. Ammu longing to take control of her body that is so much bottled-up by a pungent edict, rebels against anorganism whereconfrontation against caste and class despotism and impelling on anti-colonial thought and action are looked down upon. On the other, her daughter Rahel's deed of non-conformity can be considered as acts of confrontation through which she wants to amend the social-stigma. The Paper tries to maintain that if Ammu's cataclysm against parental as well as marital orthodoxy, and her erotic- liaison with an untouchable Paravan Velutha constitutes a desecration against an vicious social -order, then Rahel's commotion or her "quest for self-identity" is an endeavor at

a disparagingprobe of the embryonicintegrities and edifices of the post-colonial Indian society, where the concept of gender egalitarianism is yet to be accomplished.

Key-Words: Marginalization; Culture; Women; Society; Rebellion

Indian society is primarily patriarchal in nature from the beginning, based on male preponderance and female relegation. From ages women have been treated as marginalized entity.The distinctiverigidity of modern patriarchy "assigns females to a position distinctly subordinate to males- constrained, dependent, exploited oppressed, physically and psychically endangered"[1]. The idea of purity in relation to gender has been normalized in the Indian populace, and the marginalized societal roles of women follow suit.It may be proven by the fact that even after so much advancement in our society; daughters are still treated assolitaries after their marriage. The Hindu Succession Bill of 1955-56 entitles Hindu daughters, equal rights of heirloom in their father's property. But these legal rights are denied to them either in the name of conviction or personal laws. Wives have the "right to- reside" in their matrimonial homes only during the pendency of marriage. In modern times, when women have shown valour to come out to earn her own living, impediments have augmented manifold. Thenew woman has to look after both household chores and her job, which is quite challenging! Added to this, if they have ahallucinogenichusband, who bald-facedlydissipate away their incomes, and torment them too, then it becomes a matter of long-lasting anguishment for them.

The abovementionedtribulations of women are intenselyrepresented in Arundhati Roy's *The God of- Small Things*[2]. In Roy's portrayal of Kerala in the novel, there are copiouscoatings offrighteningstanching from expansionism, patriarchy, creed and standing. These assemblies areoften

dishevelled and serve as a multifariousrepressivescheme that is now and thentough to flout.The novelist presents the powerlessness of women through her female characters, whoepitomize Indian womenrepresenting three generations- who are all demoralizedviciously and imperilled to heartless treatment.Ammu, demonstrating the second generation in the novelexemplifies a new cohort of women who are not ready to negotiate with the male-controlledaccord of society. Though denied higher education, and deprived of the opportunity to explore innovative vistas in life through acquired knowledge, she shows a lot of mental strength and self-assurance which is unbecoming for a woman in a typical Indian ménage.

As an adolescent, Ammu does not know to the expectations on her that she should wait obediently in her parent's house for a suitable husband. Instead she more or less escapes her parents and marries the firstman who proposes to her, outside her parent's religion and without their accord. Ill-advisedly, the bliss of her married life was eclipsed with squabbles and it worsened, the day her husband treated her as ragdollby propositioning her to satisfythe covetousness of his English manager, Mr. Hollick. Ammu was factuallyperturbedand left her husband and reverted, unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem, to everything that she had left from, only a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children, and no more dreams.' (42)Nonetheless at her paternal house, Ammu's brother, Chacko, reminds her children that their mother has no 'locus stand i', no legal rights to inherit the factory or the house for instance (56).

Ironic as it may seem, but it is true that not only men, but women toosubsidize to the oppression of their co - gender, by either torturing them or by provoking them to take protection, ardently or ungenerouslyunder the patriarchal crinkle.Nevertheless,

while most women may not be belligerent in the same way men are, cross-cultural studies ratify that girls and women are equally aggressive in "indirect" ways, and mainly toward each other. Some women envy and compete against other women, instead of men, and often tend to deny this; even to themselves.[3]A sharp woman like Ammu is penetratingly cognizant of this horrendous female duplicity and therefore had a repugnance for two-facedness. She strappingly disfavours the women relations who come to her house to show their artificial-sympathy, because interiorly they were savouring by flaking their '*crocodile tears*' to chasten her for leading a man-less life!

From the same angle we must mention the name of Baby Kochamma, the paternal aunt of Ammu. After Ammu returns to her paternal home, Baby Kochamma develops a bizarre type of anantagonism with her because she begins to consider her as a kerbside of the same dinghy i.e. a woman in a Man- less world. She hates not only Ammu from the staple of her heart, but also her blameless children, "…for she considered them doomed fatherless waifs. Worse still they were Half– Hindu Hybrids, whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry…. (45). Here we see another swelteringinstance of a woman, who not only cossets in slighting another member of her own gender, but also unstintinglyassents the diktat of the ascendancy, i.e. the patriarchy. All the same a woman herself, Baby Kochamma trusts in the age old societal aphorism that a married daughter has no right in her parental house and a divorced one has no identity of her own in this merciless society. Hence, the novel represents through Baby Kochamma and Mammachi, the deleterious side of radicalism.

On the other hand, Ammu's Father, an out- an- out booster of patriarchy and interventionism is inept to admit the real reason for his daughter's divorce, which indirectly connotes that Ammu

herself is to blame for the step. As expected, Ammu has her abhorrence for colonial mentality. Added to it, she had her own acrimoniousfamiliaritywith her ex-husband's Englishman boss. So she is unable to digest her Father's indominatable admiration for the Britishers and so is not mortified to call her father "an incurable British CCP," the CCP being short for *chhi – chhi – poach*, which means shit wiper in Hindi. Again, another illustration proves the recalcitrant nature of Ammu, when she evades a surname after divorce, as it institutes the hegemony of the male-dominated society. Hence, Estha and Rahel have no surname because, Ammu, considers reverting to her maiden name. However, she feels, that choosing between her husband's name and her father's name does not "give a woman much of a choice." (36-37)

In this context we must also mention Ammu'sabhorrence of mendacities and disingenuousness, and she never miscues an occasion toacerbicallydisdain other people when demeaned of those concerns. One example of this is duringthe Marxist march, when Chacko appreciatively rolls down his car window to say thanks to a manwho with his balled fist thumped down the bonnet of the Plymouth (someone else had bangedit open), Ammu says with causticness in her speech: "Don't be so ingratiating, Comrade . . . It was anaccident. He didn't really mean to help. How could he possibly know that in this old car therebeats a truly Marxist heart?" (68).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her essay "*Can the Subalterns Speak*?"[4]tosses a direct challenge to the race and class thoughtlessness of the western intelligentsia, asking, "Can the Subalterns Speak?"(284). It is a point that in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can't speak. The subaltern as female is more deeply in the shadow (287). Ammu tries to disrupt thetrialof this very male dominion by daring to

express her valuationsaudaciously and is critical in the assessment of her brother. She ridicules her mother's mania with her son and refuses to admit that Chacko is "brilliant", "made of priministerial material" or "one of the cleverest men in India". In fact, she shows Chacko, his true stature. While her mother and aunt pledge to the male chauvinist notions of "men's needs", she ferventlydenounces the out- and- out charlatan and self-proclaimed Marxist Chacko and his sexual-relationship with the women workers of the industrial unit. So it is seen that Chacko, being the authoritative, or the overriding force here, takes advantage of the immobilized or the marginalized women working in his factory in the name of Marxism.

