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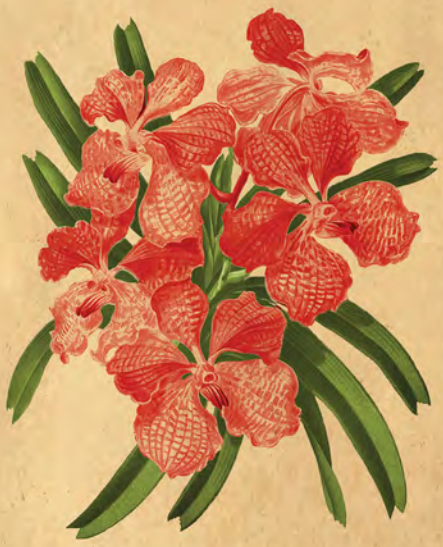

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies
(A Refereed Journal)
UGC Approved Journal No. 64788

The Journal is published by the Department of English, Mizoram University which has been awarded Departmental Research Support under UGC Special Assistance Programme (UGC-SAP/DRS II). The objective of the Journal is to provide an informed scholarly dialogue on topics that are pertinent to literature and culture studies. The focus is both theoretical and interdisciplinary and endeavours to explore new perspectives in order to create a discourse of learning.

The Journal welcomes well researched articles from Humanities and the Social Sciences. Articles should be sent directly as email attachments to the editors. Sections will be provided for input on creative writing as well as book reviews. Submitted manuscripts are considered for publication with the understanding that it has not been already published, or submitted for publication elsewhere. The final decision of selection of articles for publication rests with the editors.

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FOREWORD

The present volume of MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies (MZUJLCS) has encompassed noteworthy dialogues that reflect upon the co-relation between literature and cultural studies. The Department of English, Mizoram University has moved from strength to strength in terms of its literary eminence, and this journal is one such reflection of the literary merits and commitment towards the same.

This journal is currently one of the few journals in Humanities that has been approved by the UGC. Right from the outset is has strived to promote and enhance excellence in terms of writing and research activities. Asserting aspects of individuality and distinctiveness has been a significant parameter in terms of literary studies and the articles in the collection have joined the very significant debate towards the assertion of the self , interpreted largely in terms of culture, traditions and of course, resistance towards the same. Translations and the aspect of translatability have also been focused upon, even as attempts have been made to assess the inroads that have been achieved through translation in myriad cultures and literatures. What is the place of sex and sexuality in literature and culture? How relevant are they towards situating the holistic self? These and several inter connected arguments have been debated upon too, as have concepts that are related to both home as well as displacement. Reality and representation have been deliberated upon as have arguments upon the philosophical aspects of what would

constitute humanity as well as where would postcolonial modernity be located? Arguably, some of the finest reflections on these themes have found space within this issue and are well situated within the framework of this rich corpus of extremely academically viable compendium.

Interspersed as it were with a translation section, a book review as well as a poetry section, the journal promises to take its readers onto echelons that will surely transcend infinite academic ground.

Margaret L.Pachuau
Professor and Head
Department of English
Mizoram University

EDITORIAL

I am happy to present to our readers the **June 2018 issue of MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies,** a UGC approved journal from the Department of English, Mizoram University. The Editorial Board extends its warm appreciation to all contributors for their inputs that covers the wide gamut of literary and cultural studies.

This issue contains an invited essay from Easterine Kire who is one of the more prominent writers of a relevant and fast emerging literary genre known as Writings in English from Northeast India. There are also 17 other articles, and contributions under the sections of translation, book review, and poetry, respectively.

We note with pleasure the fact that contributions are of an interdisciplinary nature that touches on socio-political, religious and ethnic discourse in the creation of regional and marginal literature, and the expanding horizons of literature occasioned by other Englishes.

It is hoped that this issue will help to further strengthen one of the key academic objectives of our department which is, to further the cause of literary and cultural studies wherein space and location is created for noteworthy writers and academicians of the Northeast region of India.

Prof. Margaret Ch. Zama
Editor

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Writing from the heart

Easterine Kire

I call the action of writing from the heart by two other names: one is 'Dil se Direct' and the other is, 'Writing outside the Box.' Writing from the heart is writing that ignores formula. It is also about writing the silences.

We go under many definitions, many of them imposed on us. The victor-coloniser makes definitions about us, propagates them and labels us by these definitions. In the Naga case it was the western anthropologist and his ethnographical studies on Naga tribes that could be seen as the colonizer writing us. This kind of writing emerged as the first comprehensive writing on our cultural behaviour. Anthropological writing is undoubtedly valuable; but it was not one hundred percent accurate as it was done from an outsider's perspective. At one point of time in the 1930s we became objectified by such writing and were reduced to objects in museums. The relationship between the native and social anthropology is complex. Yet like it or not, we unquestionably owe a debt to anthropological writing because a great deal of cultural information which would have been lost, has been preserved through this medium.

A constructed identity

A more insidious action in today's world is how national media chooses to write us. In a great disservice to the Northeast

region, national media has continued to create a constructed identity of the Northeast; this has gone on for many decades. This constructed identity defines the area and its people as conflicted; prone to politically volcanic eruptions on a regular basis. It was an identity accepted categorically by many mainstream publishing houses who expected writers from the Northeast to write works of blood and gore and victim stories. The effect of this definition was to create expectations upon the writers and, sadly, many reviewers of our books are greatly influenced by this definition. I have experienced reviewers looking only for political elements and highly politicized plots in my books, and expressing that the failure to include these elements was tantamount to inaccurate representation of my society. These are the defined boxes people try to fit us into; when a writer writes as dictated by these expectations it is called writing within the box.

Constructed identities commodify us. We cannot allow that.

Writing from the heart is about writing outside the box. It is writing yourself as opposed to the colonizer writing you. I am writing from the heart: it is an action of decolonizing my writing.

Writing from the heart puts back value in that which was devalued by colonial processes. We should value and encourage insider perspectives, insider research, insider narratives.

I believe that when I write from my heart, my readers receive from their hearts. It is a beautiful connection.

Not every voice is helpful

There are many voices dictating on our writing. The insistent voice that says we should write within the box is a

continuation of our mental and psychological colonization. If we believe we should write according to that dictate, we are responding as our colonized selves. We are submitting to the dictation to write according to formula. Beware accepted discourse. What is accepted discourse? It is discourse on stereotypes of a culture, of a race, generalisations made about a community that are accepted unquestioningly. Accepted discourse is about accepting constructed identities.

Stop feeding the stereotype

Stop ascribing to the stereotype by insisting on looking only for specific items in Naga writing or Mizo writing or Northeast writing. Real and worthy research must concentrate on what the scholar can find outside the box in order to qualify as research. If it does not do that, it is just about reproducing another person's opinions.

Where our communications with national media are concerned, the state must take on in a wise and informed manner, the task of blasting the stereotypes of Naga behaviour or Mizo behaviour or attitude. The Nagas or the Mizos as a people cannot be represented by a few voices: that would be a gross misrepresentation and would risk feeding the stereotype, as has happened in all the national media attention Nagaland received during March 2015 and January-February 2017. Stop feeding the media's stereotype of us. We are much, much more than the caricatures they paint of us.

How do we stop feeding the stereotype?

Simply by learning to do this: by choosing to live bigger. Live big-hearted - that is such a beautiful constituent of our Northeastern cultures that we still practise. We can do this and go one step further. We can combine the culture of big-

heartedness with wise-heartedness, thus defying the stereotypes in a dignified manner.

We live out dignity. How? By attending to all phases of our lives.By taking control of what our children are being taught every day. We can introduce dignified living by taking control of school and college and university syllabi. Do they include our indigenous wisdom so that our young can learn it on an everyday basis? In the absence of the community houses in our lifestyles, are we replacing its teachings with something inferior? Can we continue teaching our children our values by making sure their syllabi contain such education?

Identity and writing from the heart

Writing from the heart is all about identity. The constructed identity that the media and the colonizer gives us is full of victimhood; it is designed to give us a victim mentality. It is designed to limit us. We must understand how victimhood works.

It is true that in Nagaland we still live under AFSPA and DAA today. We have many, many sad stories amongst us. Our sad stories of suffering need telling so that sufferers can find healing and closure. But after that is done, let us move on. There is a beautiful story of an angel who visited the house of a family grieving very long over the death of their child. The angel went around the rooms in full view of the parents and turned the photo frames of their child face down. He told the parents that it was time to move forward with the assurance of a future reunion with their loved one. Let us move on. Our victim stories generate negativity and racial hate. They don't have the capacity to strengthen us. They end up disempowering us. Let us show them due respect and understand their place

in our communal history, but having done that, let us move forward.

Writing the Silences

We have experienced many periods in our history when our narratives were silenced by war, bombing and burning of homes, and occupation of our hearths. All these periods silenced our narratives. However, there has been an even more sinister silencing of our narratives by other agencies. Let us write the silences: the stories that others deem are worthless; let us bring them to the light because we know their true value.

Changing the centre

Part of the victim identity is to be preoccupied by the idea of the centre and be oppressed by one's imagined marginalization and distance from the centre. The most effective answer to marginalization is changing the centre. It is an attitude of contentment with where you are, and living your best life where you are. You create your own centre and you decide where that is, and in doing that you take control of your own destiny. In the Northeast, there is no reason to feel deprived or neglected or, most important, less able. We can build up vibrant bookstores and get access to the best that is being written and produced worldwide. By living our best selves, we will attract others to our regions; we will no longer have to run to imaginary centers. I can easily imagine Aizawl as a centre, Kohima as a centre and so on.

Your God-given identity

Writing from the heart is about expressing your real identity; your God-given identity because that is full of value and has no victimhood in it. It is sometimes about playing a wild card, defying the expectations, writing out the things that

have value for you, and as you do that, the value will be returned to you, in double measure.

Easterine Kire is a poet, novelist, short story writer, and writer of children's books. Her first novel *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003) was also the first Naga novel in English to be published. Her novel *When the River Sleeps* (2014) won the Hindu Prize in 2015, while *Son of the Thundercloud* (2016) won the Tata Book of the Year 2017. Her works have been translated into German, Croatian, Uzbek, Norwegian, and Nepali.

Easterine Kire is founder and partner in a publishing house named Barkweaver which gathers and publishes Naga folk tales.

Translatability of Metaphors and Translation as a Metaphor: Looking at Translations of Nepali Literature

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Translating a literary text does not just imply to the change in language, but in most cases involves the process of translating between two cultures. A text written in a specific language renders a specific meaning to its readers only because it can be contextualized. If we consider the language of the text to be the signifier, there can be numerous possible signifieds. The text reaches a stability of meaning only because the signifier and the signified are mediated by a specific culture within which the text can be located. Hence, translation of a text, almost invariably, involves the baggage of translating between two cultures as well. In case of such translation, metaphors, more often than not, are extremely language specific and are hard to translate. One the other hand, the process of translation itself can also be seen a metaphor in the sense that translation introduces the idea of something that exists in a certain culture to another. This paper will try to look at metaphors as cognitive structures and the issues that come up while translating metaphors as well as culture-specific terms with respect to English and Bangla translations of Nepali short stories; while considering the fact that one of the primary functions of translation of literary texts is to introduce readers of a certain linguistic community to another.

The body of literary works belonging to different Indian languages, have certain common tropes, but are essentially different from one another in the sense that they belong to entirely different cultures. The texts written in a specific Indian language represent that specific culture it belongs to with the help of the language it uses. The paper will have two basic arguments; first, to look at the politics that translation of culture-specific terms can pose when the source language and target language do not belong to any shared culture and to see whether the case changes when the target language shares certain cultural identities; and second, to see if the process of translation as a whole is similar to metaphors. To do so, the paper will negotiate with the English and Bangla translations of Nepali short stories, namely, "Gorhey Jeep" and "Jaar" . This paper also aims to look at translation of the short stories on two levels, first, when it is translated to another Indian language, that is, Bangla; and to a foreign language, that is, English, to trace the politics of domestication and foreignisation working within these two levels of translation.

Before going on to discuss the translations, we will have to consider certain set of theoretical assumptions, based on which I will argue further. First, while talking about metaphors, we will not be restricted to its strict usage as a figure of speech. Metaphor finds its origin in Ancient Greece where Aristotle defined it as "the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy". Metaphors have come a long way since then, having being the common interest of study, for both cognitive linguistics as well as literary study. It is seen and treated differently in the two cases. I am particularly interested in the

cognitive function of metaphors which enables it to impart a sense of meaning that it does not talk about literally. Culture-specific terms, which are beyond the cognition of the target language reader, will be looked at with similar understanding.

Second, coming to the texts, we will first have to understand what the term 'Nepali literature' implies to and the position of 'Indian Nepali literature' within the corpus of Indian literature. In the process, we will also try to see the relationship of Indian Nepali literature with the literary traditions of other Indian Literature, and if that relationship affects the process of translations.

Nepali is the national language of Nepal. However is has become a kind of link language between Nepal and a number of Indian states located in the Himalayas. Although a number of languages like Newari, Tamang, Limbu are spoken in the northern part of West Bengal and Sikkim, Nepali is the most prominent of the languages spoken there. A large number of Nepali speaking population resides in a number of Indian states following the stretch of the Himalayas, like in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. The term Nepali literature can refer to any literary work written in Nepali irrespective of the region it has originated from. It is often hard to distinguish between Nepali literature from Nepal and from India. This is because of the nation state fallacy that is so evident here. The Nepali speaking nation extends to two political states, namely India and Nepal. Prior to the independence of India, there had been no such border. And even post-independence, the two countries have never quite maintained a strict border policy; there has been constant influx of people from both sides. Nepali

literature refers to that body of literature that has developed over ages without taking into consideration the geopolitical idea of a border.

However, the political independence of India, as a historical event, has become a significant point which has determined a certain course in the literary works written in Nepali in India. The body of literature that we term as Modern Indian literature, although constitutes literary works written in several languages, are connected by a common string of thought. The characteristic that binds these works is their urge to look for the kind of society that India, as a country, might strive towards. The modern Nepali literature is no exception; for they do represent the kind of life the people in the hills lead, the problems and oppressions, both societal and economic, they face. Nepali literature deserves a distinct position within the corpus of Indian literature, which is why the term Indian Nepali literature is often used to make a clear distinction. Despite having a strong literary culture and producing literary works constantly, it cannot be denied that the Nepali culture and literature has largely been ignored. It has been marginalized within the corpus of Indian literature. Very little of Nepali literature has been translated and a major part of the Indian readership remains unaware of this literary tradition. The relation of West Bengal with Darjeeling, a Nepali speaking area, has been that of dominance. The Bengali culture has subjugated the latter since years now.

"Gorkhey Jeep" written by Rabindrakumar Moktan deals with the subject of poverty.Chyangba, a man living in Darjeeling, delivers goods in a hand held cart, to earn a living. He lovingly calls his cart Gorkhey Jeep. Chyangba lives in a shabby home and can hardly provide for two square meals,

but is a god loving person, has an eye for good aesthetics, and dreams for a bright future when his children would grow up to be successful people, just like the 'babus'. He has high hopes for his son, Palden and daughter, Maichang, both of whom he has enrolled into a school. The children have not been able to pay for their school fees for months and are about to be expelled. Chyangba has also been unable to find substantial work for quite some time, and has not eaten for a couple of days. He has become physically fragile, but his dreams saw no end. An extremely sick Chyangba, in hope of finding work goes out with his Gorkhey Jeep even on a Sunday. He does find work that day; but excitement of receiving some money with which he could ensure his children's education, Chyangba forgets to notice how much load he has pull or how much money he is going to get. While pulling a very heavy load uphill, Chyangba collapses and died on the road.

This short story has a long list of words which are not literally translatable. The story opens with a description of the climate of Darjeeling city and then goes on to talk about the place where Chyangba along with a few others like him stood in search of work. Chyangba wears a *daurasaural* and a waistcoat made of *rari* cloth. He smokes *bidi*. He prepares *khichdi* for dinner. He loves playing the *damphu*. The song that he hears at a political gathering is composed in *tamangselo* beat. The list of such words is quite long. The English translation of the story does not change these words with English words having similar meanings, but keeps them in the original language, with occasional references. Although we have no problem understanding that *daurasaural* is kind of dress, *rari* is a fabric, *khichdi* is a kind of preparation made with rice, or that the *damphu* is a musical instrument; we are

left with no clues to understand how a *daurasaural* looks like, what kind of fabric *rari* is, or if the *damphu* is a string instrument or percussion.

The Bangla translation treats these words in quite a similar manner. But the cultural difference in the two target languages does make a difference in terms of cognition. Among the Nepali words discussed, there are a couple of them which are a part of the Bangla vocabulary. In fact, a number of Indian languages have *khichdi* and *bidi* in common. However, words like *rari*, *damphu*, or *daurasaural* remain equally problematic in terms of cognition. In a nutshell, the words that are not shared between Bangla and Nepali vocabulary remain equally incomprehensible as in the case of the English translation but the words which are common, help in the case of the Bangla translation.

An ideal example of the problem that might come up with translating metaphors is the instance when Chyangba thinks about the happy days he had spent with his wife. Chyangba recalls:

"When Chyangba sang Tamang songs with his damphu and danced, his wife would break into peals of laughter, and call him 'mad'".

The Bangla translation uses the word 'pagol' where 'mad' is used. It is hardly comprehensible from the English translation that the word 'mad' has been uttered in an endearing manner; unless one is used to the Indian sense of usage of the word 'mad', as a way of showing affection. Chyangba's 'madness' does not have anything to do with mental health; his wife just lovingly calls him so.

"Jaar" written by Michael Martin Gurung deals with a subject that is entirely unknown to a lot of cultures. Jaar refers to the second husband of a woman who has left the previous husband and married someone else; and jaari refers to the money that the jaar pays to the previous husband as a compensation of sorts. Balbir is a middle-aged man with a young wife named Reshamphool. Balbir is not particularly sociable, nor does he have friends. But he knows that his wife of twenty-two is quite flirtatious and a lot of young men come to their home with the excuse of having water. When these men come, Reshamphool also comes out pretending to feed her hens and cocks. One day, Balbir caught her flirting red handed with a young man named Manveer, but said nothing. On the other hand, a parallel story runs involving the hens and cocks that Reshamphool keeps at the home. Ratey is an old lazy cock, who Reshamphool has thought of replacing by a healthy young cock named Raja. While Reshamphool insists that they eat Ratey, Balbir loves him and wants to kill and eat Raja instead. A tension, metaphorical to the relationship of the couple builds up involving Ratey and Raja. One day, Reshamphool runs away with the young Manveer and the panchayat decides that he pays a jaari of hundred rupees to Balbir. Balbir, a man who is egoistically hurt, refuses the money and chases Balbir with a kukhri to kill him. He, however, fails to kill him and after coming back home kills Raja. He enjoys his meal with fried chicken and alcohol while he feeds Raja's intestines to Ratey. Raja has been called Ratey's jaar in the course of the story; and Balbir derives the pleasure of killing his jaar Manveer by killing Retey's jaar Raja.

This story also has a set of words that are not quite translatable, and have been treated in both the translations in

way similar to the previous one. Words like, *nigar, dabaka, kukhri* have been kept in the original in the English translation; but have not been explained either in the course of the story, or using endnotes. While reading the story, we can guess that *nigar* is a kind of locally brewed strong alcohol, *dabaka* can either be a measure of alcohol or can be a container in which it is had, while *kukhri* is a sharp knife of some sort. The Bangla translation omits the word *nigar* and uses an explanatory phrase meaning 'local alcohol' instead. *Dabaka* has also been replaced with a Bangla word which can mean either measure of alcohol or a container. The word *kukhri* has remained the same even in the Bangla translation, but it does not pose any difficulty in terms of understanding as the Bangla readership is more or less acquainted with the word.

The idea of *jaar*, although is alien to both the Bangla and English readership, does not pose any problem in terms cognition in both the translations as the idea itself forms the story. The story of Raja being Ratey's *jaar* acts as a metaphor to the story of Manveer being Balbir's *jaar*. But this metaphor, unlike most cases, does not pose any problem while being translated because of the way it has been used to unfold the plot.

In case of the Nepali short stories, we can clearly see that there has been no effort to homogenize the source culture; instead the translators have tried their best to introduce the source language readers to a different culture and the translators seem to have made a conscious decision of not foreignizing the source culture; but the fact that certain words are practically untranslatable to another language, have posed certain difficulties. Translation scholars have had varied views regarding the translatability of metaphors and the process of their translation. Three distinct situations have theorized in

the course of studying the translation of metaphors. The first case being, metaphors which are practically not translatable, second being the case of metaphors which fully translatable and the third being, metaphors which are translatable but pose a varying degree of inequivalence between the source and the target language. Studying the examples from the Nepali short stories, it can be concluded that translation of metaphors as well specific terms depends a lot on the notion of cognitive equivalence and we have to assume that metaphors and such words can only be translated from only language to another with the minimum loss of meaning, only if there are similarities in cultural conceptualizations between the source and the target language. Translation of metaphors as well as culture specific terms leaves a translator with the political choice of either homogenizing a culture or heterogenizing it. In an ideal situation, a translator will have to understand the meaning of such words and metaphors intralingually, and then look for a cognitive equivalent in the target language, so that there is a dialogue between two cultures in the translated text. Considering that the primary function of translation is to introduce the readers of a certain language to a different culture, the mentioned process can validate the function.

On the other hand, translation scholars have also contested on the view that the process of translation itself is like a metaphor. The similarity between 'metaphor' and 'translation' can be traced from their etymological sources. The word 'metaphor' originates from the Greek 'metaphora' while 'translation' originates from the Latin 'translatio'. Both 'metaphora' and 'translatio' can mean metaphor and translation in their English sense of usages. Metaphor, in its modern sense of usage refers to something that by talking about something

literally talks about a second meaning. The process of translation cannot be reduced to the transfer of content from one language to another, but has to be seen as a process that by talking in the language of a culture actually refers back to the source language and its culture. Both the short stories discussed in the paper, especially "Jaar" has a thematic element that is extremely embedded within its own culture. The translation of such a story bears the responsibility of keeping that thematic element intact even in a different language. Both the English and the Bangla translation do exactly that.

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Publishing industry and construction of apriori literary identities: Articulations of resistance in contemporary Naga literature in English

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"Only the North East can surprise us so consistently because only the North East has been blessed with myriad voices that only their own singing pines and undulating lands and mighty rivers hear. But here are some voices in print. Just for you." (Editorial preface to *Fresh Fictions*, Geeta Dharmarajan: 2005)

"The Northeast and its representations presents its own unique challenges, and any attempt to access it must be informed and infused by the unique social and political setting of the region, the diverse cultural landscape that goes into the making of a place. To fall into the trap of the usual binaries of civilized/uncivilized the patriot/ separatist or the communal/ individual will only divert and deflect." (Parag M Sarma: 2013)

"These songs/ From the other life/Long lay mute/ In the Confines/ Of my restive mind/ Unrelenting in their urging/ For new vocabulary/ To redraft history/ They now resonate/ in words of new/ Discernment/ To augment the lore/ Of our essential core." (Temsula Ao: 2007)

Publishers play an important role in determining the success of a work. Amit Chaudhuri argues, , 'From the 1990's onwards, we witnessed a convergence between literary

language and the language of publishing, for it was publishers, increasingly, who told us about the 'masterpieces' they were publishing'. (3: ibid) In many cases, a text is expected to fit into certain frames, based on a publisher's apriori understanding of a text and its contexts. In other words, publishers, expect an author to write a text with plots which will assure profits to the publisher, even if a text is bereft of any literary value. In such a scenario, a text tells stories, defying the stereotypes expected of it by the publishing companies. The attempt in this paper is to read practices of creative resistance in contemporary Naga literature in English. In the context of literatures (in English and in English translations) from 'Northeast', contemporary Naga literature in English is discussed as a representative case in this paper. Dibyajyoti Sarma argues that literatures from 'North East' specifically those translated into English and those written in English, have similar stories to tell. (np: 2016)

Pavitra Narayanan argues elsewhere that the interest of transnational publishers in the context of India is writings in English because they are marketable to the western world, where they are based. (99-103 :2012) However, in the case of contemporary Naga literature, even though it is mostly articulated in English, the big publishing houses do not seem to think it as 'marketable' enough or as a 'profitable' project. Studies have pointed out the interest of bigger, corporate publishing houses (transnational publishing houses) in literatures produced in English (mostly in former colonies like India, Africa etc.) However, Naga literature, whose 'de facto' language is English (although there are attempts in writing novels, poetry etc in Tenyidie language for instance), did not seem to interest the transnational, corporate publishing houses

much. Initially, Naga literature in English was published by 'regional', small scale publishing houses. For instance, the first Naga novel in English *A Naga Village Remembered* (2003) by Easterine Kire was published by the Ura Academy, a cultural organisation, based in Kohima. Only much later did a few mid to bigger players in publishing industry, display interest in publishing Naga literary texts in English. Since a decade, Naga authors have been publishing their works with Indian chapters of bigger, corporate publishing houses (Harper Collins, Penguin India) non-corporate, independent-Indian publishing houses (Zubaan, Speaking Tiger, Katha etc) and also with independent Naga publishing houses, based in Nagaland (Heritage Publishing House, Penthrill Publications etc,). Easterine Kire in one of her interviews and also in one of her recent lectures, mentioned about the initial disinterest of big Indian publishing houses, in publishing works by Naga authors since it was not regarded as a profitable venture. Since mid 2000's, some of these publication companies have displayed interest in publishing Naga literature. Easterine Kire says that most big publishers expect the authors to centre the narrative on conflict. (Lec 'Writing out of the Box': 2018) Cited below is an excerpt from one of Easterine Kire's interviews :

"Because of the politics of publishing – for many years, the media presented us as the region of conflict. Ordinary life was not valued. We became defined by the conflict. The people and their lives are interesting…there are people whose stories need to be heard but the big Indian publishing houses don't think the northeast will sell. For many years, they didn't want to publish books from the northeast." (Kire np : 2012)

Apriori interpretations of literatures and attempts to fit them into a neat, linear category, is resisted through creative

practices by contemporary Naga authors. In one of her recent lectures, Easterine Kire suggested that she now publishes her works with those who do not impose such apriori frames for her stories. (Lec Jan 9: 2018) Jon Cook argues; 'Drawn to the marketplace on the one hand, creative writing also harbours the impulse to encourage kinds of writing that would find little or no place with mainstream publishers.'(324: 2017) Jon Cook's argument helps in understanding practices of resistance by an author, in choosing to publish with those who do not expect a text to fit into an already existing mould. Extending Jon Cook's argument a little further, I would like to argue that practices of creative resistance can also be seen within a text, in its articulation of a layered texture of stories - of people, spaces, way of life etc. Temsula Ao argues that it is simplistic and reductive to expect literatures from Nagaland or broadly 'Northeast' to centre its narratives on conflict. (170:2010) Such a narrow, limited understanding of a literary tradition, ignores the complex textures of a text, implying that beyond 'contestations', there is not much worth in these literatures, argues Ao (ibid). As Margaret Ch Zama argues, literatures from Northeast are political in nature and engage with crucial, politically turbulent phases in their history. (65, 66: 2013) But it does not imply that these texts can be shelved under a single theme of violence or conflict and read formulaically. Even when a text engages with conflict or borrows from myth and aspects from traditional life practices, what are the kinds of stories it narrates? Are they stories centered on an event of conflict or is the mythical element being used to create a 'magical' tale? Or are they stories of people and their negotiations with life?

This paper attempts to discuss the question of apriori interpretation of literatures, through a reading of two texts, 'A

Fearful Symmetry' by Sentilong Ozukum and 'Soaba' by Temsula Ao. Temsula Ao's short story discussed in this paper is part of the collection *These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone*, published by Penguin India and Zubaan books. Sentilong Ozukum's short story from the collection *Sincerely Yours*, is published by HPH (Heritage Publication House) books, based in Dimapur. Sentilong Ozukum is a younger contemporary of Temsula Ao.

Memories, myths and stories

Contemporary Naga literature in English employs elements from folklore, tradition etc, in its stories, It narrates stories of Nagas, their society, culture, way of life, food, the geography of the space, changes in society and their every day, mundane lives etc. Violence or conflict forms only one aspect of these texts. And even when violence is part of the narrative, it is not positioned as the protagonist. The interweaving of elements from tradition into contemporary tales, is not merely a literary technique in contemporary Naga literature (English). In using these techniques, the attempt is to narrate stories of Nagas and their negotiation with life, society and identity. Says Temsula Ao :

"The blending of the past with their present provides them with the catalytic framework wherein they are able to explore their responses to the complex modern forces and their impact on societal evolutionary process. By doing this, the pastness of the tradition is re-interpreted in a symbiosis with the present in contemporary terms to create an altogether 'new' literature." (133:2014)

Sentilong Ozukum's 'A Fearful Symmetry' for instance, narrates a story of dilemma, of conflict within an individual

regarding his identity. The 'tiger man'/ 'were tiger', constitutes an important aspect of the Naga belief system. The tiger man/ were tiger in Ozukum's short story symbolises the complex terrain of belief system. It resists an understanding of conversion into Christianity as a simple process of relinquishing traditional life practices. The story describes the tiger man-father through the eyes of his son. The tiger man's son observes that his father has special powers which he uses in helping fellow villagers and is revered as well as feared for the same. However, his special powers are considered as satanic or devil's power by the church members who insist on the tiger man conversion as a Christian. Cited is an excerpt from the story; 'The church continually pressured father to become a Christian and declared his gifts as powers of the devil. (...) Out of pressure, he walked into the church one evening and returned home a Christian. (...) Nobody saw the inner battles he fought daily.' (38: 2017) A tiger begins to growl and circle the tiger man's house and also starts prowling in the village after his conversion into Christianity. The tiger's behaviour symbolises the anguish within the man. Cited is an excerpt from the story; 'Despite father's warning, the tiger returned every night like a wounded lover and kept circling the house until dawn. One could smell the sense of betrayal in the air.' (39: ibid) In bringing in the character of were tiger/ tiger man, Sentilong Ozukum does not make the story 'magical'. It narrates stories of Nagas and their conversations with self on questions of identity.

Temsula Ao's short story, 'Soaba', from her collection *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone,* published by Penguin India does include conflict or to use Margaret Ch Zama's term 'political turbulence' as its theme. But the centre

of the narrative is not conflict per se or the description of political situation in Nagaland. The intention of the text is to tell stories of people and their lives, lived in the midst of this event. As Temsula Ao says, 'These stories however, are not about 'historical facts'; nor are they about condemnation, justice or justification of the events (...) the stories are trying to say(...) that in such conflicts, there are no winners, only victims and the results can be measured only in human terms.'(x: 2006) These narratives are about the everyday life of Nagas as KB Veio Pou points out. (49 : 2015)

'Soaba', is the story of a young man who is deficient in his mental abilities. The townsfolk name the young man Soaba, which means idiot. 'Soaba was obviously slow in the head and seldom spoke coherently.' (9: 2006) Soaba, is an almost mute character, living in the fringes of society. He observes things and people around him and appears unaffected about anything except his hunger and thirst. One day, he gets attracted by the parade of 'home guards' appointed by the government, consisting of local people to assist the armed forces who are unaware of the space and its socio-political contours. To cite an excerpt from the story; they were designated as home guards by the government, (...) led by a notorious ex- cop reputed to be the perpetrator of several heinous crimes(...) They zoomed around town(...) intimidating and harassing the public at will' . (12:ibid) One day, Soaba sees a home guard vehicle zooming by and it becomes an attraction to him. In his enthusiasm of following speeding vehicles, he comes near the house of Imlichuba (leader of home guards) and sees a speeding vehicle park inside the compound. On seeing the vehicle, his sole purpose turns into looking at the vehicle. When the guards try shooing him away, the boss' wife sympathises with Soaba and

offers him food. She also provides him a shed inside the compound to stay. Soaba observes the on goings in the house, staying in his shed. In the midst of ruthlessness of the home guards that she witnesses every day, Soaba becomes her only point of contact with humanity. During one of the parties at his home, in his drunken stupor, the boss shoots Soaba. Cited is an excerpt from the story; 'Thus ended the tragic tale of Soaba, who, like a bewildered animal, had strayed out of his natural habitat into a maze that simply swallowed him up.' (21: 2006) Ao's story narrates a disruption of simple, mundaneness of life for both the boss's family and Soaba. Both boss and Soaba begin to inhabit a similar reality in different ways. Ao's story becomes a metonym for many such stories, of people and their everyday lives which violence disrupts. In narrating the story of the boss and Soaba, the text does not offer a judgement of any of the characters.

Ao's story speaks of inevitable realities which individuals negotiate. To put it another way, it narrates the story of individual lives, lived in the midst of various socio-political realties during the 1950's and 60's in Nagaland. It narrates a microcosmic tale of macrocosmic realties. Temsula Ao does not speak of violence or centre her narrative on violence, but speaks of people's negotiation with forces constituting the society. In other words, it constitutes an inevitable part of contemporary history while it is not the only aspect constituting contemporary history of Nagas. To put it another way, it articulates resistance against the 'single story' which publishing houses expect of texts from Northeast, in this case, specifically Nagaland. Parag M Sarma's argument made in the context of literary articulations of northeast can be extended here. Sarma argues; 'Literatures of the Northeast are ensconced in the

violence that enmeshes the region. But the violence cannot be neatly categorized in binaries like good or bad, or victims and perpetrators. For most part, the violence co-opts people as they become tragically involved in the unending cycle.' (44: 2013) Contemporary Naga author, Easterine Kire uses mountain as a metaphor and explains that violence constitutes just one mountain while there are other mountains too. Excluding the mountains of culture, religion etc, and equating a space with just one narrative can be unfair and erroneous. So when publishers expect writers from Northeast to weave their stories only on violence, it is reductive, points out Easterine Kire. (Lec, Jan 9: 2018)

Printing words and representations

Publishing houses buy copyrights to a work, use strategies in increasing the sale of a book, immaterial of its actual literary worth or the lack of it, as the current popular trend indicates. David Graham calls it as the 'dark side of market activism'. (2017) Sale and profit making may not be the only intention of most publishing houses. However, whether small or large scale, publishing groups are business ventures and it can be wrong to think they are merely trying to help a work see the light of day. The question here is not about the necessity of no-profit publishing venture. The concern is regarding apriori frames which a publisher presents before an author if the work is to be published. The themes expected of an author and her text is an already existent representation or popular representation which has gained circulation through media. For instance, representation of women in the 'third world' as living oppressed lives is a popular narrative in the western media and academia. A woman from the 'third world', who does not fall into the frame, is not considered as authentic

enough. Another instance is the French journalist's expectations of Egypt, as described in the introductory pages of Edward Said's *Orientalism.* In the case of contemporary Naga literature in English publisher's expectation of stories centered on either 'exotic' or 'violent' themes poses a similar problem. Such apriori interpretations are sourced to a large extent through representations in media and other written sources (colonial anthropological, administrative- both Indian and colonial etc). Most of the big, transnational publishers as Pavitra Narayanan points out elsewhere, are more market driven. (:2013) Besides, market criteria, the location of publishers, editors and their negotiations with history, also shape their understandings of texts.

For instance, Sentilong Ozukum's collection of short stories *Sincerely Yours* is published by Heritage Publication House, an independent, small scale publishing house, based in Dimapur. Heritage Publication house, made its foray into the business of publishing, in the year 2008. HPH publishes both fiction and non-fiction works by Naga authors. Works published by HPH (specifically fiction) deal with a wide range of themes, of which political identity and struggle constitutes one of the themes. Many of the Naga authors published by this publishing group are young and sometimes are trying to make a foray into the world of storytelling. 'Micropublishers' as David Graham refers elsewhere, independent, small publishing houses, provide a platform for authors across generations and also offer an alternative to the hegemony of big publishing houses. Given that works published by HPH deal with a variety of themes, it is unlikely that a frame for creative articulation is imposed. Contemporary Naga authors are offering their resistance to the hegemony of publishing

world and its apriori reading of literatures and their contexts through publishing with independent, local publishers. The workings of resistance can be seen in the narrative of a text. Simultaneously, resistance is also articulated, in choosing to publish, with those who do not expect the text to work on a pre-existent narrative thread. A shift can be traced wherein contemporary Naga authors prefer to publish with small and mid level publishers such as Zubaan, Speaking Tiger and Heritage Publication House which offer an alternative to transnational publishers like Penguin, Harper Collins etc.

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Notes

Naga literature is referred to as contemporary in this essay because this body of literary writing is relatively new, around three decades old.

Northeast is used not as a blanket term but only for the sake of convenience and also as this happens to be a cartographic reality as Lipokmar Dzuvichu and Manjeet Baruah point out in their introduction to *Modern Practices in North East India.*

KB Veio Pou, points out in his work *Literary cultures of India's Northeast: Naga writings in English* that English is the 'de facto' language of literary articulation in Nagaland.

Geeta Dharmarajan in the cover page of *Fresh Fictions*, edited by her, writes 'Magical, writings from North East' is used and in the preface to *Fresh Fictions*, the editor says, 'Only the north east can surprise us so consistently because only the North East has been blessed with myriad voices that only their own singing pines and undulating lands and mighty rivers can hear. But here are some voices in print. Just for you.'

Chimamande Ngozie Adichie uses the term 'single story' in her lecture entitled 'The Danger of a Single Story' delivered at the TED talk series. Adichie speaks of the problem in fixing the identity of a space, people and community through apriori constructions, based on stereotypes. She discusses this issue in the context of representations of Africa and people living in that continent on a homogenous plane in the narratives of the West.

David Graham uses the term 'micropublishers' in his essay 'Market activism: A Publisher's perspective'

In a lecture delivered at JNU, Easterine Kire mentions that she now chooses to publish with those who let her write on what she wishes to write.

The Politics of Colonial Translation - Swami Vivekananda: A Case in Point

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Translations are, as a matter of fact, never devoid of politics. As scholars interested in the field of translation studies, we are aware that translations are done with an intended readership in mind and the entire politics lies in who translates which text and for whom. Just as there is a "politics of post-colonial translation" (to quote Harish Trivedi), there was also a similar politics of 'colonial translations', that is to say, the translations made in the colonial era by the colonized subjects too had an intention. This article shall explore the case of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), who translated into both English and Bengali quite a number of texts in the second-half of the nineteenth century. Vivekananda's translations, too, were specifically intended to serve certain purposes and this article shall analyse his works not from any religious or spiritual but rather from an academic stand-point.

"Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached"—all of us are aware of this message by Swami Vivekananda. We even know that this was Swamiji's own translation of the verse from the Upanisad—"uttisthato jagrato prapya baran nibodhato". Yet, Swami Vivekananda's translations have never been discussed much. He has to his credit quite a few original works, in both Bengali and English. His fluency in the English

language and his oratory skills had made his fame spread across the seas in an era when India was under British rule. Several speeches delivered by him on foreign soil had attracted his listeners so much towards his style of oration that they had overlooked the fact that in reality Swami Vivekananda was an excellent translator of Indian philosophy and scriptures. His skill as a translator was manifest in the manner in which he interpreted ancient Indian scriptures and Indian philosophy in general in English. This skill, we must admit, was imperative to spread the Ramakrishna cult in the West.