In an interview from 1993, Spivak clarifies that her use of the term subaltern wasand is very specific; the pure subaltern cannot, by definition, move upwards in the socialhierarchy or make his or her voice heard. To speak, in Spivak's sense, is when there has beena "transaction between the speaker and the listener" and to her there is "something of a notspeakingnessin the very notion of subalternity" (The Spivak Reader 289).[5] However, Ammu's rebellion is not only against the hegemony of the patriarchal society but also against her subaltern status. What is surprising enough is that Ammu didn't have any ceremonialedification nor have met any noteworthy people in life by which she gets the motivation to challenge the authority of the center. From her early childhood she would thrust aside those fables in which Father Bear thumps Mother Bear with brass vases and Mother Bear suffered the pain with silent acquiescence.

However, in her skirmish against societal atrocity, she felt that there was something missing in her life. Steadily, she could comprehend that her body was dreadfullyyearning for physical love, which alone could calm her self-containedcravings. So she proceeds to retrieve herself, to reclaim her body, 'as though she

had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorce hood.'(44)Then there were other factors which made her fidgety too. The dream of the one armed man advocated to her that it was no use seeking perfection in life, the small and powerless people like her could but mollify themselves with whatever this little time provided them. The arrival of Chacko's ex-wife Margaret Kochamma added fuel to the fire. When she saw that Margaret had so easily suppressed her past, in order to enjoy her life in the company of her former husband, it incited her dormant cravings, of living life to the fullest. Besides it was Velutha's machismo which really fascinated her towards this person and provoked her to interrupt all class-barricades:

> She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha's stomach grow tough and rise under his skin, like the divisions on a slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body had changed so quietly from a flat muscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer - carpenter's body. Polished with a high – wax body polish. He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile.'(175).

So she is tempted to take the fatal decision 'to love by night the man, her children loved by day. To use by night the boat that her children used by day.' (44) Nonetheless, at this juncture, when Ammu breaks the age old taboo of caste-division, it would be wrong for us to assume that she was oblivious about the repercussion of this sexual relationship. An bright woman like Ammu was very much aware of the social reality, and also the fact that her impermanent erotic utopia could never promise her the enduring ecstasy of internal immovability. But circumstantial evidences illustrate that at the first go she was carried- away with the typical notion of attaining sensual gratification from a *Paravan*, whose eventual upshot can never lead anyone to anywhere. It is appropriate

to quote Diane Ackerman in this context, who in her celebrated book, *ANatural History of Love⁶*, deliberates the prominenceof the hormone oxytocin in a person's experience of love. Oxytocin, also known as the "cuddlechemical", "plays an important role in romantic love, as a hormone that encourages cuddlingbetween lovers and increases pleasure during lovemaking…The hormone stimulates the smoothmuscles and sensitizes the nerves, and snowballs during sexual arousal." (Ackerman, 163).Oxytocin is also related to the sensation of "closeness" that one experiences after intercourse, whichmay elucidate why women are prone to "fall" for a man that they may know theyhave no future with.Ammu may had the similar experience!

However, aninsubordinate natured Ammu was not only attracted to Velutha by his corporealallure alone, but she was also awestruck to see within him, the gumshoe of a real avant-garde! When she first saw him, holding a red flag in a political procession, which was demanding an equal status for every individual, he seemed to her to be a dissident, housing "a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world" she too resisted. (176) Awkwardly, Indian societal norms treat tenderness with a conventionally untouchable carpenter as afilthy act, and so it establishescontravention. So, when Velutha's andAmmu's sexual love had been exposed, Mammachi acts independently from Chacko to preventAmmu's and Velutha's relationship from developing any further. Ammu is locked up inher bedroom, insulted for her severe offence, and eventually banished from the Ayemenem House. She is accused of having "defiled generations of breeding" but Chacko is not blamed for any such 'defilement'.Baby Kochamma rushes to the police station with a false complaint against Velutha of attempted rape, kidnapping of children and murder of Sophie Mol. Velutha is instantaneouslygripped by the police and

savagelyexterminated. Ironic it may sound, but this same Baby Kochamma did not bother about the odour of the factory women, Chacko brought to his bedroom, but wonders how Ammu could undergo the smell of a factory carpenter.

Ammu's ordeal does not stop here. While she gets the permission to attend the funeral rights of Sophie, she is made to stand in a different row with her children.Nevertheless, instantaneouslypost- funeral, a grief- stricken and traumatized Ammu goes right-away to the police station and tries to save the blameless Velutha, from the clutches of law, by modifying the loggedproclamation of Baby Kochamma. But the police officer misbehaves with Ammu, because in the eyes of our patriarchal society, she is a '*Veshya',* i.e. a prostitute:

> 'It's a little too late for all this, don't you think? He said ... He stared at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police did not take statement from *Veshyas* or their illegitimate children. Ammu said she'd see about that. Inspector Thomas Mathew came around his desk and approached Ammu with his baton.

> 'If I were you' he said, 'I'd go home quietly'. Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. Tap, tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones, that he wanted packed and delivered.'(7-8)

This whole incident shows the moral courage of Ammu on the one hand and the offensive nature of the enforcers of law- and- order on the other. Nonetheless a discerning person like Baby Kochamma could very well detain the perils associated with the presence of Ammu in the Ayemenem household, as it could put her into enormous legal trouble. So she started hatching plots to get Ammu

out of Ayemenem and thereby inhibiting the whole case of Velutha to come out from the closet. Finally, she instigates Chacko to get rid of her niece. Actually, Roy shows in her novel women with a 'range of options and choices, whether complicit, resistant—or both—to the dominant order', and she does not idealize the women but rather exposes them as human beings with multifaceted characters with the likelihood of bustle and answerability towards their own activities.

The chastisement mounded on Ammu had neither any lucidity nor any validation, as it engulfs the lives of three innocent human beings, for the supposed misconduct of one. Ammu is separated from her children, as Estha is returned to his father and Rahel alone is permitted to live at Ayemenem. However, sadly enough, Ammu is not allowed to visit her daughter. Everybody's mistreatment, forces Ammu to seek a good job in order to keep her children with her and also to sustain her in a heartless demesne. She tries a number of jobs, but unfortunately owing to her declining health she dies alone in an unfamiliar Lodge of Aleppy, where she had gone to appear for a job interview. (159-61) Just prior to her death, she is irked by a sporadic dream, where the policemen approach her with snacking scissors, wanting to slash off her hair. "They did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they would catch in the bazaar – branded them so that everybody should know them for what they were. *Veshyas*. So that new policemen on the beat would have no trouble identifying whom to harass."(161) Obviously this confounding daze relates to the tremor she had to endure in the police station of Kottayam. Essentially, it is very hard for a decent woman to disregard the slur heaped on her by the defenders of the society. Heart-breaking enough, even death does not put an end to the dishonour that had been piled on the unfortunate Ammu, while living: "The church refused to bury Ammu. On several counts. So Chacko

hired a van to transport the body to the electric crematorium. He had her wrapped in a dirty bed sheet and laid out on a stretcher." (162).