It would be wrong to assume that Swami Vivekananda's translation activities began only after he set foot on foreign soil. Indeed it had started long back when the sudden demise of his father had left him helpless and desperate for money. In 1884 Narendranath Dutta passed his B.A. examination and in that year itself he lost his father. The situation was adverse to such an extent that the family literally struggled to survive. Narendranath took up the task of translating books as a means of earning money. He translated *Education—Intellectual, Moral and Physical* by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), one of the greatest philosophers of 19th century England, into Bengali and called the book *Shiksha*. Just after taking his Entrance examinations Narendranath had sent a letter to Spencer stating his difference of opinion with him. Spencer had accepted the reasoning of the young man and had even assured him of incorporating the necessary changes in the subsequent editions (Basu 71). The reminiscences of Mahendranath Dutta, Sister Nivedita, and Sister Christine too mention the profound impact of Herbert Spencer's philosophy on Narendranath Dutta. Naturally when Narendranath decided to earn money by translating books, the first book he chose to translate was

Spencer's *Education*. Noted Vivekananda scholar Sri Sankari Prasad Basu has commented that on the one hand his personal preference for Spencer and on the other his unwillingness to accept God as the ultimate Truth without any proof—these two reasons prompted Narendranath Dutta to translate Spencer's book based on scientific reasoning and logic. (169)

Published by the renowned publishing house Basumati, *Shiksha* is widely known to be Swami Vivekananda's original Bengali work. It is unknown to the majority that this book is in fact a translation of an English book and that is why it holds greater significance. At a time when English education was being enforced upon the Indian subjects by their British rulers, the translation of the most celebrated contemporary book on education in the English language was indeed a decisive step. Narendranath had wanted the British to take notice of the fact that their Indian subjects were aware of their 'master's' ideas on and philosophy of education and that they possessed their own sense of judgement and discretion too. He refrained from translating the entire book, it was an abridged version. Moreover, he had taken liberties according to his needs. Portions of 'Intellectual Education' have been left out, the translator did not consider it important enough to include in his book. The subtitle of the original book 'Intellectual, Moral and Physical' has been excluded in the Bengali translation. In the chapter on 'Physical Education', Spencer wrote—"The ill-fed Hindoo goes down before the Englishmen fed on more nutritive food, to whom he is as inferior in mental as in physical energy." (Spencer 191) Naturally Narendranath was the last person to take this insult and he had strongly objected to such an opinion of an Englishman. Not only did he let his objection be known to Spencer beforehand in his letter, he also skilfully

changed the portion while translating. What he wrote in his Bengali translation was more or less like this—the non-vegetarian races have always been more powerful than the Hindus fed on relatively nutritious food (*Shiksha* 91). This incident demonstrated why young Narendranath deliberately chose to translate Spencer's book. He had asked for his permission and Mahendranath Dutta's *Srimat Vivekananda Swamijir Jivaner Ghatanabali* clearly mentions that Herbert Spencer had sent a letter granting his permission to translate his book. The letter had also mentioned that he had not seen any Indian so well-versed in English and so he would be delighted to have his book translated by Narendranath. But Narendranath's intention was not to gain any kind of favour from Spencer but to impart his views on education to the youth of India after making suitable changes to it. Adapting western ideas and philosophy and moulding them according to our needs have always been the way Swami Vivekananda had functioned and that had indeed begun quite early in his life.

Around the same time he had submitted a commentary on and Bengali translation of Jaidev's *Geetagovindam* to Motilal Basu. Mahendranath Dutta had reminisced that when Narendranath had decided to take up the reins of the family by translating books after the untimely demise of his father in 1884, he had written a commentary on *Geetagovindam* and had also translated it into Bengali. Motilal Basu had published it from his own press. However, the book is no longer available (Dutta 191). Except this solitary mention by Mahendranath, we have no other information about Vivekananda's *Geetagovindam* and this deprives us from knowing why he had chosen *Geetagovindam* as part of his translation project.

Narendranath Dutta's next published translation was 'Isha Anusaran'. Six chapters of *The Imitation of Christ* was translated and published in volume 1 issues 1-5 of the monthly Bengali magazine *Sahitya Kalpadrum* (1889). Later the six chapters were compiled together and published as 'Isha Anusaran' in the 6th volume of Swami Vivekananda's *Bani O Rachana*. It should be noted that in case of each translation there was a reason behind the choice of texts. The book *Bangla Bhasay Bibekananda Charcha* mentions that the way the disciples of Christ had united after His death had influenced the disciples of the Paramahamsa to get united under the leadership of Naren after the death of Sri Ramakrishnadev. This had prompted Narendranath to translate *The Imitation of Christ* (22). In the Introduction to his Bengali translation, Narendranath had clearly stated that the ill-behaviour of the British administrators in India and their attitude towards Indians have led the general Indians to hold Christians in disregard and it might prompt them to hate the Christian religion. However, through his translation of a book on Christianity he wanted to uphold the benevolent side of the religion and spread the message of love and generosity as propagated by Jesus himself (*Bani O Rachana* 13).

As a translator he was careful enough to include notes on all sentences mentioning specific Biblical references such as 'Trinity', 'Law', "Judgement', 'Eternal World' or 'Manna'. Even slokas from *The Bhagavadgita* have been cited in the footnotes of the translated text to make readers understand the essential unity between the Vedic and the Christian ideologies. For example, *The Imitation of Christ* begins like this: "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord" (1). The translated text cites from the Gita—"daibi hyesa gunamayi

mama duratyaya|/ mameba ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te|" (7|14) In Narendranath's thoughts there existed a synthesis of the Vedic and the Christian ideologies and we could discover it later from the writings of Sister Nivedita also. In her book *Notes on Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda*, Nivedita has written down her conversation with Swamiji while travelling with him in 1898. Swamiji has said—"Yes, almost all Christianity is Aryan, I believe." (77) His effort to unify the two religions and spread the message of tolerance had begun with 'Isha Anusaran'.

Later the majority of translations done by Swami Vivekananda have been from Indian languages into English. It all began at the dais of the historic speech at Chicago. On September 11, 1893 he had said—

"The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world, of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me." (Chicago Addresses 21)

[ye yatha mam prapadyante tamstathaiba bhajamaham/ mama bartamanubartante manusyah sarvasyah|] (Gita 4|11)

In the speeches delivered at the Chicago Congress Swamiji had translated a total of 14 Sanskrit slokas extempore in English. It ranged from the *Gita* to the *Upanisads* (Kathopanisad, Mundakopanisad and Svetasvatara Upanisad), Siva Mahimnah Stotram, Rg Veda, Mahanirvana Tantra, Mahabharata and Vedanta Sutra. Thus, the famous sloka from the SvetasvataraUpanisad—"srinnantu visve amritasya putra/ a ye dhamani divyani tasthuh||" [2.5] gets known to the world

as "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion" (Chicago Addresses 35) or, Yudhisthira's philosophy "dharma eba manah krishne svabhavachchaiba me dhritam|/ dharmavanijyako hino jaghanyo dharmabadinam||" ('Vanaparva, Mahabharata 31.2.5) is translated to the foreign listeners in this way—"I do not pray for anything; I do not ask for anything. Let Him place me wherever He likes. I must love Him for love's sake. I cannot trade in love." (Chicago Addresses 37)

During his travels in 1898, Swamiji was in a mood to translate the Vedas for his western disciples. Sister Nivedita writes in her *Notes on Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda* on June 12, 1898:

"On Sunday afternoon, we rested near the plains…above a lake and fall, and there he translated for us the Rudra prayer… He hesitated a long time over the fourth line, thinking of rendering it, "Embrace us in the heart of our heart". But at last he put his perplexity to us saying shyly, "The real meaning is: Reach us through and through our self". He had evidently feared that this sentence, with its extraordinary intensity, might not make good sense in English." (41)

But his rendition indeed left a profound impact on his listeners that afternoon, particularly Sister Nivedita. The Rudra prayer found in Yajur-Veda "asato ma sadgamaya/tamaso ma jyotir gamaya/mrityor mamritam gamaya/ abirabirma edhi, rudra yatte dakshinam/ mukham tena mam pahi nityam" was translated as:

From the Unreal lead us to the Real.
From darkness lead us unto light.

From death lead us to immortality.
Reach us through and through our self.
And evermore protect us—Oh Thou Terrible!—
From ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate Face (42)

'The Hymn of Sweetness' found in the Rg Veda (I.90. 6-9), Brihadaranyak Upanisad (VI.3.6) and the Mahanarayana Upanisad (Section XXXIX: Trisuparna Mantra) was also translated in the same afternoon. Nivedita writes—"It was indeed an afternoon of translations, and he gave us fragments of the great benediction after mourning, which is one of the most beautiful of the Hindu sacraments"

The blissful winds are sweet to us.
The seas are showering bliss on us.
May the corn in our fields bring bliss to us.
May the plants and herbs bring bliss to us.
May the cattle give us bliss.
O Father in Heaven be Thou blissful unto us!
Thy very dust of the earth is full of bliss.

It is all bliss—all bliss—all bliss. (43)

At the request of his dear friend Jagadish Chandra Bose, Swami Vivekananda later translated the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rg Veda (X.129). About this translation, he wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull from Mayavati on January 6, 1901—"I send you forthwith a translation of the Nasadiya Hymn sent by Dr. Bose through you. I have tried to make it as literal as possible." (Letters of Swami Vivekananda 447) His translation was named 'The Hymn of Creation'. "Nasadasinno sadasittadanim| nasidrajo no vyoma paro yat|/ kimavarivah kuhakasya sharmann| ambhah kimasidgahanam gabhiram"||(1) was translated by Vivekananda as "Existence was not then, nor

non-existence,/ The world was not, the sky beyond was neither./ What covered the mist? Of whom was that?/ What was in the depths of darkness thick?" (In Search of God 76) Through his translations Swamiji not only opened up the poetic beauty of the Vedic hymns to his western audience/readers, but also made them aware of the profound philosophy of the Vedic rishis which was hitherto unknown to most of the western world. For the benefit of his western disciples and devotees he had effortlessly translated not just Vedic hymns but also lyrical poems of the Bhakti poets such as Surdas, Tulsidas, Ramprasad, love poems of Radha-Krshna and even songs of Tansen. Nivedita writes—"In matters Indian he would rather put forward, in its extreme form, at the beginning of our experience, all that it might seem impossible for European minds to enjoy. Thus he would quote, for instance, some verse—

> On one side grows the hair
> In long black curls,
> And on the other, corded like rope
> .....
> .....
> For He, the Lord, took a form,
> And that was a divided form,
> Half-woman and half-man." (5-6)

This was how the concept of ardhanarisvar was explained to the foreigners by Swamiji. Again, by the touch of his pen, Surdas's bhakti song "prabhu mera avgun chit na dharo,/ samadarsi hay nam tiharo, ab mohi par karo" becomes "O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!/ Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness" (Notes 43) or Tulsi's poem becomes "Therefore,

Tulsi, take thou care to live with/all, for who can tell where, or in what garb,/the Lord Himself may next come to thee?" (62) The popular Radha-Krshna love-lore was presented before his foreign audience as "They have made Radha queen, in the beautiful groves of Brindaban./ At her gate stands Krishna, on guard." (7) He had even translated his friend, the famous Bengali playwright of the 19th century, Girish Ghose's poem on Radha-Krshna as the 'Chorus of the Cowherds':

> "Men. Thou art the Soul of souls.
> Thou yellow-garbed,
> With thy blue eyes.
> Women: Thou dark One! Thou
> Shepherd of Brindaban!
> Kneeling at the feet of the
> Shepherdesses." (8)

Apart from these, portions of Bhartriharis' Vairagya Shatakam (Nos 14-15, 18, 24-26,31, 33), Sankaracharya's *Nirvanashatakam* and Patanjali's *Yogasutra* have been translated into English by Swami Vivekananda. The 'Six Stanzas of Nirvana' explain the ultimate truth of the Absolute: "I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute—/ I am He, I am He (Shivoham, Shivoham) [In Search of God 78]. In October 1898, in Kashmir, Swamiji translated for his disciples the 'Hundred Verses on Renunciation' (Vairagya Shatakam), later published as 'Renunciation Alone is Fearless': "In enjoyment is the fear of disease,/ In high birth, the fear of losing caste,…/In the body, the fear of death./In this life all is fraught with fear:/ Renunciation alone is fearless." (In Search of God 81). To quote Nivedita, "… carried by his burning enthusiasm it was

possible to enter into these things, and dimly, even then, to apprehend their meaning." (Notes 6)

Vivekananda's role as a translator did not remain confined only to the English language. His eagerness to master French and German, his engagement with the French language and his letters in French remind us again and again that language could never act as a barrier for a personality such as Swami Vivekananda. "I am determined to be a French and German scholar"—his desire was indeed a manifestation of his skill, his connaissance of and mastery over languages which he used to the fullest possible extent to spread the message of his Master. The preaching of the Ramakrishna cult could never have been possible had Swami Vivekananda not translated Indian philosophy to his foreign disciples and admirers. His translations from *Gita, Upanisads,* the epics and other Indian texts were all intended to make his foreign disciples aware of Indian philosophy.

In the initial stage he had translated from western texts into his mother-tongue because he felt the need of his countrymen to be aware of Christian ideology and western ideals of education. In the mature stage of his life it was more important for him to spread the Ramakrishna cult outside of India and in the last stages after he had successfully "swept off" America, he turned his attention to Europe. It must be noted here that Swami Vivekananda's spiritual conquest of the United States was not merely an accident; it was a calculated move on his part as a colonised subject of the British to participate in the Congress of World Religions in Chicago in 1893. It was only after he gained such popularity in the United States which was emerging as a super-power in world

politics in the second half of the nineteenth century that he could make efforts to gain a foothold in England. Vivekananda in his last few years was desperate to master French and German and spread his teachings over the continent but his ill-health failed him. His participation at the History of the Congress of World Religions held in Paris in 1900 was half-hearted and he could not deliver his proposed speech there. Several years after his demise, among his papers was discovered an unfinished story in Bengali titled 'Shiv er Bhoot'. It was about a baron named 'K' who longed for happiness. The one-page story abruptly ends with K's journey to Paris in search of happiness (*Bani O Rachana* 42). Perhaps the incomplete story is symbolic of Swami Vivekananda's unfulfilled desire to stay in France and learn French the way he had wanted to. Had he lived a few more years, his target audience could have shifted from those who knew just English to French and German and perhaps he could have spread his message to a wider European readership.

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The Progress of Translation in Mizo Literature

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The people of Mizoram were introduced to a foreign language only after 1894, when the British missionaries had entered their land. Being situated in the Northeast corner of India it remained secluded for decades even though there have been communal conflicts and wars with the people of the plains. This paper will attempt to show the journey of translation from Mizo to English as well as from English to Mizo. Importance will be given to the analysis of the different kinds of translation employed by the translators. In Mizoram, the British are seen not as colonizers but as missionaries, their saviours, who have come from across the seas. The language of the 'saviours' easily became the 'language of authority' among the natives. In the young history of Mizoram we find that it is the Pastors and the people who were in close affinity with the British who became educated in the 'language of authority'. As such, the earlier translations from the Mizo language to the English language were excessively Christian and 'proper'. The earlier translators chose to express the Mizo original in certain selected words which was considered 'right' but were often not quite socially appropriate translations. One can also somehow know the background of the translator from his choice of words. This paper will also analyse the kind of omissions done on a work of translation and the politics brought

about by the authoritarian figures, the society and the Church, who have the power to make the necessary omissions. The later part of the paper will put into perspective Walter Benjamin's question, "Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?" (Benjamin 71). This question will be posed among the Mizo translators of various generations focusing mainly on their reasons for translation. The last part of the paper will analyse the importance of the authenticity of the original work of art. Among the Mizos who have a very young history of written literature, most of the earlier literatures were oral which have been transmitted by word-of-mouth down the ages. The source of the original work often differs as the content of the story or tale or song may vary from person to person. This paper will thus analyse the various ways and means employed by the Mizo translators in their journey of translating from Mizo to English.

Mizo literature comprises of the literature written in the Mizo language. The period between 1860 and 1894 is regarded as the Pre-Christian period of Mizo literature. Mizo literature had started to develop after the entry of the British missionaries into Mizoram in 1894. Laltluangliana Khiangte has made mention of the missionary, Thomas Herbert Lewin's book *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect* written in 1874. In this book T.H. Lewin had mentioned two Mizo folktales 'Chemtatrawta' and 'Lalruanga and Kungawrhi' with their English translations. He had also included some Mizo words with their English meaning (Khiangte 1997). This period was followed by the Early Period which comprises of the period between 1894 and 1920. The missionaries had created the Mizo alphabet for the natives in 1894. On the 22nd of October 1896 the missionaries published the first Mizo language book *Mizo*

Zir Tir Bu', a Mizo primer book. The examples given in this Mizo primer book for teaching sentence constructions are socially and culturally appropriate sentences, many of which also teach the natives personal hygiene. The early period comprised of a huge number of translations from the English to the native tongue, Mizo. This period was followed by the Middle period which comprised of the years between 1920 and 1970. The Middle period of Mizo literature saw the rise of a number of works of literature in the native Mizo tongue. This period comprises of well-known poets who wrote both secular and religious poems. Some of the more well-known Mizo poets of this period were Rokunga, R.L. Kamlala, Patea, Capt. L. Z. Sailo, Laltanpuia, P.S. Chawngthu and Vankhama. The modern period of Mizo literature starts from 1970 and continues till the present day. This period comprises of great Mizo writers who write in Mizo and in English. This period sees the translation of many literary works from the Mizo to the English.

The archives of the Aizawl Theological College have accounted that the translation of 'The Prodigal Son' by F.W. Savidge, a missionary who came from Wales, is the first translation of an English work to the native Mizo tongue. F.W. Savidge had translated 'The Prodigal Son' into the Mizo language on 6th February, 1896 in Aizawl. Being the first record of a translation into the Mizo language, the symbols and alphabets used in this translation are quite different from the alphabets of the contemporary Mizo language as the Mizo alphabet was still in the process of development. Savidge puts an 'o' on top of the 'a' instead of using the later more widely used 'aw' of the Mizo language as in 'lawm'. He has also inserted a symbol '^' instead of using the 'i' of the Mizo language which is pronounced as 'e'. From his translation,

one is able to find out the accent with which the white man spoke the Mizo tongue – he would add an 'h' after the 's' as in 'shem' instead of merely writing it as 'sem,' the accent in which the natives would have pronounced it. Savidge also wrote 'sawi' (the now recently used spelling) as 'shoi'. In his translation of 'The Prodigal Son', Savidge had not yet placed the "h" after words like "leh" and "hnenah". This first recorded translation into the Mizo language shows the dominance of the accent of the translator in the translated work. The earlier translations in Mizo literature were mostly Biblical and religious writings from the English to the Mizo (the Lushai).

The second translation was the translation of the Gospel According to Luke and John and the Acts of the Apostles to the Lushai in 1898 in London, for the British and Foreign Bible Society. The first edition of the translation of the New Testament to the Lushai was published in June, 1916. The first edition of the translations of the Book of Psalms, the Book of Genesis and the Book of Isaiah was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1928. After the various books were translated, the first edition of the Mizo Bible was published in 1959. The Apokrifa, known as the holy writings between the two testaments, old and new, is been considered as part and parcel of the Bible by the Roman Catholic Church. The Presbyterian Church, the church followed by the majority of the Mizos, separates the Apokrifa from the Bible. This may be the reason why the first published translation of the Apokrifa (sub-titled as the Deutero-Canonical Books) has been published only as late as in 1989 by the Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, Mizoram.

Religious songs and hymns were also translated alongside the Biblical writings. The first Mizo Christian Hymn Book

was published in 1899 which comprised of hymns which have been translated from the English to the Lushai. In 1903, the North India Christian Tract and Book Society, Allahabad, had published the first edition of the Mizo Christian Hymn Book. This Hymn Book comprised of the translated hymns composed by J.H. Lorrain, F.W. Savidge, David E. Jones, Edwin Rowlands, Raibhajur, Simeon Rynjah, Sahon Roy, Shiniboni and Awmia Nu. In 1904, the Presbyterian Church of Wales, North Lushai Hills had published Part Two of the Mizo Christian Hymn Book. In 1918, the 'Lushai Hymn Book with Solfa' was brought out by the Welsh Mission in Aizawl. The first hymn book which came out in 1899 had only eighteen songs, and the hymn book which came out in 1908 already had two hundred and seventy three songs and the hymn book which was printed on 1919 had five hundred and fifty eight songs. The Christian influence on the Mizo culture was so great that the use of the desert and the ocean imagery for describing life and the world was also the outcome of the influence of the translations of the English Christian songs to Mizo. The Mizo song composers began to share even the mind-set of the English missionaries. The new religion's influence on the Mizos was seen in the manner in which they perceived the spiritual world to exist. They discarded the rules of *Thangchhuah*(i) and instead accepted the Cross. And so the people who once looked towards Rih Dil now looked towards the river Jordan. The new religion also enriched the vocabulary of the natives –

ChanchinTha (Good News), Tidamtu (Healer), Chhandamtu (Redeemer), Zawlnei (Prophet), Berampu (Shepherd), Sipai (Soldier), Vantirhkoh (Angel), ThlarauThianghlim (Holy Spirit), Nunna Bu (Book of Life) and Nunna Thing (Tree of Life).

The missionaries had translated a huge number of Christian songs to Mizo. Out of the six hundred hymns in the Christian Hymn Book (Kristian Hla Bu) published by the Mizoram Synod in 2005, fifty-two translated hymns of Rev. E. Rowlands, a Welsh missionary, were added. Eight Mizo songs composed by Rowlands were also added in the hymn book. Twenty-five translated hymns of Rev. D.E. Jones were also added. Four jointly translated hymns and two jointly composed hymns in Mizo by Rev. F.W. Savidge and Rev. J.H. Lorrain were also included. Among the Mizo song/hymn composers a fairly decent number of the works of Rev. Liangkhaia and Rokunga were added. Nineteen of Rokunga's hymns composed in Mizo were added along with five of Rev. Liangkhaia's hymns composed in Mizo. Rev. Liangkhaia had also translated sixteen hymns from the English to the Mizo. Among the Mizos, a greater number of the translations were done by the reverends. This hymn book has included three songs composed by a Mizo woman, Lalruali, and also one hymn translated by a Mizo woman, Lianchani. It is noteworthy to mention that two hymns translated by Simeon Rynjah, a Khasi missionary, were included in this hymn book.

The Middle period of Mizo literature (1920-1970) saw the rise of a new breed of natives who became educated in the 'language of authority'. This knowledge of the 'language of authority' gave them authority over the other natives. How is the 'language of authority' being tackled while translating? The Kristian Hla Bu, Mizo Christian Hymn Book, shows that a number of native converts had started composing Christian songs since the 1920s. Their compositions were very much in the style of the Christian missionaries. The hymns composed by Upa(ii) Thanga, Rev. Liangkhaia, R.L. Kamlala, Patea,

Chawngkunga, Thanghuta, Rokunga and Ziakkawia have been translated to English by Laltluangliana Khiangte, Rev. J.M. Lloyd, Rev. L.N. Ralte and Lalthankima. Their compositions were dated between 1940 and 1960 (Khiangte 2002). Lalmama, Vankhama, Rokunga, P.S. Chawngthu, L. Biakliana and James Dokhuma are the more well-known composers of Nature songs in the Mizo language. Their works have been translated to English by Mafa-a Hauhnar, Sangliana, Lalthankima, Laltluangliana Khiangte, Rev. Zairema and Jimmy L. Chhangte. Jackson Mathews articulates that to translate a poem whole is to compose another poem. A whole translation will be faithful to the matter, and it will 'approximate the form' of the original; and it will have a life of its own, which is the voice of the translator (Nida 146). In the earlier translations from the Mizo to the English, one finds the translator sticking to the original as faithfully as possible. The 'language of authority' is handled with much caution for fear of putting forth a 'wrong' translation. In the translations of the 'devotional songs' or hymns especially, the translators try to translate each and every word without putting in mind the tune and solfa of the songs. In the translations of the hymns from the Mizo to the English, one is able to find the translator's immense use of 'thou', 'thy' and 'thine' maybe to make the translation sound more 'religious' and 'proper'. There is also a more recent translation of Thanghuta's 'Ka ralthuamna ka dah ngam lo' into English by Rev. J.M. Lloyd. Lefevere is of the opinion that translation bestows "the authority inherent in a language of authority (Latin, French, English, Russian) on a text originally written in another language lacking that authority" (Lefevere 123). As a result of this 'authority' inherent in certain languages the speakers of emerging languages like Mizo aim to translate works of literature

written in those languages so that their languages may appear to be as expressive as the languages of 'authority'.

The English culture is in almost all manners different from the Mizo culture no matter how hard the Mizo culture tries to mimic the English culture. As such, in most of the translations from the Mizo to the English where one is unable to find 'equivalent' words, translators usually give explanations so that the cognate words used may find a place in the translated work. At times when it becomes difficult to give direct translations, William A. Cooper is of the opinion that it is better to cling to the spirit of the poem and clothe it in language and figures entirely free from awkwardness of speech and obscurity of picture. He also says that such kinds of translations might be called a 'translation from culture to culture' (Nida 146). In Sangliana's translation of Vankhama's 'Rimawi Ram' (Khiangte 2002: 35-36), the translator keeps the names of the insects and trees in the original language and gives an explanation in English in the foot-notes. Other translators have attempted word-by-word literal translations. In Laltluangliana Khiangte's translation of James Dokhuma's 'Chhaktiang Thlifim' (Khiangte 46-47), the translator instead of translating the title as 'The East Wind' translates it as 'Purvaiya – The East Wind' as this east wind has been depicted as the 'purvaiya' in the text of the poem. Andre Lefevere writes that translators "protect their own world against images that are too radically different, either by adapting them or by screening them out" (Lefevere 1992: 121). Khiangte has added the word 'Purvaiya', the name given to the east wind, to give a sense of authenticity and maybe even a sense of familiarity to the readers.

Margaret L. Pachuau's *Handpicked Tales from Mizoram* (2008), a collection of translations of select folk tales and short

stories from Mizoram has also been chosen for study. This book is quite noteworthy as it is for the first time that these stories from Mizoram have been compiled together in an anthology in translation. Margaret L. Pachuau has written in the foreword to her book, "My intention in creating this compilation has predominantly been to bring to the forefront, the richness and the uniqueness of the literature of the Mizos" (Pachuau 2008: 7). The role of the translator is very important especially for a culture which was oral for a long time and has acquired a written literature only very recently. And so Walter Benjamin's question, "Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?" (Benjamin 71) has to be examined. Translations often take on the role of educating people on certain things which they were unable to appreciate as they were written in a language which they could not comprehend. The role of the translator and the translation is to transmit information. Walter Benjamin is of the opinion that the translator's act of merely transmitting information is the hallmark of bad translations. Benjamin also states that the "inaccurate transmission of an inessential content" (Benjamin 72) is another cause of inferior translation. There are critics of translation who believe that the translation should be clearer than the original. Evolution of oral language to written through print culture has generated new ideas and thoughts. Education and the creation of the scripted language of the natives have brought about immense change in the thought processes of the natives. Ideas, thoughts and memories can now be passed on easily from one person to another and stored safely in print medium for future generations.

The re-telling of the Mizo folktales by Margaret L. Pachuau and Laltluangliana Khiangte has brought to light the

contested nature of the authenticity of the source of the oral tales. Pachuau and Khiangte have both translated the tales of 'Thailungi', 'Kawrdumbela', 'Chemtatrawta', 'Kelchawngi', 'Rimenhawihi' and 'Lengkawia' and the content of information of their translations differ from one another. For example, in the tale of 'Thailungi' as translated by Margaret L. Pachuau we find Thailungi under the care of her stepmother while in Laltluangliana Khiangte's translation we find a mother and not a stepmother taking care of Thailungi. In the tale of 'Kawrdumbela' Margaret L. Pachuau mentions the name of the bird 'Vazuntei' which also denotes the feminine gender of the bird while Khiangte did not make mention of any such thing. As the source of the tales may differ from person to person as they have been transmitted orally, the translations of the same tales may differ slightly and sometimes greatly. Margaret L. Pachuau's translation of eight never before translated Mizo short stories shows the advancement of the journey of translation in Mizo literature.

In her latest book *Folklore from Mizoram* (2013), Margaret L. Pachuau gives an elaborate introduction to the tales she had translated all the while explaining the culture and tradition of the Mizos. This introduction gives a better understanding of the tales not just to the non-native but also to the native as many customs and traditions and way of speaking have changed immensely over the years. This paper shows the dilemma faced by translators in a society whose memory was primarily oral. In their journey, translations have acted not only as tools for transmission of information; they have advanced as the translators are now capable of translating the feelings as well as the essence of the original works. Walter Benjamin has simply said, "Translations, on the other hand,

prove to be untranslatable not because of any inherent difficulty, but because of the looseness with which meaning attaches to them" (Benjamin 82). These acts of translations from the Mizo to the English have thus made it possible for readers from other regions to be aware and even become interested in the literature of the region.

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Note

(i) *Thangchhuah* is the name given to a man who has distinguished himself by killing a certain number of animals or by giving a certain amount of feasts (Lorrain: 447)

(ii) *Upa* is Church elder

Animal Imageries and the Representation of the Marginal in J.M. Coetzee's Apartheid Novels

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In the very first sentence of J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), the titular character of the novel, described by critics as "a simple South African … subjected to the oppressions of apartheid" (Head 55), is described by the narrator with two striking animal imageries: "The first thing the midwife noticed about Michael K when she helped him out of his mother into the world was that he had *a hare lip*. The lip curled *like a snail's foot*, the left nostril gaped" (emphasis added, 4). From thereon, throughout the rest of the novel, K is continually associated with different types of animals by the third person narrator, by other characters, or by K himself. This, however, is not confined to this particular novel alone; similar zoomorphic associations recur in Coetzee's other novels as well, where such animal imageries are deployed by different characters to completely different effects. In this essay I shall focus on two contrasting types of such zoomorphic imageries one frequently comes across in Coetzee's novels from the apartheid period, novels that deal with issues of racism and colonialism. One type of such animal imageries highlights the oppressive nature of such zoomorphic associations that compare marginal people to animals and thereby justify the subjugation and exploitation of both these groups; conversely, the other type of these imageries not only

undercut the previous ones but also rewrite their meaning. In Coetzee's novels, these first kind of zoomorphic imageries, images that perpetuate the stereotyping of the marginal human beings as animal-like, are predominantly used by individuals occupying or identifying with positions of privilege and authority. Also, almost all the characters who use such imageries are of European stock and the subject of their zoomorphic metaphors are invariably the native Africans or the people of colour (and in the case of Coetzee's hyper-masculine characters - women). However, in his use of such metaphors, Coetzee's approach is reflective and interrogative rather than mimetic. This, as we shall see, is an integral part of Coetzee's conscious and careful subversion of the Enlightenment Humanist discourse which places the rationality of human beings above the non-rationality of animals, and by the same principle, prioritises European 'civilisation' over non-European 'barbarianism'. Such an act of subversion has profound political significance in the racial and colonial context of his novels.

Coetzee's questioning of the animalisation of the marginal can be observed as early as his first novel *Dusklands* (1974), composed of two parallel narratives. At the very beginning of the second of these narratives, titled "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," the titular character, a fictional sixteenth century Dutch explorer in Africa, describes one "Adam Wijnand, a Bastard . . . [whose] mother was a Hottentot," as a "rich man with ten thousand head of cattle, as much land as he can patrol, [and] a *stableful of women*" (emphasis added, 57). Shortly thereafter, Jacobus Coetzee tellingly describes "the Bushman [as] a different creature, an animal with an animal's soul," and adds: "heartless as baboons they are, and the only way to treat them is like beasts" (58). "It is only when you hunt them as

you hunt jackals," Jacobus says, "that you can really clear a stretch of the country" (59). For Jacobus, the value of a San (or Bushman) life is so insignificant that "a bullet is too good for [him]" (60). In the same place, Jacobus recalls how once when he and his men had captured a Bushman alive, they "killed and tied him over a fire and roasted him. They even basted him in his own fat" (ibid). Naturally enough, Jacobus employs the same violent imageries and by extension the same conceptual framework to women as well. Thus, in order to bring home the 'worthlessness' of the San female, he says:

"Dutch girls carry an aura of property with them. *They are first of all property themselves*: they bring not only so many pounds of white flesh but also so many morgen of land and so many head of cattle and so many servants ... Whereas a wild Bushman girl is tied into nothing, literally nothing. She may be alive but she is as good as dead. She has seen you kill the men who represented power to her, she has seen them shot down like dogs. You have become Power itself now and she nothing, a rag you wipe yourself on and throw away. *She is completely disposable*. She is something for nothing, free." (emphasis added, 61)

This animalisation of the aboriginal Africans culminates in Jacobus's brutal massacre of the Namaqua tribe, where he compares the killing-off of his injured victims to the disposal of "wounded birds" (105). This violence is paralleled by his actual violence on nonhuman animals, as reported by Jacobus himself: a self-proclaimed "tamer of the wild," Jacobus records in his chronicle:

"I move through the wilderness with my gun … and slay elephants, hippopotami, rhinoceres, buffalo, lions, leopards,

dogs, giraffes, antelope and buck of all descriptions, fowl of all descriptions, hares, and snakes; I leave behind me a mountain of skin, bones, inedible gristle, and excrement. All this is my dispersed pyramid of life." (79)

The interconnectedness of this dual violence towards humans and animals is again explored in Coetzee's third novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (hereafter, *Waiting*). In the very beginning of this novel, the Colonel of Police Joll, an official of "the Third Bureau of the Civil Guard" of the Empire, tells the Magistrate of the imperial outpost, the first person narrator of the novel, "about the last great drive he rode in, when thousands of deer, pigs, bears were slain, so many that a mountain of carcases had to be left to rot" (1). The Magistrate in turn tells the Colonel about "the great folks of geese and duck that descend on the lake every year and about native ways of trapping them" (ibid). Later, the Magistrate briefly describes the hunting of fowl during the "season for trapping," when "birds with their necks twisted, [are] slung on poles row upon row by their feet, or crammed alive into wooden cages, screaming with outrage, trampling each other" (62). This reference to the actual violence on animals in accompanied by an initial figurative violence on the nomadic people, defined by the agents of the Empire as "barbarians," who repeatedly and pejoratively frame the formers as brutes. For instance, when the fisherfolk arrested by the colonel are confined in the yard of the Magistrate's barracks, they become a source of temporary amusement to the staff because of "their strange gabbling, their vast appetites, [and] their animal shamelessness" (20). But soon the employees in the magisterial residence start despising and avoiding them and "begin to toss them their food *as if they were indeed animals"* (emphasis added, 21). Not only

that, the Empire's treatment of these imprisoned nomads is akin to human beings' treatment of domesticated animals, as reflected in the description of "the shuffling group of prisoners roped together neck to neck" (22). This leads to a most 'beastly' abuse of these native prisoners towards the latter half of the novel:

"The standard-bearer's horse is led by a man who brandishes a heavy stick to clear his way. Behind him comes another trooper trailing a rope; and at the end of the rope, *led neck to neck,* comes a file of man, barbarians, stark naked, holding their hands up to their faces in an odd way as though one and all are suffering from toothache … *A simple loop of wire runs through the flesh of each man's hands and through holes pierced in his cheeks. "It makes them meek as lambs,"* I remember being told by a soldier who had once seen the trick: "they think of nothing but how to keep very still." My heart grows sick. (emphasis added, 113)

One of the primary objectives of this cruel method is to make the prisoners as submissive as domesticated animals, something made explicit by the comment of the soldier. This, however, is not accidental, because as Charles Patterson points out, originally it was "the enslavement of animals [that] served as the model and inspiration for the enslavement of humans" (12). Patterson again says, "The great [perceived] divide between humans and animals provided a standard by which to judge other people, both at home and elsewhere … Those judged less than human were seen either *as useful beasts to be curbed, domesticated, and kept docile,* or as predators or vermin to be eliminated" (emphasis added, 25). In the narrative of *Waiting*, the inferior, animal-like status of the 'Barbarians' is further accentuated by the Colonel's hiring of the "aid of a

hunter who has shot pigs up and down the river all his life" (23) as a linguistic mediator while interrogating his first batch of prisoners. Likewise, the Magistrate too takes a "hunter and horse trader" (63) on his journey to return the Barbarian girl to her people. Similarly, the Magistrate calls the Barbarian girl, whom he kept as his mistress, a "wild animal" (37), and refers to himself as an "old hunter" (42). Later, after his reversal of fate and following his imprisonment by the very regime to which he served as a magistrate, the Magistrate starts describing himself in terms of a beast of prey and calling his enemies "my hunters" (104).

Coming back to Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* (hereafter, *Life & Times*), we find similar zoomorphic imageries employed by different characters in the novel to underline the marginal status of the protagonist and of other subaltern characters/people. This is a marginality which "since his earliest memory the protagonist Michael K passively accepts" (Poyner 69). Most of the zoomorphic imageries in this particular novel are used firstly to refer to the novel's protagonist, who is "marginalized not only by his physical appearance but by race, by his socio-economic status as a disenfranchized 'Cape Coloured' and a vagrant" (ibid), and secondly to refer to all the other marginal characters and people in the narrative. In the case of Michael K, it is not only the third person narrator who frames him as an animal, but other characters too perceive or project him as animal-like. However, as we shall see, there is a great qualitative difference between these two types of zoomorphism.

On a simple metaphorical level, animals are used in *Life & Times* to represent the 'brutish' condition of the marginalised

people. For instance, when the gang of workers employed in forced labour on the railway tracks finish their work at midnight, they are *"herded back into the carriage* ... [where] they [sleep] slumped against one another on the seats or sprawl on the bare floor" (emphasis added, 42). When the police captain comes to the Jakkalsdrif relocation camp to conduct a raid as a response to the sabotage in the town, "men, women and children [are] herded on to the open terrain before the huts and ordered to sit down" (90), and then "outside the gate men [are] herded left, the women and children right" (91). In his outburst, the police captain calls the camp "a nest of criminals" (ibid) and orders that the previous guards, the "monkeys," are to be locked up with the inmates of the camp for dereliction of duty (92). After this angry tirade of the captain, the police officers "shepherded … back" the inmates into the camp (93). Apart from these descriptions by the narratorial voice, such zoomorphic associations are also established by Robert's observation to Michael K about the common people "being shut up like animals in a cage" (88) in the relocation camps, or by K's reflection during his stay in the Karoo about the "vast country across whose face *hundreds of thousand of people* [are] daily following *their cockroach pilgrimage* in flight from the war" (emphasis added, 106). During the same time, as K mulls over the possibility of being discovered by some runaway soldier or some off-duty policeman, he wonders whether it would "not be better to bury [himself] in the bowls of the earth than become *a creature of theirs"* (emphasis added, ibid).