Ammu signifies people who basically dare to do 'the unthinkable', to contravene the very line that upholds the system of variance that casteism and patriarchy intrinsically conserve. She epitomizes all those who have agonized due to transgressions against the 'Love Laws' and gender-specific anticipations imposed upon them, sometimes even by recompensing with their own lives.

The succeeding marginalized character is Ammu's daughter Rahel, a representative of the third generation, who is in an amended situation to her grand -mother and mother, in respect to the society. Rahel had a gloomy upbringing, as she had to leave her Father's house and along with it, the paternal warmth for ever, when the parents got divorced. Studies of the implications of parental separation for children's well-being have steadily shown that children of divorced parents fare worse on different measures of well-being than children living in intact families (Amato 2001; Amato and Keith1991).[7] Rahel along with her brother Estha and mother Ammu, had no substitute but to live like unwelcomed guests at her maternal uncle's house. Hence, they were deprived of the very idea of contentment, which is so much needed for the children in their growing years. Ironically enough, Baby Kochamma, Chacko and even the maid-servant of the household, Kochu Maria did not hesitate to let them know that the Ayemenem house was not their pertinent place of lodging. It made Rahel so much hungry for love that even a casual handshake of her mother or maternal uncle became a cherishable moment to the twins "treasured and threaded like precious beads on a (somewhat scanty) necklace"(62).It was at this very moment, that Velutha came into their life and was able to win over the children and became a Father figure to them.

Nevertheless, this era was transitory for Rahel, as numerouscalamities occurred, all unexpected, subsequently in her life. Despondently enough, at the young age of seven, she had not only to be a mere spectator of these calamities, but has even to endure its repercussions!

The paramountknock-back to her embryonic phase came, when her mother's clandestinesexual-relationship with Velutha was exposed and she was locked in her bedroom. When they approached their mother, a ferocious Ammuimpugned them as "millstones round my neck". (253) This unpredictedincident upsets the children so much, that they plan to flee, and are escorted by their cousin Sophie Mol, in this misadventure. They try to escape by a boat at night and due to the current in the river and heavy darkness, Sophie is inadvertently drowned. Subsequently, the police arrest Velutha and kill him, on the charges of Sophie's murder, and a devastated Rahel has to go to the police station to testify against this very man. Though they are too young to appreciate the depth of all these, but they fully know that their friend Velutha is guiltless. Yet they speak against him in the police station, as Baby Kochamma convinced them to do, as that was the only way to save their mother, from the clutches of the police. Grief-stricken, Rahel is unable to come out of this mourning, throughout herentire life.

Even so, the nastiest episode was yet to come. Four days after the funeral of Sophie, Chacko broke down the door of the bedroom where Ammu had locked herself and yelled: 'Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body!' Little Rahel was so shocked by the passion of this sudden ferociousness of her maternal uncle, that it haunted her for years to come. It replicated later in her tenaciousreverie: "a fat man, faceless, kneeling beside a woman's corpse. Hacking its hair off. Breaking every bone in its body..." (225) The wretchedness of Rahel does not end here. As

her mother is forcibly evacuated from the Ayemenem house, her health deteriorates and consequently she dies in a cheap lodge, unattended by anyone. Her twin brother Estha too is separated from her as he is sent back to his Father (326). This was a matter of deep anguish for her, as they were raised together as one individual. Throughout the rest of her childhood, Rahel never gets the opportunity to meet her brother, even once. This isolation from her near and dear ones, made Rahel not only stubborn but also unsocial.

After the demise of her mother, she practically drools from school to school like an aimless child and spends her holidays at her maternal uncle's house. Actually Rahel has her own way of remonstrating against the disingenuousness of the society. The mistreatment that she had writhed from society after the death of her mother had made her determined, intrepid and capable of taking inventiveness. As the victim of a dysfunctional family, she fails to connect with the people around her and lacks self-assurance. The most atypical act of social contravention committed by Rahel is her incestuous love for her twin brother Estha - which is perhaps her implied confrontation against the sharp-tasting social order. "Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister, a brother. A woman, a man. A twin, a twin" (93). Truthfully, the only person with whom Rahel has congruence, a compassionate bond is her own twin brother Estha, eighteen minutes her senior! Their dispositionspoise to each -other like the two splits of a sphere.

Once completing school, she spends eight years in the college without finishing the five years undergraduate course and taking her degree, because it seems that she was more fretful to prove to the world, that she had the ability to live an unencumbered life of her own rather than that of building an upright vocation. Neither

she put her foot in Ayemenem again nor did she live a cheerful life in the college. She fortuitously meets the American Research Scholar Larry Mc Caslin in Delhi and marries him. Nonetheless it would be off-beam for us to assume that there was anything romantic in her hasty feat. Just like her mother tied the knot in the absence of an alternate, her daughter too drifts into marriage, "like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair, in an airport lounge" (18). However the marriage proves to be abortive, just like her mother's and uncle's.

Nonetheless, economic self-sufficiency gives her an edge over her mother and grand-mother, and she takes her divorce in a chivalrous fashion. She works as a waitress in an Indian restaurant in New York, and consequently as a night clerk in a bullet proof cabin at a gas station outside Washington. Through these anomalous jobs Rahel ascertained the unbending truth that there is nothing like 'gender-specific jobs' and a up-to-the-minute woman should be ready to accept the challenge of working in an assorted milieu, in any given state of affairs.

Essentially, Rahel is the quintessence of her mother. If she is despicable in nature, she can also be ardent, with feminine merits of affection and broadmindedness. She colossally loves her twin brother Estha, and deems her to be a part of her own self. So as soon as she gathers from Baby Kochamma that Estha has been re-returned, she packs her bags and leaves America forever to accompany her brother at Ayemenem. Here we can very well perceive, that even after the passage of twenty-three long years, Rahel has neither untutored her previous life, nor is able to separate herself from her twin brother. She lives her own sovereign life, but for that she never makes any conciliation, a value she has inbred from her mother.

To conclude, Ammu and Rahel stand against the hegemonic forces of the male dominated social order as well as the hypocrisy of their co-gender, its forbidding canons and conventions! Whereas in Roy's *The God of Small Things* the female characters of the first generation like Mammachi, Kochu Maria and Baby Kochamma mutely tolerate the despotism of the virile hegemony, Ammu and Rahel belonging to the second generation are not scared to pliably confront the well-thought-out norms of the society: like Ammu having a sexual relationship with the lowly *Paravan* Velutha or Rahel having an incestuous liaison with her twin brother Estha. These bold women are not ready to be treated like rugs; they impudently manifest their remonstration by challenging the power-structures & infringing the love-laws!

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5. According to Ranajit Guha, subalternity is the "demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite' "which leaves more room for different kinds of social categories like "rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper-middle peasants" to be included, if only they act in the interest of the 'people' i.e. the 'subalterns', not the 'elite' (Guha 44).

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Claiming identity for the inhabitants of the Sundarbans: A perspective after Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide

Prasenjit Datta Roy
Ph.D Research Scholar
Department of English, Mizoram University

Abstract

There is need to conserve the local culture. The continuous wave of globalisation as well as modernisation always imposes a pressure on the local culture and may mould the origin to a great extant through cultural exchanges. It is in this way that a hybrid culture including religious belief and literature may take birth and which may claim a different identity. The study following will try to highlight the issues mentioned above.

This paper will try to highlight the issue of the identity for the inhabitants of the Sundarban, a coastal area of West Bengal, India. The people of that area believe in natural forces and they worship them in their own ways. Their belief and practice has given birth to a religious custom which may claim a separate identity. The mythological story about the deity of Bon Bibi has achieved an equal historical status among the locals. The Sundarban inhabitants worship the deity following a mixture of Hindu and the Islamic beliefs. While the chanting of mantra is a Hindu way of worshipping, the use of the term Allah for several times may confuse the reader about the ethnic identity of those people.

The story about Bon Bibi is a popular myth. But the scripture is unavailable. The Bon Bibi myth has been collected

by Nirmal Bose, a social activist from the narration of Fokir, a boatman. That narration with proper nourishment can be brought into printed form in local dialect to claim for a separate identity.

To first put things in view, the present paper would like to refer to the permutation of culture and literature and its influence on each other. Literary works namely fiction, poetry, drama, criticism etc. are considered to have permanent artistic values. Culture, on the other hand, includes different perspectives of survival including eating, lodging and education and thus it is a wider concept than literature. In this context the relationship between literature and culture, i.e. the blending of literature and culture is required to be considered. Literature plays different roles in the presentation of a culture while culture plays a vital role in giving birth to literature.

It is needless to say that Indian culture it is a blending of different cultures. India includes different states, regions and people with their divergent culture, languages, attire, food and religious practices. Indian culture is a colourful consortium of each colour with its individual significance. The culture of a particular place is built as well as influenced with the source of earning; way of living including primary needs of food, cloth, education, besides others including entertainment, religious belief etc. Infect, culture resides in a group of human beings called society, while it is culture which moulds the society to a great extant.

The influence of climate and economic resources on the material aspects of culture, e.g. food, dress, modes of living, etc., is too obvious to need any discussion. No one would deny the fact that the material aspect of Indian culture is also moulded on the pattern of its physical and economic environment. (Hussain 5)

India is a land of multiculturalism. But within this multiculturalism each individual culture may claim its separate identity and can have its separate literature. To view in detail, the novel *The Hungry Tide* , written by Amitav Ghosh focuses on deep cultural values and through these the novelist explores the changes those have come and been coming into society. Amitav Ghosh reveals the syncretic culture that exists in the Sundarban area by exploring into worship patterns that manifest cultural assimilations leading to a kind of amalgamation of different ethos. The tide of political events during the Indo-Pak war in 1971 and the resulting refugee influx at the Sundarbans of West Bengal, India, from Khulna District of erstwhile East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh, has compelled the new comers to go through a cultural compromise irrespective of separate religions. The human existence within the natural scenario of that region and the prevailing myth about a local deity has given birth to a syncretic way of worshipping God.

The Hungry Tide reveals that during the creation of Bangladesh in1971 there has been an influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh into India. Rehabilitating them is often done in an illogical way. The existence of refugees is an indicator of the presence of political conflict.

> *Once we lived in Bangladesh, in Khulna jila: we're tide country people, from the Sundarban's edge. When the war broke out, our village was burned to ash; we crossed the border, there was nowhere else to go. We were met by the police and taken away; in bushes they drove us, to a settlement camp. (Ghosh 164-65)*

Amitav Ghosh in his novel highlights the immense toughness of the Morichjhapi refugees and their hard work and enterprising spirit that has transformed Morichjhapi into a hub of activity.

There was much to show – even in the short while I had been away, there had been many additions, many improvements. Saltpans had been created, tube wells had been dug, water had been dammed for the rearing of fish, a bakery had started up, boat-builders had set up workshops, a pottery had been founded as well as an ironsmith's shop; there were people making boats while others were fashioning nets and crab lines; little marketplaces, where all kinds of goods were being sold, had sprung up. All this in the space of a few months! It was an astonishing spectacle – as though an entire civilization had sprouted suddenly in the mud. (Ghosh 190-91)

Piyali Roy, generally known as Piya notices that the boat man Fokir's adoration to Bon Bibi is almost in a similar way as the Muslims do while worshipping their Allah. The way of worshipping followed by Fokir shows the merging of cultural identities. In Bengal, since before partition in 1947 both the communities of the Hindus and the Muslims have been living side by side for centuries together and thus have been influenced by each other. Similarly, in this novel too, Bon Bibi emerges as a protective goddess for the inhabitants of the area of the Sundarbans. The original Hindu ethnic identity of the refugees and their subsequent adoption of the mode of worshipping of the deity have given birth to an amalgamated ethnic value. Dokkin Rai, a powerful landowner who had reigned at the Sundarbans did not like the influx of people into his territory and invoked Allah to drive them away. Besides, Nirmal Bose has recorded his utter surprise at the way Horen worships in order to protect them from the tigers.

But nothing untoward happened. We came to a clearing and Kusum led the way to the shrine, which was nothing

> *more than a raised platform with bamboo sides and a*
> *thatched covering. Here we placed the images of Bon*
> *Bibi and her brother Shah Jongoli, and the Kusum lit a*
> *few sticks of fragrant dhoop and Fokir fetched some*
> *leaves and flowers and laid them at their feet. (Ghosh*
> *245-46)*

In *The Hungry Tide* the reader goes through the description of Sundarbans, a cluster of islands in the south east of Bengal at the mouth of the river the Ganga. It becomes very apparent that death is an ever present reality for the inhabitants of the Sundarbans who live amid the mangroves, under the continual threat of tigers, crocodiles, dolphins and cyclones. The reader observes the natural phenomenon of the Sundarbans with Piyali Roy an India born American Cetologist[1] and Kannai, a businessman of New Delhi. Piyali has come to the Sundarbans to do her Ph.D on the Irrawaddy Dolphins.

'I'm a cetologist,' she said. (Ghosh.11)

Kanai wants to recover the journal written by his deceased uncle Nirmal Bose. It is through Nirmal's journal that the reader comes to know in detail about the history of the islands including disaster of Morichjhapi where the Government agencies had massacred thousands of refugees in an attempt to evacuate the place to build reserve forest for the Royal Bengal Tiger.