When we consider the animal imageries used in *Life & Times* with reference to Michael K, we find that they are used to convey both his marginality and the consequential

vulnerability. Thus, when after leaving Stellenbosch following his mother's death K enters an apple orchard, the narrator describes him in terms of the following animal imageries: "with his beret beaten flat over his ears by the rain and the black coat clinging to his body like a pelt, he stood and ate [the fallen apples], taking bites of good flesh here and there, *chewing quickly as a rabbit"* (emphasis added, 39). Later, the Medical officer, in whose care K is placed in the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp, calls K a "bunny rabbit sewn up in the carcass of an ox" (164). Likewise, when K is flushed out of his burrow in the mountain after a heavy rainstorm, he sits crouched in the "lee of the dam wall, sodden, feeling like a snail without its shell" (112). These metaphors of hares/rabbits and de-shelled snails, figures that refer back to the depictions Michael K's "hare lip" as a "snail's foot" (4) in the opening sentence of the novel, re-emphasise K's status as one of the 'hunted' and persecuted people and his social and political vulnerability. Even when he is represented as a dog, a seemingly privileged animal than the beasts of prey or the livestock animals, K is referred to as a "dumb dog" (28), or a "guilty dog" (30), or "a sick dog" (155).

Another very significant and historically loaded animal imagery associated with K is that of a monkey. For example, when K is harvesting the lucern (alfalfa) field with the labour group from Jakkalsdrif, the white farmer shouts at him, "Where were you brought up, monkey?" (87). Again, towards the end of the first part of novel, after his hideout and his crop of pumpkins have been discovered by the police, K overhears the soldiers referring to him as a monkey (123). When the police captain arrives at the scene and recognises him from Jakkalsdrif, he asks K about his rudimentary abode and his

harvest of gourds, "So what's this about, monkey?" (124). Towards the end, recalling his experiences and interactions with people throughout the course of the narrative, K reflects, "They want me to open my heart and tell them the story *of a life lived in cages*. They want to hear about all the cages I have lived in, as if I were a budgie or a white mouse or a monkey" (emphasis added, 181). We have to understand the significance of this figure of the monkey in the context of the colonial discourse where the ape has always been a very powerfully degrading signifier. This debasing power of this imagery arises from the fact that in the Great Chain of Being, a system that sought to arrange all living organisms in a hierarchical order, the Africans were considered "nearer the apes than other men" (Frederickson 57). Though some eighteenth century scholars attempted to promote the idea of the 'Noble Savage' by holding up the life of the Native Americans as an example of prelapsarian innocence, the mainstream racial discourse vigorously promoted the idea about the "closeness of American Indians and Africans to wild apes" (Rattansi 25). The Enlightenment idea of progress which believed in a gradual advancement from a dark and barbaric age to an age of light, liberty and learning, fiercely clung to the idea of the Africans or the Native Americans as the savage 'other' so as to provide itself with ontological reassurance. In this object, it was assisted by contemporary science that "seemed to link other [non-European] races to apes through measurement of the skull and face, at least according to scholars concerned with justifying the practice of slavery by dehumanising Africans" (Marks 69). Julian-Joseph Virey, an eighteenth century French naturalist-anthropologist and an important influence upon the American pro-slavery writers,

concluded that the "blacks … copulated with apes in Africa and had brains and blood the same color as their skin" (Frederickson 67).

Thus, the equation of K with a monkey carries within it a heavy cultural and historical baggage and has significant political and racial connotations. It is also important to note how this particular image is used only by those characters who occupy positions of colonial power: the white farmer, the white police chief and the soldiers. Michael K's figurative association with the monkey also conveys the ambiguous place occupied by K and people like him in the apartheid South Africa, which is akin to the place of the 'Negro' in the Great Chain of Being: someone considered closer to animals than to human beings.

However, apart from the aspects discussed till now, there are some other significant facets to Coetzee's handling of zoomorphic imageries which undercut their racist-speciesist signification. One such notable feature is the refusal of Coetzee's narratives to accept the 'animality is marginality' connotation of these zoomorphic metaphors as a natural and neutral given. His narratives and their deployment of animal imageries highlight the dominative and exploitative transactions that occur between the tenor (the humans) and the vehicle (the animals) in such metaphors, where the former is always prioritised over the latter. Unlike the majority of literary works "where the animal is used as an object upon which to project or act out human feelings … [or where] animal death and agony [is used] to dramatize, symbolize, or comment upon the emotional state of the human protagonists" (Donovan, "Aestheticizing" 206), in Coetzee's narratives the violence inherent in (and the violent origin of) these zoomorphic metaphors is made starkly explicit. Thus, in his narratives,

such zoomorphic imageries underline the unfortunate fate of the animal victims hidden behind these dead metaphors, who are generally "pressed of [their] semantic juices and left aside, having spiritually animated the [human] subject" (ibid, 207).

This refusal to subjugate the fate of nonhuman animals to the fate and concerns of the human characters is also stressed through the adoption of a sympathetic attitude towards the animals and an awareness and acknowledgement of their suffering at the hands of, and their exploitation by, human beings. This acknowledgement, which momentarily pulls down the seemingly insurmountable species barrier between humans and nonhumans, often occurs unbeknown to the characters themselves, which makes it all the more effective and results in a subversion of the exploitative frameworks of such conventional zoomorphic metaphors. Thus, despite his highly raciest and strongly anthropocentric attitude, Jacobus Coetzee records at one point in his narrative in *Dusklands* about an encounter between his men and some aboriginal Khoikhoi people of Africa:

"I rode out slowly toward them. My men stayed back, obeying my order. The mounted Hottentot rode forward, matching his step to mine. His men moved up behind him, their feet dusted with the ochre of the plains. Flies buzzed about the ox. Where the ring entered its nose the foam stood out. *We breathed in unison, all living beings*." (emphasis added, 65)

Though in the case of Jacobus Coetzee this acknowledgement of commonality does not result in any actual recognition of the innate value and individuality either of the native people or of the animals, it nevertheless results in a structural resistance to both racism and speciesism.

Unlike Jacobus, a movement towards such a recognition is strikingly evident in the character of the Magistrate in *Waiting*. The Magistrate, who initially treats animals merely as figures of speech, comes to recognise the existence and individuality of the actual animals in his surroundings only after he has become a "hunted man" himself (103). Notably, this recognition is accompanied by the Magistrate's growing concern not only for the working staff of his magisterial quarters, who had been till then only a marginal, shadowy presence for him, but also for the 'barbarian' victims of the Empire. Thus, an imprisoned Magistrate asks the cook's grandson, who brings him his daily food: "How is your granny today," and in the same breath inquires of him, "And the dog? Has the dog come back yet?" (94).3 The Magistrate's recognition of the interconnectedness between the oppression of marginalised human beings (perceived and represented as animals) and the actual oppression of nonhuman animals dawns at the moment when he witnesses the gruesome treatment meted out to the 'barbarian' prisoners by the imperial police in the latter half of the novel. In this particular episode, when Colonel Joll prepares to beat the nomadic prisoners with a hammer in a public display of the Empire's authority and might, a beaten and maimed Magistrate shouts out in protest: "Not with that! … We are the great miracle of creation! But from some blows this miraculous body cannot repair itself" (117). However, at that pivotal moment, the Magistrate fails to rationalise this anthropocentric view that places human beings at the centre of all creation and to take it any further. He says, "What I wanted to say next I cannot remember. A miracle of creation—I pursue the thought but it eludes me like a wisp of smoke. It occurs to me that we crush insects beneath our feet, *miracles of creation too, beetles, worms, cockroaches, ants,*

in their various ways" (emphasis added, 118). This failure of logical thinking on the Magistrate's part and his pluralisation and diversification of the otherwise exclusive and monolithic category of "a miracle of creation" through the inclusion of animals and insects in it signal a radical departure from the anthropocentric vision of Enlightenment humanism that equated non-Europeans with animals and animals with inanimate machines.

Similarly, in *Life & Times,* the mutual deprivation and suffering undergone by animals and marginalised human beings alike is starkly brought forth in the following description of the childhood of Michael K and his companions at Huis Norenius, a state-run institute for the differently-abled children:

"Hunger had turned them into animals who stole from one another's plates and climbed the kitchen enclosure to rifle the garbage cans for bones and peelings. Then he had grown older and stopped wanting. Whatever the nature of the beast that had howled inside him, it was starved to stillness." (68)

It is important to note the self-illuminating quality of this metaphor, which not only depicts the suffering of its tenors, that is, the human characters, in a graphic fashion, but also draws our attention to the suffering of its 'absent referents' or the animals. Carole J. Adams discusses how generally in such zoomorphic imageries "the animals … become absent referents, whose fate is transmuted into a metaphor for someone else's existence or fate. … [T]he original meaning of animals' fates is absorbed into a human-centred hierarchy" (67). In contrast to this, in the above quoted passage from Life & Times, even though the imagery of the hungry animals is used to convey the experience of the human characters, it also serves

to foreground the experiences of the nonhuman animals (the hungry dogs) by bringing them to the centre-stage at the end of the passage, so that finally it is not the human characters but the starved animals who is the subject of the metaphor. The plight of the real animals is also highlighted in the novel through a brief yet very powerful description of a "*truckload of sheep packed so tight* that some stood on their hind legs" (emphasis added, 36). It is significant that this detail is filtered through the perception of Michael K, who himself shares the fate of these animals. This sordid plight of the sheeps is mirrored by a similar, 'brutish' condition of the common people in the novel: "A blue police van arrived in a cloud of dust and pulled up at the gate, followed by an open truck with men *standing packed together* in the back" (emphasis added, 76). Here, this comparative view of the dismal condition of the animals as well as of the marginalised humans destabilises the speciesist hierarchy inherent in the traditional zoomorphic imageries which privileges human beings over nonhuman animals. Donovan points out that:

"the use of a figure in literature, however time-honored, is often a dominative transaction. In the metaphor or simile or even indeed allegory the entity being used as a point of comparison or similitude (sometimes designated the vehicle) is objectified so as to have transferred certain of its qualities to the subject (designated the tenor)." ("Aestheticizing" 207)

It is this "parasitical exploitation or metaphysical cannibalism" (ibid) of animals by traditional zoomorphic metaphors that Coetzee's usage of these imageries resist.

Finally, apart from revealing the exploitative nature of these zoomorphic tropes and highlighting the plight of actual

animals, another way in which Coetzee's narratives resist the anthropocentric and speciesistic tendencies of such imageries is by emphasising the intrinsic value of the lives of individual animals and by imagining their capacity for pleasure and suffering. For instance, in Coetzee's second novel *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), the narrator-protagonist Magda wonders whether "the lives of animals are [not] one long ecstasy interrupted only at the moment when they know with full knowledge that the knife has found their secret and they will never again see the goodly sun …" (85). Here, the author stresses the plurality of animal lives and existence through the significant phrase "the lives of animals," which he again uses as the title of his 1999 Tanner Lecture, widely regarded a seminal work in the area of contemporary animal ethics. This acknowledgement of the individual existence and worth of all living beings, whether human or nonhuman, finds a very evocative expression in Life & Times in the following description by the third person narrator: "He [Michael K] passed through the empty early morning streets and went down to the beach. With the sun still behind the hill, *the sand was cold to his touch.* So he walked among the rocks peering into the tidal pools, where *he saw snails and anemones living lives of the own"* (emphasis added, 177). The focus of these lines is not only on Michael K's subjective experiences and sense impressions, who is otherwise denied any subjecthood within the racist discourse of apartheid/colonialism, but equally on the snails and anemones that K observes.

Such a twin attention to the individuality and subjectivity of the nonhuman creatures as well as of the marginal human beings is true not only of these particular lines, but also of the entire narrative of this novel, and for that matter, almost all of

Coetzee's fiction. Such an attention effectively dismantles the oppressive ideological and conceptual structures that deny the marginal and the nonhuman any autonomy, subjectivity or individuality, and thus it infuses the narratives of these novels with a serious sense of responsibility towards such dispossessed beings. This renders Coetzee's use of such animal imageries not only critical, but also ethical.

Notes

1. It is interesting to note that the only verbs given as collocations to the noun 'rabbit' in the Oxford Collocation Dictionary for Students of English (second edition) are 'catch', 'chase', 'hunt', 'shoot' (esp. BrE), 'trap' (esp. BrE), and 'skin'.
2. Though critics have focused on the interest of Coetzee's fiction in the fate of actual animals, they trace this interest only to a later phase in his career. Though Josephine Donovan says that "Concern about human treatment of animals … is apparent in his earliest work" ("Miracles" n.p.), about this issue in Coetzee's first novel *Dusklands*, she merely says that its narrative "deals centrally with human colonization of the land" (n.p.). However, as we see from the present discussion, animals or the idea of animality has played a very significant role in Coetzee narratives from the very beginning of his career.
3. A similar change of heart towards animals is also seen in the protagonist of Coetzee's second Booker Prize winning novel *Disgrace* (1999). For a discussion of this issue, see Tom Heron and Marianne Dekovan.

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Social Struggles in the Darjeeling Hills: Prajwal Parajuly's "Mixed Blessing" and "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie"

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"Despite Himalayan potential for the picturesque, no ink is wasted here on landscape or appearances… What gives Parajuly's characters warmth is an energy born of division or dispossession: a desire to be loved, to be better off, or to be elsewhere. "(Garth, The Guardian)

There are eight stories in Prajwal Parajuly's collection *The Gurkha's Daughter* (2013), most of which are set in different towns across the Himalayan landscape – in Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Darjeeling Hills. Each story begins with a map, cartographically locating these towns for the reader – as a broad objective entry point before zooming in on subjective aspects of life in these locations. This paper will look at attachment to place in two stories from this collection, which are based in the Darjeeling hills – "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" set in Kalimpong, and "Mixed Blessing" set in Darjeeling – to articulate how ethnic separatism, economic disparity and other social struggles affect characters (and by extension people) who live in these towns. Unlike other stories in the collection, these two are set in locations denied a regional identity, and therefore constantly affected by agitations for statehood.

Garth's review begins by noting that Himalayan towns are known primarily for their visually enthralling landscapes.

Narratives in the Darjeeling Hills either veer towards the picturesque, or focus on political issues that plague the Himalayan region (including Amiya K Samanta's account *Gorkhaland: A Study in Ethnic Separatism* (2000), Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), Karma T Pempahishey's compilation *Roadmap on the Trail to Gorkhaland* (2013) and so on). Parajuly deviates from both these perspectives of picturesque and political, to broaden our understanding of these hills by focussing on conflicts in relationships between people. As Parajuly puts it :

"The stories deal with relationships more than anything else… I like for these social and political issues not to take away from the actual stories of characters in my book. Of course there are conflicts throughout… I think conflicts are vital in making good stories." (Parajuly, "Prajwal Parajuly" 3:45-4:30)

This paper will reflect on how Parajuly's stories have helped to understand the personal struggles of people settled in places in the Darjeeling Hills, in a subjective manner that almost all other English accounts have failed to do.

"Let Sleeping Dogs Lie"

"[P]lace serves not only as an indicator but as a source of social and political order…as a constantly re-energized repository of socially and politically relevant traditions and identity which serves to mediate between the everyday lives of individuals on the one hand, and the national and supranational institutions which constrain and enable those lives, on the other." (Agnew and Duncan 7)

Agnew and Duncan describe the relationship between people and place as something that is constantly in flux – where one influences the other and vice-versa i.e. place is presented

as a repository of historical traditions which are re-energized gradually by inhabitants, who in turn follow these traditions implicit in social and political institutions maintaining order. In Parajuly's short story "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" regional traditions in Kalimpong influence the characters in the narrative – centred around the apprehensions of Munnu (real name never declared), a Bihari Muslim shopkeeper living in a town where Gorkha identity cements the social and political order. In the story Munnu is unable to confront Shraddanjali, a young girl from a well-reputed Gurung family who is stealing from him; while also unable to convince his newly married wife Humera to give up her burqa, an unusual garment for the town. These are challenges that Munnu may not have encountered in towns outside this conflicted region, challenges created by place.

Despite having lived in Kalimpong his entire life, Munnuinternalises the notion that his identity as a Bihari Muslim paanwalla (a minority in the hills) prevents him from identifying with Kalimpong as a native. He is afraid of confronting Shraddanjali because he understands that constructed stereotypes in the region perceive all Bihari Muslims as outsiders, and therefore his voice will always be considered less reliable than the native's. This fear is portrayed in the story, "If I tell someone else about it, who will believe me? I am a Bihari Musalmaan paanwalla, and she's the daughter of the biggest lawyer in Kalimpong" (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 48). His apprehensions echo the general sensibility of minorities in places that subscribe to a certain sense of national or regional identity. The same apprehensions of Munnu can be applied to people considered outsiders in other parts of the country and the world – driven by different forces of social and political order in places. A realisation he comes to terms with:

"Despite knowing no home other than Kalimpong, he knew he would never totally belong here, that he'd always be considered an outsider... He was so much of a Kalimpong man that he thought in Nepali and not in Bhojpuri or Urdu." (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 48-49)

As the Lingua Franca in the hills, thinking in Nepali becomes what Agnew and Duncan describe as a socially relevant tradition that helps the individual to identify with the place.

Parajuly also reiterates Munnu's apprehensions through the native's voice presented in Shraddanjali's mother MrsGurung, a well-established lawyer. For Mrs Gurung, Munnu is "a Musalmaan" who "insults Kalimpong's own daughter" with his accusations and should be punished (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 59). She will never consider the possibility that her daughter steals because these accusations have been made by a Bihari Muslim, invoking other Nepalese watching them to "defend one Nepali's honour when a Bihari insults her daughter" (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 59). These conceptions of prejudice are constantly re-energized by the social and political atmosphere in Kalimpong. Through Mrs Gurung's character Parajuly reflects on the misuse of historical traditions to generate the same biases they were created to fight against. She uses the subjective position of being the oppressed (a position used in the campaign for Gorkhaland against the state of West Bengal) to become the oppressor – by publicly insulting and slapping Munnu and invoking Gorkha identity for public support against him. She reiterates Munnu's apprehension that he will remain the perpetual outsider because he is different, despite his attachment to the hometown.

In contrast to this, the story also depicts a sense of religious and feministic freedom in the town through the friendship that develops between the landlady Dr Pradhan and Munnu's docile wife Humera, who was brought up in Meerut. After her interaction with Dr Pradhan, Humera starts considering the possibility of a professional life outside the confined social space inside her husband's house. It is in Kalimpong that Humera gains more exposure and confidence than she did in Meerut – surprising her husband when she gradually moves from being a subservient housewife to demanding employment for herself. Dr Pradhan in contrast to the boisterous Mrs Gurung, presents a more understanding and accepting perspective of the native. She encourages Munnu to break away from his own cultural and religious biases. Despite having lived in Kalimpong his whole life, Munnu has trouble accepting the progressive traditions of his hometown – he accepts dowry, initially refuses Humera's requests for employment and rejects the idea of celebrating his daughter's birthday. While he is dominated in the public space by native women like Shraddhanjali and Mrs Gurung (who may not have been able to exert the same dominance over native shopkeepers), Munnu tries to exert his own dominance over his wife in the domestic space. Dr Pradhan as a socially conscious native chastises these prejudices that Munnu holds, by encouraging him to forget Bihar and practices of Islam that do not celebrate girl children (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 56).

Thus, Parajuly shows us through the characters of Munnu, Mrs Gurung, Humera and Dr Pradhan, different perspectives influenced differently by the same traditions within the same town. While the story doesn't directly depict the Gorkhaland movement, it presents the influence that the Gorkha discourse

continues to have on the lives of people in Kalimpong. The challenges posed in differentiating between the native and the outsider are presented as something that cannot be determined by uniform identity or religion. While Mrs Gurung's misuse of the Gorkhaland discourse cannot be generalised to imply everyone in the districts is culturally biased, neither can Mrs Pradhan's friendly attitude towards everyone, nor Munnu's prejudice and shrewdness in running his business, or Humera's initial subservience to her husband and later quest for economic freedom. The story indicates that each person, regardless of ethnicity or religion, struggles with different prejudices as well as different ideas of community within the same place – and all perspectives (including narratives of individuals from other communities living there that are not depicted in the story) need to be addressed for any sense of communal unity in the region.

"Mixed Blessing"

"Home is the local and the familiar. Place at its most intimate. Neighbourhood, village, and small town too can have that degree of familiarity and intimacy. Nurturing and desirable as these places are, they can be suffocating, for we are creatures of both place and space, hearth and cosmos." (Tuan, "Lecture at UW-Madison" 37-38:15)

Tuan highlights the range of emotions that the concept of the hometown can invoke in different people living in the same location. The hometown can be nurturing, suffocating or bring up a range of other emotions for different individuals, depending on one's attachment to place. The short story "Mixed Blessing" based in Darjeeling portrays Tuan's anxiety of having to choose between place and space, to live at home or to choose a possibly better life away from home, by

addressing one of the primary concerns for young adults living in the district – the lack of employment opportunities.

The story depicts the frustration of Rajiv, a poor unemployed youth from the Khambu (Rai) community, who lives with his grandmother, preparing room for extended family that's visiting during the annual Nepali festival Dashain. Despite being well educated, having received a scholaship to St. Paul's School and then completing an engineering degree at Majitar, Sikkim, with financial support from his external family, he is unable to find a job in Darjeeling because of a lack of opportunities in the hometown as well as political agitations that upset the economy. As Parajuly puts it in the story:

"It was also unwise to explain to an eighty-year-old [grandmother] the current job market in Darjeeling, which had a lot to do with the frequent strikes that various political parties called in an attempt to attract national attention to their demand for a separate state. The economy was crippled; opportunities were non-existent. And he didn't want this decaying woman to know that she was the reason he hadn't left Darjeeling to go to Delhi or Bangalore for an IT job." (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 110-111)

Parajuly describes through the personal conflicts in Rajiv's life, the drastic effects of the dearth of employment and the constant strikes for statehood on local people and economy. For majority of the youth, moving to developed cities like Delhi or Bangalore still remains a better alternative, away from their families and homes. While a large section of population looks forward to the endless possibilities of space, for most it is not a choice but a necessity. Rajiv portrays the circumstances for those who choose to stay behind – they become frustrated with life at home.

For the older generation however the relationship with the hometown is presented differently – home represents all the attachments they hold significant, a location from which they cannot stand to be uprooted. As it does for Rajiv's grandmother, "She wanted to die in Darjeeling, in the hills, surrounded by mountains and her people" (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 111). These are the sentiments of people driven to remain in the district – for whom social and economic stability has to be rooted in the hometown. While Tuan's space provides the economic freedom necessary for a comfortable life, for Rajiv's grandmother no sense of comfort outside can replace the comfort at home. Parajuly shows here that settling in the hometown can evoke different emotions for two different generations – what is discomfort and frustration for youth like Rajiv, is comfort and peace for the older generation represented by his grandmother.

This frustration in Rajiv reaches its zenith when he beats and kicks Tikam (his poorer cousin who hails from a rural part of the district), until his eyes are swollen with tears. As the story narrates, "The more he screamed in pain, the less my pain became, the less I felt like I was suffering" (Parajuly, *The Gurkha's Daughter* 119). The innocent and uneducated Tikam who handles all their domestic chores while he studies in a school in Darjeeling (away from his immediate family), becomes the source for Rajiv to relieve all the frustration he feels. Although the story focuses on Rajiv who struggles against the judgement of his relatives, Tikam's mistreatment by relatives in the backdrop is worse. For Tikam, Darjeeling is that space, that outside world with endless possibilities, which he is denied because of Rajiv's beatings. Tikam represents that population of youth from rural villages, who

struggle to adapt to life in these urban towns, just as individuals migrating from these towns struggle to adapt to life in bigger cities. We see an endless cycle of categories and prejudice produced by class – Rajiv's uncle ridicules him for his poor circumstances, just as Rajiv ill-treats Tikam who is obligated to Rajiv's family for shelter. These characters help indicate that conceptions of place and space can differ subjectively across class and circumstances within the same town as well.

"Mixed Blessing" also comments on the Christian evangelisation mission through the friendship that develops between Rajiv and an American Christian couple Christa and Michael Scott – who have been evangelising in Darjeeling for over a year. Since the middle of the 19th century, the influence of Christian missionaries on local life can be seen in schools and architecture all over the region like Rajiv's Catholic school St. Paul's. This influence has been explored in accounts like J.A. Graham's *On The Threshold of Three Closed Lands* (1897), L.S.S O'Malley's *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling* (1907), Dick B. Dewan's *Education in the Darjeeling Hills* (2008) and so on. After a neighbouring Subba family converts to Christianity, Rajiv comes to question the couple's motives behind befriending him and insults them, while Hindu families in the neighbourhood ridicule the new converts for their decision. Parajuly's story can be seen as a critique of both sides – the mission of conversion (through the crafty manner in which the couple slips a New Testament copy into Rajiv's hands and encourages him to read it), as well as a critique against the religiously rooted population (in the hypocritical manner in which traditional families shun the new converts).

The story ends ironically with Rajiv reciting a Christian prayer that he learnt in school – his actions indicate more than

just an association with Christianity but with a childhood when attachment to the hometown was nurturing. This attachment for the young career driven Rajiv who is denied opportunities to thrive, loses that nurturing quality inherent in childhood. While for youngsters like Tikam, this nurturing quality of the town is denied in childhood itself as he is exposed to hardship. Although the story shows that attachment to place can be different for people of different generations and of different backgrounds, this attachment can vary individually across generations and backgrounds as well. It isn't possible to draw general conclusions from Parajuly's narrative – to imply that all youth are frustrated with unemployment in the region, or all traditional families are prejudiced towards other religions, and so on – but the perspectives of Rajiv, his grandmother, Tikam, the Scotts and other characters portrayed all contribute towards understanding how personal circumstances determine the individual's attachment to these towns and the world outside. The story highlights the need for a more stable economy, the need to bridge social and economic differences, the need for more acceptance of both traditional as well as liberal ways of life, overall the need for a social atmosphere where these hometowns can offer the same comfort that the individual searches for in the world outside.

The Familiar at Home

Both stories – "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" and "Mixed Blessing" show us how different characters struggle to build a life in these Darjeeling hill towns fighting prejudices and circumstances they cannot control – be it differences in ethnicity, religion or economic background amongst others. For the unfamiliar reader Parajuly's depictions may serve as an entry point into a new and unique social space, and for the

native, it is a nostalgic reminder of the familiar atmosphere at home. Parajuly shows us that connections to these towns are significantly shaped by identity and lifestyle. For people in Ghoom, Kurseong, Mirik, Siliguri, and other towns in these districts campaigning for statehood it is the same. Tuan describes this connection between people and place as Topophilia – "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (Topophilia 4).

The trajectories of characters in these stories highlight that the desire for space provided by the outside world is a constant threat to the topophilic attachment to place and vice-versa. Through the descriptive portrayal of comfort and hardship in the hometown, Parajuly articulates the difficulty of choosing between these binaries of place and space, between attachment and freedom. *The Gurkha's Daughter* shows us that this spatial freedom is not available to everyone in these small towns, particularly people with little economic mobility. We also witness how life in such conflicted towns can be drastically different for different individuals. These subjective differences influence the prioritising of one over the other in the home versus world dilemma.

In these fictional depictions of the personal, we see how political tensions seep in, because they are an integral part of life in the hills. Political conflict in these towns continues to impact social life as new protests for new agendas take shape – the most recent being the 104-day strike period from 15 June-26 Sept, 2017 – driven by the state government's attempt to make Bengali a compulsory subject in schools ("GJM ends 104-day strike"). While Parajuly does significantly portray the Nepalese context, the nature of ethnic and religious plurality there are other themes yet to be explored by writers in English.

In order to approach social life in these towns it is important to understand that the social space comprises of various communities like Lepchas, Bhutias, Limbus, Tamangs, Kamis, Tibetans and a range of others. Similarly there are traditions of Animism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and so on, that are equally influential across the districts.

Even though these stories offer no solutions to the social struggles, they help us understand both the shortcomings and strengths of social life in this region. While Munnu faces native prejudice, Humera also becomes more independent in the same space in Kalimpong; and similarly while Rajiv feels alienated, his grandmother is more at ease with their circumstances in Darjeeling. Through this general depiction of different lives in the hills we can understand better the impact these Himalayan towns can have on its population. Parajuly's stories introduce this social space in a manner that no other author in English has successfully done before – highlighting the nature of differences that hampers the potential for a more cosmopolitan way of life in the hills. Whether these differences are cultural, religious, economic or any other, they will continue to remain prominent there for a long time. More fictional representations in English may help the native's voice reach a larger audience – for a more comprehensive solution to the social struggles in these hill towns.

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Difficult Displacements, Lost Homes: 'Partition' in select autobiographical writings

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Partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 remains that seminal moment which had generated displacement of an extraordinary measure. Partition is a living reality; it continues to peep through endless cycles of fear, communal riots and violence in each of the three nation states, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.[1] As Urvashi Butalia in her very recently edited volume on the legacy of Partition notes, "This is, perhaps, why, nearly seven decades on , we have still not found a way of memorializing Partition, acknowledging what people lived through."[2] (Butalia, viii) The traumatic process of displacement contains within it the destruction of lived space, cultural practice and social ties. The question of survival struggles and the concomitant violence with respect to refugee conditions raise some important issues pertaining to politicised state policies and strategic rehabilitation programmes.In more ways than one literature, films and other similar cultural spaces remain the arena in which the most sustained engagement with the human dimension of Partition gets staged[3] There has been a distinct shift of focus in Partition historiography from the study of archival matters relating to transfer of power and high politics to the other contours of the event. New perspectives have included accounts and experiences based on oral testimony, memoirs, popular source materials and these have

broadened the framework of analysis. Social scientists like Prafulla Chakrabarty, Ranabir Samaddar, Joya Chatterji and many more in their investigative works[4] on refugee problems in partitioned Bengal have shown how the all India bosses tilted balance at the centre against Bengal and how it impacted the entire scheme of relocation and rehabilitation in Bengal.[5] The stories of Partition refugees' experience, their assimilation within the restructured survival space generate crucial commentary on the debates surrounding nationality, ethnicity, class and belonging. The transition impacting displaced lives has been fraught with a great degree of shock, disbelief and anxiety. Historical accounts declare that only 25 percent of the total refugee influx sought shelter in government camps, the remaining 75 percent struggled on their own to sustain themselves. These statisticsare instructive of the magnitude of collapse which struck deep into the social fabric of Bengal. In the recent years, a lot of autobiographical fictions and reminiscences written by women have engaged with tropes of displacement and the cascading effects of such dislocation on individual lives. What have been the modes of representing the strands of displacement in these works? How does one look at the dynamics of such engagements in such writings? This paper looks at select autobiographical narratives from Bengal to arrive at a meaningful understanding of displacement angst and the subsequent phases of negotiations which impacted the everyday realities of lives in the post-partitioned context.

Women as rape victims, women as abduction victims, women committing suicide, women as being traded for family's sake, women as bread winners of the families and women as unassailable individuals countering violence - these multiple

images of women emerge from a wide array of Partition stories, real and imagined. The diverse issues covered in these narratives pronounce the constitutive centrality of women's experiences in the context of Partition. Drawing upon critical insights offered by theoretical discussions on Displacement, Partition Studies and Memory Studies, one can arrive at interesting patterns of displacement reflected in these writings. A close analysis provides plurality of visions which in turn shows an awareness of multiple dimensions designed to reflect the fundamentally 'discontinuous state of being'(Said,140) In all these narratives, displacement is posited as a rupture which initiates a constant reordering of the self. These writings initiate constant reminder of a history where mobility has not really been a matter of choice, rather a necessary mode for survival. Caren Kaplan while drawing our attention to the dynamic nature of displacement points out pertinently in "Questions of travel: Postmodern discourses of displacement" that displacement is not universally available or desirable for many subjects, nor is it evenly experienced.This heterogeneity of experience is a very important aspect of these writings. As Ekata Bakshi notes in her article on women's autobiographies on displacement, "The women's narratives, though mostly from an upper caste background, lament the loss of lived relationships more than the material and ideological complex. The women's narratives further turn the moment of male trauma, the reversal of existing domestic roles (the loss of the ideological structure) into a moment of triumph over patriarchal codes, despite being forced to face the vagaries of a public life." (Ghosh,2)

The most evocative image of Partition displacement which flashes up is that of a long, haphazard march of men,

women and children walking with leviathan efforts on their way to India or Pakistan. Another powerful image which has been transmitted through official photo archives and also newspaper clippings is that of choked railway compartments, densely crowded train tops posing danger and fear. In the case of Bengal another image which is frequently associated with Partition dislocation is that of a boat over brimmed with hapless migrants navigating through river routes to the other side of the border. This experience of dislocation is explored very meaningfully in Shanta Sen's *Pitamohi* (*Grandmother*) It takes an engaging look at the hazardous span of journey performed by Mago to cross the border. The parameters of loss and violence are assessed through the grandmother's reluctant decision to leave her long cherished ancestral land. The first part of the novel serves as a prelude to the major turn of events in the consecutive parts. The first section echoes the tone of many such narratives where a tone of nostalgia and pining for the past becomes an overarching concern. Anusua Basu Raychaudhury talks about an invocation of similar motifs in her article "Nostalgia of Desh, Memories of Partition" where she notes that 'desh' for these refugees "existed at a certain moment and in a distinct space associated with their childhood and younger days, their friends and playing fields, their village and para, their riverside walks and natmandirs."(Basu Raychaudhury, "Nostalgia" 5654) The first section "Tultulir Poth" (Tultuli's Path) explores a similar excursion into various corners of the village and builds up the sense of piety surrounding their ' bastu-bhite'. The naming of the three sections, "Tultulir Poth"(The Route of Tultuli), "Saat Purusher Poth"(The Path of Seven Generations) and "Magor Poth" (The Road of Mago) is highly suggestive and these titles invoke

the metaphor of a road both symbolic and real. The final journey of Mago after the occurrence of Barishal riots violently disintegrates that long path where familial past, community culture and shared faith had mingled so naturally. Ironically the novella begins with the happy and exciting journey of Tultuli along with her family to Mago and culminates in a tragic dislocation of lonely and withered Mago. A strong sense of belongingness intensifies the measure of violence constituted within her eviction and subsequent stretch of her painful journey across the border.

The manner in which she experiences her uprooting is indicative of implicit violence which shaped the process of dislocation. The woman who had nurtured and preserved her familial roots for so long succumbs before the hostile forces of displacement. There is no suggestion of physical attack or arson, nevertheless the act of uprooting this old, frail woman striving to reach her son is no less violent. Bigger political games operating at a higher level or the strategies of constructed nationhood deprive people like Mago of their own desh. And when Mago finally arrives it is no less shocking:

> Her cloth is so worn out that it barely covers her body. Her hair is smeared with dust. She does not have anything with her, not even a spare saree. She has only brought her bony, emaciated body along with her.(100)

Her delirious outpour throughout the night expresses her desire to convey her individual experiences of woe and suffering on her way to India. She survives till morning only to finish her own story of displacement. Monmayee Basu's[6] study based on personal interviews with many women migrants who conveyed their own experiences of traumatic and painful

turn of events. She notes in "Unknown Victims", "Another aspect of the problem was the intense psychological impact left on the minds of the victims. The Hindu women who migrated were shattered psychologically as a result of the uprooting." (Settar & Gupta, 157) Mago's struggles to cope up with the odds of journey, covered partially by steamer and then by train bring forth the misfortunes which victimised many people like her. Road as a metaphor is used to convey the note of destruction and devastation. The process of ruining of the road, the intensely personal road of Mago, represents the violence embedded within this dislocation. The journey which she undertakes to reach Calcutta ironically obliterates the entire route of her life journey.

Parvinder Mehta in her article on female silence in Partition texts "A Will to Say to Unsay" comments, "The tug of war between silence and narration of traumatic events- a predominant engagement in many history-inspired literary narrative- reveals a dichotomous struggle between repressive paradigms of fragmented history and the confessional urges to express and articulate that which has not been narrated."(Singh et al, 35) An analysis of Himani Bannerjee's narrative provides an interesting insight into this confessional urge to express and articulate her life experiences of Partition. Her narrative records her wanderings through different spaces, from Calcutta to East Bengal, then to Calcutta again and finally to Canada. She presents herself as a recipient of the displacement experience whose existence is constantly haunted by the memory of an irredeemable political and historical dislocation that cannot be left behind. She recollects, "Through my own different migrations, from India to Pakistan, back to India and then to Canada, this feeling of loss and migration

from my childhood sent down its roots into my sense of space, my own location and sense of being."(Bagchi et al, 107) Commenting on the rhetoric of displacement in today's world, Katrina M Powell notes, "Displacement is a meandering path, a combination of many paths, paths not predetermined by place, person or nation."(Powell,301) Bannerjee's terrain of displacement seems to be such a combination of many paths. This experience perpetuates the intensity of dislocation and rootlessness in the narrator's life. The narration is also a comment on the gap "between the abstract notion of nation, a formation of people and peopling it by shifts of population." (Singh et al, 22) Is there no way of belonging? Is the outsider perennially doomed to this sense of homelessness? Her narration raises a very crucial question as to whether one needs to belong to a category such as race, religion, region or does there exist the possibility of living beyond such relationships. At the same time, this constant series of displacement also provides her with an opportunity to access different cultures and atmospheres induced by religious ideologies. It offers a totally new frame in which we can place the living history of Partition.