The people in the boat joined together their voices and began to shout, in unison, 'Amra kara? Bastuhara. Who are we? We are the dispossessed. (Ghosh. 254) The refugees of Morichjhapi became disobedient to the State orders to evacuate the area for a reserve forest needed for Royal Bengal Tiger. Even the people grimly cluing to their settlements. They continued to depend on their self-sufficiency and confidence. They settlers continued

shouting an abstain answering the questions they had themselves posed.

> Morichjhapi chharbona.We'll not leave Morichjhapi,do what you may.(Ghosh 254)

Besides, the novel states that when Horen chants the mantra of Bon Bibi, Nirmal is astounded to hear the invocation in Allah's name. The style of prayer was that of a Hindu puja, but the language used is deeply interpenetrated by Arabic and Persian expressions.

There had been a close relationship between the refugee movement and the left wing politics of West Bengal as far as Morichjhapi refugees are concerned. The political power in West Bengal lay with the Left Wing. The Left Front provided leadership to the refugees and in return the refugees provided mass support to the left which helped them to become influential in West Bengal state politics and get political authority ultimately. One of the reasons why the refugees left Dandakaranya was that the communists instigated them to demand for resettlement within West Bengal before their coming into power. [2]

The refugees were also fed up with the natural climatic inclemency of that region and the surroundings as being born in the plains of Bengal.

> The soil was rocky and the environment was nothing like they had ever known. They could not speak the languages of that area and the local people treated them as intruders, attacking them with bows, arrows and other weapons. For many years they put up with these conditions. (Ghosh 118)

So when the communists came into power in 1977 the refugees saw a ray of hope. They started moving in large numbers into West Bengal. But in that situation the Left Front government

opposed the coming of the refugees and tried to drive them away. Despite this, a large number of thirty thousand refugees occupied Morichjhapi around the Sundarbans and settled down to active life. Subsequently, the refugees began to understand the betrayal of the politicians and their attempt at exploitation. But this was a miscalculation: the authorities had declared that Morichjhapi was a protected forest reserve and they had proved unbending in their determination to evict the settlers. (Ghosh 119)

In Ghosh's narrative, the folk tale of Bon Bibi represents the cultural narrative of people of the tide country of the Sundarbans. For the inhabitants of that area the basic struggle for survival and the challenges involved in it are very much overpowering that they find no scope to quarrel on the basis of religious and linguistic differences. The novel projects a concept of a hybrid culture that exists at the Sundarbans. In the midst of the conflict and confusion among the refugees there is a sense of harmony as regards the religious feelings uniquely crystalised out of different faiths.

At Morichjhapi, Nirmal Bose, a social activist collects the sources of Bon Bibi myth from Fokir's recitations which mingle both the Muslim and Hindu faith. The ritual prayer to Bon Bibi is a mingling of Islamic and Hindu spiritual beliefs. Thus though clay images of Bon Bibi and Shah Jangoli are worshipped which is something unconventional in Islam ; and the rhythm of recitation is that of Puja, the prayers, like all Quranic prayers, begin with Bismillah and are repeatedly combined with continuous invocation to Allah. The folklore represents not only cultural syncretism but also linguistic and generic one.

Nirmal writes his journal - the one that has now been bequeathed to Kanai - in the village of Morichjhapi the year after his retirement as headmaster. All through her years of establishing

the Badabon Trust, his wife had thought he was a writer; in fact, however, the journal is the first and last thing he has written since coming to Lusibari. (Hawley 129)

It is claimed by the local people that there prevails a historical truth behind the figure of BonBibi, as the presence of Islam is historically associated with attempts to turn dense forest into cultivated areas as early as the 13th century. An interesting antecedent is the story of one Khan Jahan Ali, a Zamindar died in 1459 A D, who domesticated a piece of land that was turned to paddy cultivation in the Khulna district. According to the legend, he arrived from the Middle East riding two crocodiles, which later makes him a Sufi saint. His shrine is at Bagerhat in Khulna in Bangladesh. Near the shrine, lies a water tank where crocodiles live which are supposed to be the descendants of the two he rode on his coming from the Middle East.[3]

Besides, according to a popular myth, Dokkhin Rai was a Brahmin who lived in the forest and imposed taxes on the humble population. Soon his greed became boundless as well as violent, and he got transformed into a tiger and started eating people. He ironically became the Lord of Lower Bengal of the Sundarbans until Bon Bibi appeared to punish him, subsequently inspiring the local people for their unanimous submission to the very local deity. They got a lesson from Bon Bibi's story that the deity would protect only those people who use the forest for their essential livelihood; provided that they should be clean in their aim, and especially those who are not greedy. For this reason, organising a journey through the forest for either fishing, or collecting fuel or honey, is a complex ritual as a Men who goes into the forest must not take from there more than they really need and must only enter when they are really in need. [4]

In the novel, Fokir feels the fear of Bon Bibi, the deity who protects that entire region. Kanai, on the other hand conceals his fear, which Fokir interprets as an act of unspiritual boldness. Kanai is put to an ordeal just like Dukhey. Like Dukhey, he would have to come out of the forest being a wiser man. Left on the island all alone to face a tiger, Kanai is frightened, humbled and blessed with a kind of epiphany. When he is finally rescued, he has learnt his lesson well; he no longer blames Fokir for abandoning him on the island, and decides to go home, belatedly following his aunt's suggestion. The supernatural and spiritual encounter with the divinities of the forest cures Kanai from his pride and self-centeredness and makes him convinced about the potency and power of native belief and culture.

The narrator outlines some prime aspects in the narrative- a perilous ecosystem, devastation of estuarine mangrove forest, nature's aesthetic appeals and human interaction with a catastrophic environment. The text emphatically highlights the conflict between man under pressing refugee conditions and nature. *The Hungry Tide* has the eco-critical inquiry while it exposes a scio-historical and ideological incursions in the perilous Sunderbans local culture. To force the refugees to occupy the territory of tigers is fraught with dire consequences for both the species, which ultimately occurred from time to time. Instances of political expediency and, more than that, its apathy towards the animal world are glaringly presented in this tiny corner of habitat.

To conclude, this can be said that, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* brings out such a cultural and religious tradition of the Sundarban inhabitants which accompany a unique way of living including the legend of Bon Bibi, the local deity. The reason behind choosing *The Hungry Tide* for this paper is the unique narration

by Ghosh to establish a heteroglotic[5] national identity on the basis of realistic principles around a specific geographical area. Besides, the elements of history, Ghosh uses mythical elements also not borrowing from any established religion, but the local folktale that itself is reflective of the cultural hybridity of the land. As it is found in the novel that the style of worshipping the deity includes both the religious values of Hinduism and Islam, but a common faith on the deity among the Sundarban dwellers, so, the very cultural hybridism may claim a different indigenous identity for the inhabitants of that place.

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Memory and Trauma in Kamila Shamsie's Burnt Shadows

Debakshi Bora
M. Phil. Research scholar
Department of English
Assam University, Diphu Campus

Kamila Shamsie, one of the frontrunners in the genre of South Asian fiction writing in English from Pakistan has paved her way in the world literature by projecting a different reality of the established orders. Her novels exemplify the juxtaposition of memory and trauma along with history in order to subvert the hegemony and the established history. By bringing forth the trauma of the individuals, she attempts to interrogate the Westerner's dominant melancholia regarding the Holocaust and 9/11.

Shamsie has written altogether six novels namely *In the City by the Sea* (1998), *Salt and Saffron* (2000), *Kartography* (2002), *Broken Verses* (2005), *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and *A God in Every Stone* (2014). All these novels epitomize the writing back to the hegemony making her oeuvre rich in quality.

This research paper attempts to purport the role of memory resulting in trauma subverting the Eurocentric trauma of empire which affects the history with reference to *Burnt Shadows*. Shamsie through her novel *Burnt Shadows* explores the ways trauma is represented based on 9/11 dominantly in fictions. As a postcolonial writer, she tries to delineate the re-imagination of trauma through the constant memory moving backward and forward to challenge the Eurocentric trauma.

Shamsie by her portrayal of characters shows memory as something very steadfast for going back to the past creating trauma and at the same time, for creating a counter history reversing the hegemony. While tracing the history of memory, it can be said that memory itself is a 'travelling concept' as Mieke Bal has defined it. Anne Whitehead in her book *Memory* (2009) says that although the concept of 'memory' undoubtedly travels in fascinating ways between academic disciplines and across geo-graphical space, but her only intention is to show how it has travelled between historical periods. So, Whitehead says in her book *Memory* "memory is historically conditioned; it is not simply handed down in a timeless form from generation to generation, but bears the impress or stamp of its own time and culture." (4).

In the nineteenth century, the development of a specialized discipline of history accentuated a sense that memory was primarily subjective and concerned with the inner life. Rahael Samuel, a British Marxist historian, elaborates that memory was subjective, a playing of emotions, indulging its caprices, wallowing in its own warmth; history, in principle was objective, taking abstract reason as its guide and submitting its findings to empirical proof. However, Samuel goes on to contest this view of memory as history's 'negative other'; rather, he contends, the two discourses are 'dialectically related'. So, memory drags one to go deep into the history. Whitehead in her book shows the relation between memory and late modernity. Typically, an emergent anxiety regarding memory is dated to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is linked to accelerated processes of modernization, the impact of the industrial revolution, and the advent of technical warfare. These factors, as Walter Benjamin has pointed out, destroyed traditional communities and ways of life, and they also give rise to the traumatic symptoms.

Trauma is one of those memories as Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) claims "Though the notion of trauma ... we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (p.11). In other words, Caruth exclaims history as being inherently traumatic and trauma as an overwhelming experience that obstructs expression and integration.

'Trauma of empire' is one that drags us to devote ourselves to the events that took place in Europe and United States , most prominently the holocaust and more recently 9/11 which is nothing but a western experience. But postcolonialism as resistance to colonial hegemony questions this Eurocentric, monocultural bias. Stef Craps in his essay 'Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory in the global age' has argued that trauma theory needs to become more inclusive and sensitive by acknowledging the suffering of the non-westerns and minority groups more fully for their own sake.

Evoking a huge panorama beginning with Japan in 1945, India in 1947 and Pakistan in early 1980s apart from 9/11, Shamsie in *Brurnt Shadows* enables the East or the other to encroach on the white westerners' dominant melancholia with the help of memory. In a way, the novelist tries to collocate the underpinning trauma of nation's history with personal lives bringing out real images.

Shamsie as a South Asian writer depicts the reality of 'War on Terror'. Through the 9/11 and its aftermath, the novelist represents the actual mechanism i.e. the so called 'War on Terror' to save 'American Lives'. In an interview when Shamsie is asked about her choosing of the setting of 9/11 in *Burnt Shadows*, she seems to be deliberately using the term 'War on Terror' rather

than the post 9/11 to talk about the final section of the novel. Though it may seem just a semantic difference but to talk about it means to talk about the consequences of the decisions made by governments including those of US and Pakistan, rather than to place the terrorists of 9/11 at the centre of the narrative. It is Hiroko, the chief protagonist of the novel who experiences the trauma out of the catastrophic consequences of the bomb in 1945 and the same experience has been done by her as a result of the post 9/11 or more appropriately through 'War on Terror'. This may be Shamsie's memory which goes constantly to 9/11 and its consequences anticipating her creative mind to take it as the setting of the novel.

The novelist introduces the protagonist, Hiroko's trauma of atomic bombing depicting the first portion of the novel 'The Yet Unknowing World' getting its full expression through the second part of the novel under the naming of 'Veiled Birds'. While talking to Elizabeth, James' wife, Hiroko utters her dissatisfaction in the form of vexation saying, "... I don't want people to judge me by them either. Hibakusha. I hate that word." (100). Out and out, the novel can be shown as a trauma novel revolving around the painful memory and the suffering of the characters i.e. Hiroko, Sajjad, Hiroko's husband and their son Raza rather than the only self-centered preoccupation with the protagonist's suffering.

From the very onset of the novel, the Prologue hints at a sense of loss giving a picture of a prisoner who is stripped naked- a symbol of losing one's basic needs as well as the absence of freedom. The novel proceeds like the evolution of Hiroko through trauma, the lives of Sajjad and Burtons which has been deemed ubiquitous through the World War II and beyond. Yet, the novel ends over a note that signifies that the events will continue to occur even though the horrific past will continue to lurk over one's existence with a 'burnt shadow' to drag along.

Shamsie has taken memory as the most prominent weapon to write back to the hegemony as memory is historically conditioned. Memory seems to be striking in Hiroko's consciousness as a steadfast benchmark from her tender age. The very initial chapter indicates the sense of poignancy through Hiroko's memory. The dehumanizing effect of war makes Nagasaki distilled and distorted which renders self questioning of herself "... Why potatoes where once there were azaleas?" (7). In the global power dynamics, America becoming the power healer tries to ensnare the world by using various weapons like nuclear bomb in the name of saving American lives. As an ordinary individual, she suffers the anxiety of fear as well as a sense of loss. To quote: "... they have this New Bomb the Americans won't stop until we're all skeletons or grapes." (15). The annihilation of Nagasaki leads Hiroko to endure it long having 'burnt shadows' on her back along with the smell of 'dead flesh' for good. The pattern of the kimono having three black birds, she wore at the moment of her sexual awakening towards her German beloved; Konrad is the same moment when silk and flesh becomes one. Konrad leaves behind nothing but a silhouette of melted body fat on rock as a sign of trauma to live long for Hiroko. The burns here are perceived as neither flesh nor silk, neither animate nor inanimate. Indeed, Hiroko perceives her injury as the process of her dehumanization. She does not seem to fear of her own deformity on her back being exposed to the minute gaze of the public; rather she is terrified of being reduced to the bomb. As she gets the labeling 'hibakusha' or bomb victim, so her identity is no longer her own. Instead, she is defined by the bomb. This leads her to leave her own birth place Japan. Her decision to leave Japan is not her desire to escape from the reality, but it is her repulsion towards bitter dehumanization dragging her to go away from her own place.