The other narrative which draws special attention is Hena Chaudhuri's "Women become Breadwinners". After Partition, like many others she crossed over to West Bengal in 1948, when she was 9 years old. In this narrative, she recalls her life, a life which records her trauma as well as her triumph. The narrative represents the victimhood of East Bengali migrants struggling to cope up with an entirely new set of challenges and constraints. Her story gives a graphic account of living in government provided relief camps and various planes of violence constituted within this system of rehabilitation. Talking about the genesis of vast number of

camps in West Bengal Anusua Basu Raychaudhury in "Living Another Life: Un-Homed in the Camp" states:

> In fact, different types of camps in West Bengal were set up to deal with an unprecedented refugee influx in the state. The government mainly set up three types of camps, namely, women's camps, worksite camps and Permanent Liability (PL) camps. (Basu Raychaudhury, *Citizens,* 13)

Chaudhuri's story also reveals how one of the most unprotected segment of the refugees were the women, who were widowed or separated from the family, and who, consequently, were placed in a culturally anomalous position and particularly vulnerable to exploitation. In a study of women's role in recreating the space in resettlement colonies Weber (2003) reports that refugee women did not really move into public life, but rather the domestic world expanded to include their participation in political, community and economic affairs.It was in fact a direct fall out of the experiences of Partition that a radical transformation took place in the lives of many women[7] after Partition. Women's visibility in the public sphere grew more and more pervasive. The sense of security and permanence conventionally associated with home faded away. In order to accommodate these responsibilities women's role outside home was drastically revised. They had to take into consideration many factors like adjusting in a dislocated nation and then also the necessity of looking for some degree of financial stability in this transitory phase. It becomes imperative to consider the life choices and locational realities of various categories of displaced women and find out the range of gender specific types of work and the impact of these on their lives. The process of migration/ displacement is the actual process of movement but it is not

the concluding aspect because this movement does get necessarily followed by some form of settlement/rehabilitation which leads to social change more than often. Migration study posits this as the most difficult moment because when movement initiates social change, the process of struggle, fierce competition for minimum survival begins. A few studies on women refugees in post-partition phase throw some interesting light on this question and indicate that the experience of women migrants is variable and fluid.[8] This gradual phenomenon of women turning into bread winners in order to sustain their families becomes an interesting trope in the field of sociological research.Through Hena's narration, we come to know about such a complex cartography of the effects of displacement. Her movement across Nadia, Calcutta, Kanpur and then back to Calcutta signifies a cyclical pattern of dislocation and its ramifications. Many of such interviews and reminiscences of the refugee women who had to grapple with the turmoil of rehabilitation indicate often the strategic intimidation of the governmental measures to handle refugee issue and its derivative problems. Post Partition scenario thus becomes a terrain of discursive struggle and contention marked by 'critical moments in the policing, production and contestation of community identity.' The complex dynamics of displacement and spatial loss, the psychological and sociological dimensions of the experiences of the people venturing into both world of problems and possibilities required all kinds of adjustments that changed their gendered existence within the family. These narratives further critique the issue of women struggling against several odds to be the providers and negotiating between crumbling pressures engulfing their existence. Archit Basu Guha Choudhury in his study on migrant women observes:

> There is no clear consensus on the transformation of the bhadramahila because it followed no definite route that could be charted. The reality was far more complex than a mere expansion of domesticity or a dramatic foray into the outside world. The ability to find the economic means to support one's family and oneself is circumstantial but requires confidence. (Basu Guha Choudhury, 67)

Hena recounts how the entire pattern of family life becomes different under such a circumstance. Gargy Chakravartty has given an elaborate picture of the gradual transformation of Bengali society after Partition on account of women's participation as breadwinners within the family. Her findings are based on extensive interviews conducted across class and culture to give a comprehensive picture.Rani Dasgupta, an active participant in the Tebhaga movement in Dinajpur writes about the refugee women who took up jobs as salesgirls including door to door selling which was unthinkable for women in those days.[9] Uneducated women also worked as maidservants, washing utensils, cooking, supplying office tiffin, selling fruits, flowers and vegetables. Those were the days when survival really meant fighting tooth and claw against various odds. These readings to a certain degree disclose the slippage within the representational status of sanctified ambit of official documentations of Partition voices. The exercise of exploring via these writings the varied experiences of the dislocated women in building up their lives and surroundings also explicates the mode of structuring these occurrences by the discourses of gender and nationalism.

[1] Episodes of communal fury and retaliatory acts rule socio-political life in India. Bhagalpur riots of 1989, Bombay riots of 1993, Gujarat violence of 2002 and recent unrest in Kokrajhar and retaliatory action in Bangalore in 2012 are only few examples of a long and continuous series of communal conflicts happening in India.

[2]Urvashi Butalia, the author of iconic *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, has recently edited a volume of essays on hitherto unaddressed areas of Partition such as the northeast and Ladakh. See Urvashi Butalia (ed) *Partition: The Long Shadow* Gurgaon: Penguin Random, 2015

[3] Here literature plays a role similar to that of subaltern historiography in uncovering the voices of the marginalised and the invisible. Since 1990's special attention has been paid to recover those silent and dormant voices which would amplify our understanding of Partition violence better

[4] Their pioneering works on Bengal displacement and relocation provide a nuanced analytical framework for understanding the specificities of refugee problems in West Bengal. See Prafulla Chakraborty's *The Marginal Men,* Ranabir Samaddar edited *Reflections on Partition in the East* and *Refugees and the State: Practices of Care and Asylum in India, 1947-2000*, Joya Chatterjee's *Spoils of Partition, Bengal and India,1947-1967*.

[5] A huge scale of dislocation affected not only West Bengal but also Assam and Tripura. The new physical frontiers which were created also shaped the polities which these provinces circumscribed.

[6] Monmayee Basu 's observations are based on interviews conducted with the displaced Hindu women who had migrated during Partition. All of them had to face massive discrimination and neglect from the government side while attempting to relocate in India.

[7] It is an interesting finding that after Partition there was a huge transformation in the public sphere with the emergence of women as working especially in Bengal. As maximum number of displaced people gravitated towards Calcutta it was natural that the entire socio-economic structure underwent a radical change. Images of busy women crowding the streets of Calcutta is a common representation of the fall out of Partition.

[8]Navnita Chadha Behera points out the major changes in status, identities of the migrant women and the multiplicities rooted in such a construction. See Navnita Chadha Behera(ed) *Gender,Conflict, Migration: Women and Migration in Asia*.

[9]Gargy Chakravartty mentions Rani Dasgupta's documentation of varied roles taken up by women to sustain themselves in Dasgupta's article "Deshbhag Udvastu o Meyera" ("Partition Refugees and Women") in *Coming Out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal.*

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Select Discourses - A Study of Resistance

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This paper is an attempt to study the notion of resistance prompted by the 'othering' of people and communities from the lens of select discourses from Northeast India, mainland India, and from the context of the Southern United States of America. The Northeast will be represented by three short stories from *The Heart of the Matter* (2004) edited by Geeta Dharmarajan, *Untouchable* (1935) by Mulk Raj Anand will be representative of the mainland Indian context, and the classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) by Harper Lee reflecting the situation of Southern United States of America . The main focus of the study will be an attempt to carry out a realistic representation of issues and challenges faced by the 'othering' of certain sections of the society and ultimately how different forms of resistance are resorted to in the selected narratives.

"When the self attempts to subsume the other into the 'same', then there is violence done against the other. There is an ethical responsibility not to violate the other by reducing it to one's own system of thought". (Sundar 1407)

An important thinker who deserves mention in this study is Gayatri C. Spivak and her seminal essay "Can the Subalterns speak?" (1985). Spivak writes about the subaltern - the position of people of low rank in social, political or other hierarchy. In

extension it can also mean someone who is marginalized or oppressed. In her work, Spivak is saying that speech is not possible from the position of the subaltern. This is not to say that the physical act of speaking is not possible but rather that the speech never gets accepted as a meaningful form of utterance. For speech to be considered a meaningful statement in society it needs to carry weight of the socio-political agency which can articulate self interest and self identity. (NPTEL Postcolonial Literature Lecture 17)

Foucault too draws our attention to the notion that where there is power there is resistance. In the context of this study resistance is when there is a refusal to accept or comply with an established way of thinking or doing things - a policy that may be scorned for its exclusion of regional interests; one that breaks standard norms of human rights in the interest of subscribing to promote a very centralized form of nationalism. Or one that takes away the dignity of a human being due to a strong conformity to long established religious traditions and practices; or one that strongly promotes and sustains racial prejudices over the basic tenets of justice. When people refuse to comply with such demands of established orders there is conflict and unrest generated in society – a conflict that resists the state, social, class, and racial biases.

The 'North East', a region and part of India not quite 'Indian' in many ways, offers sights, sounds, and tastes of the 'foreign' within the territorial boundaries of India. The region's location spatially, or geographically if one prefers, is a matter of great interest. Over ninety percent of its borders are international of which Bangladesh and Myanmar take the lion's share and the others divided between China, Nepal, and Bhutan. More interestingly, what connects the region to the

rest of India is just a 30-kilometer-wide corridor often referred to as the chicken neck – accentuating on, perhaps, the 'detached' nature of its physiological link to the Indian nation. Speaking, indigenously, the region's people and culture reflect stark differences from mainstream India but bear stronger resemblances to the cultures of the east. The Indian nation's efforts towards creating 'a united India in diversity', while keeping the region in mind, has given rise to many levels of intellectual discussions. One of the more interesting debates is given in the introduction of the book *Troubled Diversity: The Political Process in Northeast India* (2015) edited by Sandhya Goswami, where regional diversities of the Northeast India are examined. It gives us the highlight on one of the perspectives that focuses on the need to represent a culture in conformity with the rest of India.

"The nationalist discourse in both cases places a premium on 'unity with uniformities' and the emphasis on uniformities generates tendencies towards 'centralization'. It is from the perspective of the 'centralized' nationalist model that the peripheries are dealt with. The process of nation-building in the peripheral areas remains incomplete or rather unaddressed". (Goswami xxiii)

The short stories selected for the purpose of this study are namely "Son of the Soil" by Sebestian Zumvu, "He's still alive" by Bimabati Thiyam Ongbi and "The Bomb" by Keisham Priyokumar. "Son of the Soil" is a short story which takes us through an account of how a young boy from a small village in Nagaland, aspires to become an educated government employee but fails and ends up becoming an extortionist in the search for a livelihood. The story is narrated by the protagonist himself and he walks us through the depressive

state of affairs in a 'corruption infested' society. It also gives a brief but intimidating glimpse of the Indian army's ruthless tactics of submission towards the end of the story of which he becomes a victim. "He's still alive" is a story about a son who goes missing; and about the mother's pain and difficulty associated with accepting the loss of her son. Though the reason for the son having gone missing is not clearly given, there are some possible explanations, especially in the light of the conflict and unrest within the state of Manipur. "The Bomb" is a story about a young man who is given the responsibility of safe-keeping a bomb by another younger man whom he addresses as a 'youth'. He is made highly uncomfortable and nervous as the 'youth' does not appear to be coming to pick the bomb. His thoughts ramble over what would happen if the bomb was set off in a public place amidst innocent people. He poses questions of right and wrong of such actions of violence. At the same time, his family's financial crisis due to the heavy corruption in the government and the divorce of his sister seems to also reflect a bomb that is about to go off in his personal life.

Over a very long period of time, one has been witness to a policy towards the Northeast in the absence of the appreciation of local and regional differences from mainstream India. In trying to unify the region under a single banner of 'One India' the Indian state has very often overlooked the need to approach the issues of the Northeast by examining and understanding its uniqueness within its nationalistic framework. Not only does the Northeast as a whole have its distinct characteristics but also each state in the Northeast is diverse and different in its own way. The treatment of the Northeast has been guided by the fundamental notion of the region being 'different' and therefore what should we do to

make them more like us. To the common man, it appears as though the Indian state has not incorporated social, political, and economic strategies reflecting a genuine desire to drive growth and development in the region. A number of flawed policies from the past continue to create an enormous 'trust deficit' in the minds of the people.

The study of the concepts around the genre of fiction, in its essence, brings us to the need to leave behind the stock and universal characterizations of people and places. Just as the Indian state needs to look beyond enforcing a unified concept of nationalism, the selected works of fiction too leave behind generalized narratives and narrow down to the individual's experiences.

Meenakshi Mukherjee speaks about the success of Saratchandra's novels and the mass popularity that he enjoyed from a pan Indian perspective. His novels are the most translated and are found in almost every Indian language. Though he has not won any Akademi prizes or awards he is the only Indian writer whose works have been translated into other Indian languages without official patronage. Mukherjee informs us that one of the reasons for the popularity of his works is the realistic representation of the life in Bengal during his times.

"More than half of Saratchandra's twenty novels and about as many short stories deal with the situation of a widow. This is not merely a device for evoking the reader's sympathy – it has a basis in the social reality". (Mukherjee 103)

The focus is on 'particulars' and through these three narratives, we get individual accounts of the experiences of the protagonists within the folds of their respective

communities. These stories all depict the reality of the region by portraying lack of stability and a state of unrest and conflict. Each one, describing a story of ordeal and pain, where good governance and law and order appear to be conspicuously absent from society.

In "Son of the Soil", Zumvu's main character Neiu reflects back on what he might have become obviously not quite gratified with his position at the end of the narrative; the position of having been booked under the National Security Act and also under the National Security Regulation. He was officially declared an extortionist. In his mind, he is a product of the society that he is a part of. The social, political and economic realities of Nagaland have played a major role in determining who he is and has become. "Heaven knows what I was meant to be, but I am what I am because of my upbringing and circumstances. Society moulded me, and good or bad, society must accept me…" (Zumvu 275) Zumvu walks us through Neiu's life in a brisk manner, telling us his story, at the same time acquainting us with the difficulties of rural Nagaland, a place like Kezekevira, and the challenges of adapting to the urban life in Kohima. A series of events where the government's plan to provide easy access to running water at the village is initially celebrated with great enthusiasm but over time becomes a big farce, killing the hopes of the people for an authentic development in the state of affairs. Electrification of the village supposedly makes way for a brighter future but constant failure of power supply makes the villagers hopes darken over time. Subtle forms of bribery are presented where the meat of chicken and deer appear to have great value in getting things done. Neiu gets his certificate from the headmaster of the high school with the help of a

'roosting fowl'. On another occasion in order to get an admission to one of the better schools in Kohima he presents the meat of a whole deer to the headmistress – because they refuse to admit a student from government schools from the villages. At the end of it all unable to find a decent job, despite being the most educated in his family, he ends up as a pseudo extortionist in Kohima.

A number of these realities have gone a long way in the formation of Neiu's character but what appears to have deeper impact on his psyche is his childhood experience of the Punjab Light Infantry division of the Indian army's combing operations and burning down of their village. This had left them all homeless and insecure. They were forced to live a life on the run; forced to find shelter, food and security in the wild conditions of the forests. "The soldiers were hunting us. We had become fugitives in our own land!" (Zumvu 276) To have everything taken away from you and to be made a criminal without a just cause has an enormous impact on people's lives. These are conditions that create a 'trust deficit' which may never be truly reconciled. Such traumatic experiences and the failure of the state machinery in providing political, social, and economic security goes a very long way in forming attitudes towards their concept of an 'adulterated nation' that treats them as the 'other'. Alienating people in their own land and taking away from them the feeling of 'belongingness'.

In the short story "He's Still Alive" by Bimabati Thiyam Ongbi we get a picture of the enormous challenges faced by people in the state of Manipur. It is a heart wrenching story about a mother who grieves and hopelessly waits for the return of a lost son. For Thamcha, the mother, it is a matter of great concern as she has already lost her husband. The son was to

be the man of the house to provide and care; but now he too is missing, and the possibility of never ever returning looms enormously large.

"She wakes up with a start. Runs out and opens the door. Was that him knocking on the door? Saying, "Ima, open the door." I fell asleep, I didn't hear my child call. Leaning against the door, slowly she slides down to the floor. Tears stream from her eyes even as darkness and light are busy exchanging duties." (Ongbi 102)

Many have discussed the gruesome nature with which the Armed Forces Special Powers Act has been implemented and the human rights issue that has accompanied its execution. Manipur is one of the states in the Northeast where this act was put into place for a very long period of time. This story is believed to have been written in connection to the same act where young men are lifted off the street to be interrogated and many a times they never make it back.

"Where do we search? Not one of his friends says they went out together. It's not as if he's been captured or taken away." (Ongbi 100)

"The Bomb" by Keisham Priyokumar is another short story that reflects the instability in Manipur. It's a story about how Mohon comes into the possession of a bomb and what thoughts go through his mind as he is holding on to this bomb hidden in the back yard.

"Is it right to explode the bomb – In a train full of innocent people? At a crowded corner of the city? There is a reason behind every action. But is every reason right? How do you measure another's thoughts? Trivial issues maybe. Still the

bomb, exploding all of a sudden, people blown to pieces, others crippled and dying. Seeing it all with one's own eyes or hearing it over the radio! It might be seen as fun,…" (Priyokumar 59)

The thoughts of Mohon who is not even an owner of the bomb is a reflection of the disturbed state of affairs in Manipur. Apart from the bomb his family is facing an enormous financial crunch as his father is unable to receive the pension money that is due to him. The government machinery is infested with corrupt forms of thinking and practices and his father fails to return successfully, day after day, as he sets out to and from the government offices. One day, in his anxiety, Mohon actually considers the detonation of the bomb that he has kept hidden.

"Whether the soul dies or not, whether the body dies or not, the bomb has to be exploded. His bomb has to be used today. It could be anywhere." (Priyokumar 64)

The three selected short stories reveal a certain reality of the region of Northeast India where the idea of the Indian nation is a far and distant dream as it does not build a relationship of trust. In fact for many it is a forceful and deliberate imposition of values and beliefs which are not shared. In this seemingly one way affiliation there is a strong resistance against the State, especially in scenarios where innocent civilians have been made unwilling victims of the inhumane military undertakings – sanctioned by, what is seen and perceived to be, the Indian nation. Such indiscriminate exercise of the armed forces power has many untold stories of violations of human rights brought out in a way by these short stories. Thus, the novel and short story creates platforms where the silenced and gagged voices find their expression of resistance.

In the absence of 'trust,' the state machinery fails to function effectively to meet the needs of the different populace of the region and strongly manifests itself in unrest and conflicts – acutely accentuating on 'differences'. Thus, there is a definite need to identify programs and schemes which are contextualized to address the specific conditions around the region. Here is a concept from the field of economics that may help us understand the conditions more clearly.

"Under the Pareto Principle, if every person is better off under one policy than under another, the former policy is deemed to be socially preferable….. Because our discussion of the Pareto principle and notions of fairness makes reference to individual's well-being we should state what we mean by that concept. We have in mind the broadest conception of well-being, which includes not merely individuals' levels of material comfort but also their degree of aesthetic fulfillment, their feelings for others, and anything else they may value, however intangible." (Shavell and Kaplow 65)

Through these revelations perhaps there is an opportunity to reach out, mend, heal and re-orient ourselves to leave behind us a history of conflict and unrest.

First published in 1935, *Untouchable* is Mulk Raj Anand's first major novel. The novel's format is very simple—it follows a day in the life of an "untouchable," a member of India's lowest social caste. Despite its simplicity, *Untouchable* is a powerful work that exposed the systematic oppressions inherent in India's caste based society. It also looks deeply into the problem of superior and inferior dynamics of human relationships. It takes away the basic dignity to living one's life as a human being. The book's main character, Bakha, is

an outcast and restricted from improving his life situation because his touch and presence are considered impure and corrupting.

"A superb specimen of humanity he seemed whenever he made the resolve to say something, to go and do something, his fine form rising like a tiger at bay. And yet there was futility written on his face. He could not overstep the barriers which conventions of his superiors had built up to protect their weakness against him." (Anand 56)

Using Bakha's story as a platform, Anand challenges the barriers and rules that inhibit the lives of untouchables and argues for the betterment of their position. Bakha begins to think about resisting the forces that were keeping him tied down. His thoughts travelled about and he started looking at options that would allow him to improve his conditions. The first option appeared to be that of Christianity; a religion that did not have class and caste distinctions. The second was the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi who preached equality for the development and progress of India as a nation. The third was the flush system that would wipe out any need for human intervention in the sanitation system of keeping India clean.