Hiroko Tanaka is the character related with all the characters specially Konrad, the Burtons, Sajjad and Raza, displacing herself in terms of negotiation but everywhere she is territorialized and marginalized due to the bomb. The trauma of the bomb engulfs her whole life. The word 'hibakusha' dominates her life so much so that to the Japanese, she is nothing beyond the explosion-affected person; that is the only defining feature. Hiroko becomes the 'other' what the literary critic Gayatri Spivak would term 'Subaltern'. Spivak in her philosophical essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' raises the question of subaltern's voices focusing specifically on women who are oppressed. Here in Hiroko's case, she displaces herself to Delhi, Pakistan and to America but every time she is seen to be reduced by the same as a bomb victim.

The trauma drags her to Delhi in order to search herself and for reducing loss. There she comes into contact with Konrad's sister Elizabeth or Ilse, the dissatisfied wife of James Burton, an English colonialist on the brink of lifelong superfluity. She is overwhelmed by her trauma in such a way that though she acquires 'awful freedom' but there is a constant angst where to go out of it. Her soul becomes crippled. When James asks her about the stay period in Delhi, she says, "I just arrived. I didn't want to be in Japan any longer," (45).

Through trauma, Shamsie probes another side of it as a bridge maker. It seems to be prominent in Sajjad and Hiroko's case. Hiroko comes closer to Sajjad, a Muslim employee in Burtons' household to replace her loss of Konrad. Moreover, Konrad's sister Elizabeth meets her brother though not physically but through Hiroko's memory after his death only. It becomes possible for Elizabeth to realize herself to become Ilse, her original Japanese identity in contact with Hiroko while sharing the most intimate of secrets by talking with Hiroko in German.

The third part of the novel 'Part-Angel Warriors' exposes Raza as a great personality who elevates himself by means of reshaping his own self in spite of his in-between identity. His personality is juxtaposed with the bomb and like his mother; he too is marginalized and reduced to the identity of 'a bomb-marked mongrel' due to their painful past. Therefore, when he proposes to Salma, his neighbour for marriage, she answers in negation. To quote: "It's not about age. It's your mother. Everyone knows about your mother ... Nagasaki. The Bomb...You could be deformed. How do we know you're not?" (189). Moreover, his identity is a mere soap-factory worker devoid of any progress in academic career. His indomitable will power ushers him to imagine about American University encouraged by Harry, Burtons' son but here also he gets refusal. In the mean time, he is in a quandary what to do or what not to do becoming liminal.

Cultural diversity is in Raza's blood which is seen through his passion for acquiring various languages irrespective of his own. But his features are seen to be unnoticed by the society. The social stigma of marginalization goes with him even more fervently to reject him. In turn, Raza comes out with resurrection searching his self identity which brings him closer to Abdullah, a fourteen years old Afghan boy, calls Raza as Raza Hazara. Raza for the first time realizes a balance in his name rather than in Raza Konrad Ashraf. Though Raza belongs to Pakistan but because of his mixed-race identity, he feels unhomed what Bhabha says as a threatening feeling of being 'Unhomely'. His idiosyncrasies are even ignored among Afghans, Hazaras and many of the Middle-East natives which haunt him to join a mujahedeen camp along with Abdullah. Beginning with it, Raza's identity becomes critical having two lives, one as plain Raza Ashraf and the other as Raza Hazara stereotyped with a person who would not speak his language, his family and past

and even to other Hazaras until and unless 'he had driven the last Soviet out of Afghanistan'.

In every phase of Raza's life, trauma is an indelible imprint. Though he joins the mujahedden camp but here also the imperialism is the dominant power to leave venom. The novelist introduces Harry, James and Ilse's son who has transferred his idealistic allegiance to adoptive US as a CIA operative in cold war Pakistan. Shamsie through his persona brings forth the real apocalypse of imperial mind. To quote:

> In Harry's mind, there was a map of the world with countries appearing as mere outlines, waiting to be shaded in with stripes of red, white and blue as they were drawn into the strictly territorial battle of the Afghan versus the Soviets in which no one else claimed a part. When he arrived in Islamabad, it had been a three way affair: Egypt provided the Soviet-made arms, America provided financing, training and technological assistance, and Pakistan provided the base for training camps. (203).

Sajjad is an innocent victim of Imperialism which ends up with his killing while he searches for his son Raza. Through this, Shamsie maps out the agency and the agents of Imperialism with utmost derogation. The whole incident lingers Hiroko's tragedy. Her strata lead her to internalize loss in each and every vein of hers while losing her husband, Sajjad. As the novelist narrates, "she had thought Nagasaki had taught her everything to know about loss but in truth it was only horror with which she had become completely familiar. At twenty-one it had been impossible for her to learn all the facets of loss. She couldn't have known then what it was to lose the man you had loved for thirty-six years." (239).

Shamsie projects the real strategy of imperial power and their pulling of Third World nationals to battle the 'War on Terror' affecting the down-trodden class to continue their trauma. Harry, being an agent of imperial power, controls Raza by pulling him to join a private security firm which has been contracted by the US military. Raza takes the opportunity being unknown to it. In the mean time, there is 9/11 followed by the war on terror and Harry drags him to Afghanistan- the time when both the office where Raza and Harry work, are taken under US military. Here, though Harry has not worked under CIA, but his mind desires to fulfill American dreams. As Harry is killed by a gunman, Raza falls under suspicion. Though Raza asserts his inadequacy regarding the killing but he is seen to be questioned by another CIA operative Steve. He wants to get rid of CIA but ironically he comes to America to help his friend Abdullah, one of his mujahedeen friends in order to make him escape from US haunted by FBI. Earlier Kim is asked by Raza to assist Abdullah but having seen both together, a second thought comes to her mind allowing herself to inform the police. Finally, the novel dismantles into Raza's uncertain fate being in police custody. Shamsie through the character of Kim speaks to Hiroko how Harry in reality tries to mould his own image in Raza to fulfill the dream of becoming a super power. But it is the same power which traps him for Harry's murder. Throughout the novel, Raza becomes prominent subverting all hierarchies, fighting a war of survival which comes to an end with his arrest allowed by Kim.

Hiroko embodies the most distressful situation of anguish when she realizes her son's wretchedness. As a mother, she denounces to Kim, "... you lived in a world where all suspicion of Muslims is just prejudice, nothing more." (361). Through 'New York, Afghanistan, 2001-2' and specially glimpsing Raza's arrest bears the tone of Islam's marginalization, the trauma of war torn

world and more broadly how East is represented as 'exotic' and 'foil' to West as Said pronounces in his book *Orientalism* (1978).

Shamsie becomes successful to show how the power of memory reduces the gap between nations and its established history. Nations like narratives lose their origins in myths of time; instead it can fully be realized in the mind's eye. Nation and novel have often been quoted in the same breath because the genre of novel has often captured the history of a nation from within. By going one step further, we can intrinsically locate Hayden White's applying of theories of fiction to historical writing which blurs the disciplinary distinction between History and Literature. This leads to the subversion of established history.

In case of Hiroko, her memory goes constantly to Japan, Konrad and the bomb. She comes to India to seek repose from her mental agony under Burtons'. When India is partitioned she cannot find herself in any talk of tomorrow. Sometimes, she volunteers to Ilse or Elizabeth:

> I always planned on leaving Nagasaki, you know. I was never sentimental about it. But until you see a place you've known your whole life reduced to ash you don't realise how much we crave familiarity. Do you see those flowers on that hillside, Ilse? I want to know their names in Japanese. I want tea that tastes the way tea should taste in my understanding of tea. (99).

It can be irrevocably judged that she is still confined with the memory of her birth place Japan though she displaces out of circumstances. It is her 'want' that stimulates her to tie a knot with Sajjad as a married couple in order to seek refuge under him. Unfortunately, Sajjad's initial pleasure too converts to tedious agony due to false

nationalism. The nationalism compels them to leave their culture of 'home' resting on homelessness. Due to partition, Sajjad has to leave his heart like 'Dilli' and in spite of his belongingness to Pakistan, he and his family is regarded as 'muhajir' or immigrants in Pakistan. His memory always goes back to Dilli creating the trauma of homeless identity.

Throughout the novel, Shamsie focuses on the trauma caused by the West leaving a lasting memory to bear on. Right from the beginning, all the characters are seen to be in a persistent tension due to the painful memory, questioning the Westerner's dominant melancholy which at the same time, subverts colonial hegemony and historiography.

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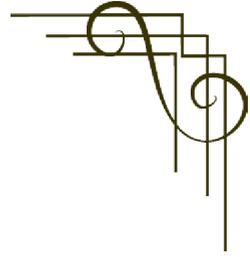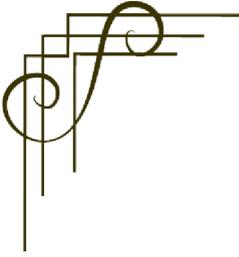
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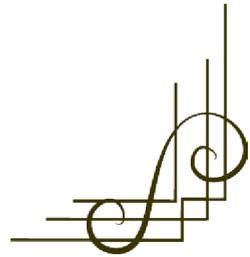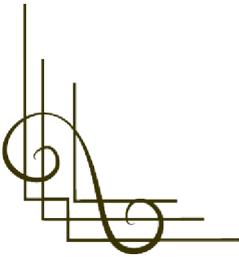
The Slip Away

Zualteii Poonte
Department of English
Govt. Aizawl College

When it comes
at a time when life
no longer holds promise or magic,
when ailments are part of daily life,
and you no longer dream dreams
for so many have been realised,
you feel you shouldn't be too greedy
but be satisfied with what you have,
and your discontent with what you are
and what you have accomplished
is quietly washed away with drink.
But the drink eats away at you,
at your insides, and time after time
you cheat death
in close, painful escapes,
and you go on,
tiredly,
knowing you're not too old yet to sit back on life
while all too aware you're no longer
young enough to start afresh
and tackle those dreams you never fulfilled.
That's when it comes,

the swift, sudden call,
and you go, quietly, alone,
you let go for it seems so easy
to slip away from the weariness of it all
and you don't really care anymore
what waits on the other side.

Year End
Zualteii Poonte

December,
and they come in droves -
some for Christmas shopping
with money they've saved all year,
some to see the big city
they've heard of all their lives,
some persuaded finally to see the doctors
for that nagging stomach discomfort
they've been putting on hold
through the long, hard months
of slash and burn, sowing and weeding
and finally the harvest,
all under the burning sun
and pouring rains.
Some are easy to tell -
lean, skeletal almost,
sunbrowned, clothed in sombre colours,
together in groups of threes or fours,
clearly not at ease
in the jostling throng on the streets.

Others, while also from the provinces,
but spared perhaps the more brutal agrarian labour,
blend in more easily with the city crowd
of smooth faced young girls strolling in pairs,
identical in fur lined boots and slim fit clothing,
sweet-smelling young boys,
jackets zipped up to the chin,
swinging bike helmets in leather gloved hands,
children clutching plastic toys from China,
licking ice cream, as weary parents in tow
pause at mounds of secondhand winterwear
piled high on each corner of every street,
patient women fruit sellers
with neat stacks of sweet, juicy oranges,
Red Kettle volunteers grouped
at strategic intersections,
breaking into loud, brassy snatches
of well-loved carols.
It's Christmas time in the city,
fast paced and frenetic.
Soon they'll rattle back to the villages
on roads baked passable in the dry season,
and exhaustedly, they will exclaim,
"How crowded Aizawl is,
how can anyone even stand to live there!"

A Letter to My Daughter

Jane Mary Joseph
Post-Graduate Student, Department of English
Mizoram University

Daughter Dearest,

You were born
not to be a silent stream, but a raging sea,
not to be a zephyr, but a tempest.
Do not be held back
by the standards of society, nor
by the dictates of family.
Do not let them nip you in the bud.
Father, brother, husband,
permit them not to mar your uniqueness.
Do not be unnerved
by falling, erring, sinning,
shed what they call purity.
Have no fears,
leap like a mermaid, not daunted by the depths;
soar like a bird, not terrified by the heights.

Silent Tears

Jane Mary Joseph

*(A poem written in view of the rising number of people
sending their people to old-age homes and the pain endured
by the latter thereafter.)*

My Child,
Do you remember?
When you were little, you'd hold on to my hand and not let go,
When I'd go for work, you'd cry and ask me to take you along,
When I'd return home, you'd come running and hug me tight.
You couldn't bear the thought
Of staying away from me.

With the years, as my little boy grew and became a father himself,
I grew old and was turning a menace every moment.
When I spilled the soup, you kept me hungry all day,
When I wet the bed, you locked me up till I cleaned the mess,
When my knees became weak and I fell, you didn't help me get up.

A year later, you gave me away
To a home where they said they would care.
I cried and pleaded with you to take me back,
But you left
Unaffected.

Son,
They provide me a roof and bread,
But no one cares if I live or die;
I'm always by myself, with no one to talk to.
And I now can only pray that someday you'd embrace me again.

The next issue of MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies Issue IV Volume 1 June 2017, shall focus upon writings pertaining to and about **Northeast India** within the parameters of the literary paradigm. Articles for the same may be sent by April 2017. All contributors are requested to kindly refer to the prescribed format that has been denoted in the inside back cover of the journal . The themes related to the above may be pertinent to, but not solely confined to the following:

Peace, Conflict and Media	Women's Studies
Ethics and Conflict Studies	Gender and Sexualitiy
Death ways	Memory
Cultural Traditions	The Body and Performance
Pop Culture	Storytelling
Comparative Studies	Craft
Belief Narratives	Food ways
Religion	Trauma
Witness	Life-Writing
Testimony	Communities
Photography	Insurgency
Music	Art