Considered revolutionary because of how it champions the cause of the untouchables and exposes India's social evils, *Untouchable* was well received and highly regarded both domestically and abroad. Within India, it caused a generation of educated Indians to think about how India's internal colonialism was preventing the country's progression to a modern civil society. Outside India, prominent novelists of the age such as E.M. Forster hoisted up Anand's novel as having both historical and literary significance. Though India's

caste system is still in place today, books like *Untouchable* raised awareness about the crushing inequalities and injustices the system fosters. This has resulted in the passage of numerous anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action initiatives along caste lines in contemporary India. Furthermore, the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi in the novel explicitly places the book in a distinctive historical context.

Harper Lee's classic novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* first published in the year 1960, hardly requires an introduction as it has been translated into at least 40 languages, with a million copies still selling worldwide annually. The novel had become an instant success and created a space for itself immediately on the bestsellers list. Not surprisingly, it is a Pulitzer Prize winning novel also made into a very popular film. The popularity and appeal of the novel amidst its readers is found to be tremendous. Surveys conducted by Book of the Month Club and Library for the Congress' Center for the Book has discovered that the book is second only to the Bible in "making a difference in people's lives".

There may be a number of factors responsible for the popularity and appeal of the book some of which undoubtedly are morality, childhood innocence, and friendship among others. However, the focus of this study will be on the notion of the 'other' in *To Kill a Mockingbird.* In pursuing reality in the study of novels one is often compelled to raise questions around the mistreatment of other human beings because they are different; the issue in black and white is one of racial discrimination.

In brief this story is about Tom Robinson a black man who is wrongly accused of raping a white girl. The case is

considered to be a foregone conclusion. When a black man is accused of a wrong involving a white man he is unconditionally pronounced guilty. The verdict is not only one given by the judicial system but by the society in which blacks and whites live in. In this novel the power structures are strongly established in the way that silences the black man from having any voice. Every society has a set of codes that determines the behavior and conduct of its people. Many a time people are forced to look away and ignore an obvious act of wrong and injustice because it deals with certain forms of social biases and racial prejudices. And other times people overlook acts of immoral conduct in society as it sets up confrontation with those who belong to the same community as they do. What is the ethical perspective on the issue at hand? Is it the right thing to do? The reality of life is that one will face battles, some internal and others external, forcing us to weigh between right and wrong; good versus evil. Sometimes the pursuance of morality is driven by our religious frame of minds, on other occasions our shared humanity. Whatever the reason may be Atticus in pursuing justice for an innocent black man, Tom Robinson, takes up an enormous challenge; putting his own life and the life of his family at considerable risk.

'Just what I said. Grandma says it's bad enough he lets you all run wild, but now he's turned out a nigger-lover we'll never be able to walk the streets of Maycomb again. He's ruinin' the family, that's what he's doin'.' (Lee 92)

Apart from his family members we get others from the town responding to Atticus's decision to defend a black man as unacceptable and ridiculous. Members of the Maycomb community, who looked upon him with favor and respect now started to talk and behave otherwise.

"'I thought Mr Cunningham was a friend of ours. You told me a long time ago he was.' 'He still is.' 'But last night he wanted to hurt you' Atticus placed his fork beside his knife and pushed his plate aside. 'Mr. Cunningham is basically a good man,' 'he just has his blind spots along with the rest of us.'" (Lee 173)

In this novel, Atticus Finch depicts resistance against the white mentality of superiority and racial discrimination. He is the one who offers resistance against the racially prejudiced white community to which he belongs to. On investigating and studying the case closely he discovers that Tom Robinson is innocent. As he commits himself to building up a meticulous case for his client he continues to find himself and his family members in the midst of conflict and unrest. Despite his impeccable defense of Robinson, where he has everyone convinced of his client's innocence, the jury sits out for an hour – the longest for a case that is considered to be a foregone conclusion, the verdict is guilty. Harper Lee manages to raise some very crucial issues around racial discrimination. However she is realistic in not making Atticus win the case. It would have been a very romantic gesture but not one that would be reflective of the reality in which the Southern US of the times was immersed in. Meenakshi Mukherjee too draws our attention once again to the social reality of the times in which Saratchandra prevailed as a writer in Bengal.

"First, he was being faithful to the social reality of the time. A widow's remarriage might have been a romantic gesture but was hardly likely to succeed. In one impulsive moment Rama and Romesh might have decided to get married, but in which society would they have lived?" (Mukherjee 104)

The presence of differences in society depicts a certain reality of human existence. Every society has its biases and prejudices, some are determined by race, class, caste, religion and others by politics and economics. Whatever the cause may be there is always a power play at the helm of the affairs. Some are governed by established notions and while others are driven by the interests of the privileged class. However, at the end of it all the question comes down to whether it is ethical or not. And when these imbalances are not addressed there arises in the society resistance towards such power plays resulting in conflict and unrest. But perhaps there is a need for such forms of resistance to depict the reality of our communities which enables us to relook at our practices, policies, prejudices and politics; in an attempt to better the conditions that surround our lives.

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Failure and Resistance of 'Hero(es)': Selected Bengali Texts

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This paper analyzes three Bengali novels that dealt with 1960-70s Leftist movements in Bengal. The texts are *Shokmicchil (The rally of mourning)* and *Vivahbarshiki (The marriage anniversary)* written by Deependranath Bandyopadhyay in 1973 and 1977 respectively and *Yuddha Paristhiti (The time of war)* by Nabarun Bhattacharya in 1995.

The protagonist of the novel *Shokmichhil*, Binaybhushan, is a communist activist who fights for his ideology persistently against the ruling class and revisionist policies of his own party. He along with his comrades fought in the Tebhaga (i) Movement in 1940s and had experience of a long struggle against the rulers. The novel depicts a socio-political picture of 1970s Bengal where political upsurge and bloodshed devastated family-balance and personal lives of a leftist family.

The story revolves around his family as his elder son was a youth leader of his own party CPIM and his another son believed in Naxalite ideology. In a wrathful time of undeclared civil war in 1960s - 70s, a new generation of party cadres refuted his ideological stance. Even his elder son became convinced to kill his younger brother. In a face-to-face encounter his elder son Ajay was annihilated by his younger son Bijay. Later Ajay's fellow cadres murdered Bijay to take

revenge in front of Binaybhushan. Binaybhushan followed his Party-rule and refused to join the funeral of his Naxalite son Bijay. He joined his elder son Ajay's funeral. Binaybhushan's wife Parul companied Bijay to his funeral. He was helpless due to his compulsion to stay beside his elder son but his wife Parul's motherly affection chose to protect their younger son Bijay. Thus, a family got dismantled which certainly carries a metaphor of Indian communist parties. From 1964 upto now, so many factions have been formed negating previous ones. CPI was split into CPI and CPIM in 1964 and in 1969 a new party called CPIML formed denying CPIM. These splits affected party members and their ideological base too. The state cherished this split as unity of a communist party with Marxist ideology had always been a threat to them. Binaybhushan got saddened by those events of split, he mourned over his sons' death but never left his party for which he had struggled against the oppressor class. Binaybhushan was a silent & helpless witness of a ruthless time. So many comradeships were broken due to those splits. So many lives had been lost when they started to blame each other. He blamed himself as a failure for not resisting the split.

Manimohan, the protagonist of the text, *Vivahbarshiki*, is an extended soul of Binaybhushan. He carries the crises and ideological setback of the decade where Binaybhushan belongs. Manimohan too suffers due to confusion whether he should choose the bourgeois culture or should he swim upstream. He got frightened when he observed his child adopted in a consumerist, anti-communist culture. He became disturbed when he heard his wife Kanak, who was a party member too, arguing for accepting the ongoing cultural change. He was hurt watching his old comrades to welcome

neo-liberal policies. He was helpless to accept his Party's coalition with Right-Wing parties who were responsible for declaring Emergency in 1975. Manimohan, just like Binaybhushan and Ranojoy, failed to sustain revolutionary actions. Franco Moretti says in his essay 'The Geography of Modern Tragedy', "Where the state is stable and strong, a national culture evolves in a fundamentally unpolitical fashion: whence the anti-heroic conventions of the novelistic world-view, one of the greatest stabilizing factors of modernity. This world-view finds its centre not just in politics, but in a tragic version of political struggle" (Moretti, 119). He defines it as 'crisis as the moment of truth' and its present in these texts where tragedy dwells with the politics in the decisive decade of the '70s.

Nabarun Bhattacharya, in his novel *Yuddha poristhiti (The time of battle)* narrates the story of a communist rebel Ranojoy who was apprehended by the police and was tortured severely for being a communist during 1970s. Chronotope of the narration was set in 1990s Kolkata where Ranojoy tried his utmost to resist cultural hegemony of the state with the help of his ideology. Though he is the 'failure' of a so called 'failed' revolution in 1970s and has been tagged as a tragic hero, still he searches a hidden weapon to fight back socio-political evils even after two decades of the movement. In this text, Ranojoy, the protagonist, lives in reminiscences. He lives in the past, still dreaming of a war against the state which they had declared in the late 60s. The time has passed by two decades and the certain changes in socio-economic-political fields have appeared. Ranojoy escaped from the asylum in 1994 to find hidden rifles to restart the armed struggle against the Govt. but he failed to find it. He had failed to relocate the

raging time to rebel as it was in 1970. But Ranojoy was too stubborn to accept the change; he is too obstinate to give up his communist ideology.

The fall and the Crisis

Binaybhushan identified himself as an outsider in the communist party. His ideals were declared old-fashioned. He found himself marginalized in the party as his Marxist views were no longer acceptable inside the Party. Binaybhushan is now a senior citizen by age and has become a senior comrade too. He had chosen the career of a ground-level organizer of the communist party so didn't accept any chair. When the new blood joined the youth wing and the mass organizations of the party, Binaybhushan's opinions became less important. He carries a glorious past of fighting for the rebel peasants of Tebhaga Movement in late 1940s, he possesses both theoretical and practical experience of strategy and tactics. But the new action squad of DYFI, formed by local goons and chauvinist youth leaders, deny him. When Binaybhushan tried to explain that a communist party should win over peoples' faith by love and class-sentiment, they rejected him rudely; their leader Paresh negated his mandate, "You give your orders in the Party Office. We are the action squad. Don't act smart with us (Bandyopadhyay, 445)". Gradually, after serving the CPIM for 3 decades as a whole-timer, he feels that he is nothing but a liability to the party. After seizing power, leaders of CPIM might have been diverged from class-struggle and basic Marxist issues. A State committee member indirectly told him, "Most of the Party whole-timers are liability, they are just extra. Binaybhushan and comrades like him should retire from the Party and the Party will provide them monthly pension (Bandyopadhyay, 430)".

Their ideals and class-sentiment made them marginal in the party structure. But at the same time, Binaybhushan's marginality left him the only way to clutch Marxist ideals. He regained inner force to challenge leaders and authorities of his beloved communist party. Like Ranojoy of *Yuddha Paristhiti*, he too knows that complete faith on class-struggle and dialectics can reinforce the inner-party struggle which will strengthen the Party. Like Ranojoy he goes back to memories of acclaimed revolutions of Tebhaga Movement and Food Movement of 1959. Binaybhushan memorizes Sukhi's mother who was a martyr in the Tebhaga Peasant Movement. He differentiates the color of the flag of the same communist party when it was for the oppressed, by the oppressed and when they have seized the power to rule. "This is the Red Flag. Police shot fire in the gathering at Rathtala. Sukhi's mother was shot down but still she upheld the flag… (Bandyopadhyay, 433)". Binaybhushan's reminiscence of class-struggle and comradeship to proletariats for which he was sent to prison several times by the ruling class gives him strength and confidence after the mournful incident of the death of his sons.

Binaybhushan and his party agenda both were challenged by his younger son Bijay, who had chosen the revolutionary path of Naxalbari over electoral politics of CPIM. Through the conversation of Bijay and Binaybhushan, we get the idea that once a mass-leader and rebel could become an isolated and ideologically defeated person. Bijay accused Binaybhushan along with his party CPIM for practicing revisionism. "Comrade Father, you won't allow an inner party struggle. Did you allow it ever? You people expelled people from party whoever raised voice against your decisions. Leaders of CPIM are dictators, they won't allow a new voice

to be raised (Bandyopadhyay, 435)". But Binaybhushan observes his own youth, his own radical age inside his son Bijay, when Bijay firmly talks about romanticism, dreams and revolutionary events all over the world (437). Binaybhushan did admit his Party's faulty strategy and tried to make Bijay understand what the true Marxism is. "There is no made easy for Marxism. If only some people wish to revolt then they can't succeed without getting the mass on their side… If leaders make mistake, then the party, the people even the country all do suffer. We made a blunder in 1949 (Bandyopadhyay, 437)". Binaybhushan experienced the set back of communist party during the last phase of Tebhaga Movement and he knew that his party, undivided CPI made a blunder for which peasants and workers had to suffer. But he didn't deny that strategic fault like a cunning leader. When Bijay, after joining newborn CPIML, asked him, "do you think CPIM is the true revolutionary party? Is it still a Leninist party?" Binaybhushan replied firmly, "Yes, I think so. That's why I am still alive (438)". Though, he failed to make his son convinced on his own viewpoint of revolution. In a turbulent time, when bloodshed was taking over political ideology and communist parties were going through split, inner-struggle, Binaybhushan didn't lose faith. Like a hero he kept on fighting against the unfavorable time.

The Police applied brutal third degree torture on Ranojoy when he was apprehended in 1970 at a village where he went to organize an armed peasant revolution. They tortured Ranojoy to break him and to know the whereabouts of his comrades but they failed to break him. After several years of hellish torture, he was declared a 'lunatic' by the State. The State by applying all the oppressive apparatuses tried their

best to wipe out his memory and physical strength. After some years a former Inspector of Police, Basak, who was one of the torturers, was stunned by lunatic Ranojoy. He attacked Basak with a small iron-made weapon. He neglected Ranojoy's presence and underestimated him as a memory-less mad. He was one of the cruelest torturers who used to apply barbaric methods to get info from detained Naxalites. He didn't have any fear or worry about anything. Such a fearless daredevil agent of State got panicked by 'mad' Ranojoy. Even after the attack was over, Basak didn't sleep in peace for a single night. Basak, once the face of terror of the Govt., used to watch Ranojoy with his deadly iron-made weapon in his nightmares. Ranojoy failed to recognize his son, wife and friends after being mentally unstable but he recognized Basak. He never refused the revolutionary tactics of annihilating class-enemies and proudly answered after attacking Basak, "I am liquidating the class-enemy (Bhattacharya, 142)". Even after the setback, when his party got dismantled and broken into factions, he never forgot the firebrand slogan of hailing Naxalbari.

Ranojoy escaped from the asylum, and he was detached from present political scenario of Bengal. He was jailed for the rifle that he had hidden 20 years ago under the soil of a barren land in Jadavpur area of Kolkata. He, after spending six years in prison, got bail in 1974 and returned home. But again, his student Kaushik and wife were compelled to shift him to the asylum. His incoherent thoughts and words bore no meaning to them. He escaped from asylum assuming that the anti-state civil war was still going on. After a day long search for his hidden rifle, he was able to locate the exact place. But a multistoried building has been erected there. The state had gunned down rebels to take the situation under

control. They killed most of the revolutionaries in fake encounter or tortured them to death. Ranojoy was one of their victims. But, he never deviated from his target to down the state with arms.

Ranojoy's time-space had been stopped in 1970. But how did he survive in the time-space of 1990s? Ranojoy was similar to Rip Van Winkle who slept for 20 years and found everything changed after being woken up. But the difference is Ranojoy was reluctant to accept the changes. Ranojoy was stuck in 1970s, he never woke up from sleep, his son is still 5 years old to him and he still converses with Lenin. Ranojoy was completely dislocated from the ongoing time; that's why he wasn't aware that Soviet Union had dissolved and was broken into pieces, China is no longer a 'peoples' republic' and a Leftist Govt. has seized power in Bengal. This dislocation from time-frame keeps his dreams alive. Time here is playing a leading role. But time itself is deconstructing time. From an event to another and from a voice to another the central theme that has been revealed here is, People are the real creator of Time. A novelist, especially a progressive one can identify the process of creating 'Time'. Helga Nowotny in her book *Time: The modern and post modern experience*, stated about ambiguous and complex time, "Time is made by human beings and has to do with power which they exercise over one another with the aid of strategies of time. Time unites and separates-combatants as well as lovers. As with every form of power, there is a counter-power, every strategy finds its counter strategy (Nowotny, 142-143)". Ranojoy thus used 'Time' as a counter-strategy; he counter-powered the establishments of the state like a hero who never is defeated. The state and its power machineries alienated him from the mainstream society by

declaring him a 'cynic', but he transposed his cynicism into his weapon to fight back.

Protagonists of Deependranath's novels embrace ideological optimism even when they see the world is burning. Manimohan of 'Vivahbarshiki (The anniversary)' observed that his party's practice had been derailed from communist ideology. In the year 1977, when the Left front emerged as the ruling force elected by people's vote, he keenly observed loopholes and deviations inside his communist party. He was a whole-timer of the Communist Party of India and sacrificed everything to serve his party. But he desolately observed that most of his comrades ignored communist ideology to get an easy access to power and money. That hurt him but couldn't break him. He watched a consumerist and bourgeois culture maliciously affecting the leftist culture that they constructed with a decade long struggle. At this moment of cultural crises he didn't lose hope. He had faith on people, on ideology. He remembers Vietnam War to reconstruct faith on communist culture. He remembers Shatrughna, an old comrade who fought bravely in the Bangladesh liberation war. He listens to Joan Baez's 'Where are you my Son?' and teardrops blur his eyes. Louis Althusser argued that the individual is interpellated as a 'subject' by the Ideology of the dominant class. The individual interpellates himself as a 'free' subject who can freely submit to the commandments of the Subject . But Manimohan, Ranojoy and Binaybhushan do not accepy their subjection. Their identity is in crisis by Ideological State Apparatuses but they are constantly fighting against it.

Resistance of undefeated heroes

Ranojoy dodged reality and was completely ignorant to what is happening outside his self-created reality. Will we call

him an escapist? Was he avoiding the reality just to escape from the ruins of his life? No. He had found an alternative to live. He reconstructed past events to struggle against the adverse reality.

Ranojoy's heroic resistance against the State-sponsored terror continued in a different way. He was an organizer of Rural uprising and an intellectual too who used to have a taste of vast reading. In the interrogation room, police officers tried to confuse him with Marxist theories. They tried to prove him wrong about the practice of class struggle. But Ranojoy countered them firmly with actual theories of Marxism. "You have read Mao-Tse-Tung's books translated by two American army-men. But, you haven't read the anthology. You should read that to get answer (145)" Ranojoy answered to his interrogators. After giving a short lecture on Marxist theoretical evolution, Ranojoy made fun of his torturers to their face, "I hope you will rectify your misconceptions about Mao and revolution. But, I don't bother whether you will rectify your lessons or not (145)". Such an arrogance and firmness was replied back with more torture but Ranojoy didn't fumble a bit to keep his head high with a strong base on Marxism. Another example of heroic resistance by Ranojoy is the propagation of myths and stories related to Marxist figures. Inside the hellish interrogation room, he called police officers 'ridiculous' and told them stories of Chinese revolution of 1949. In the asylum, whenever he felt psychologically weak, he used to remember myths about Joseph Stalin and how he stood tall against tyrant army of the Tsar. When he saw a High-rise had been constructed on the ground where the Rifles were hidden, he thought that would cause a severe setback to the revolution. With a blurred memory, he thought himself responsible and began self criticizing in front of a statue of

Vladimir Lenin. He had hallucinated about Politburo members of USSR in 1919 who were encouraging him to continue the fight. He heard the leader of Proletariat uprising, Lenin, addressed him, "Dear Comrade Ranojoy, be prepared for the future revolution. You have to build up a mass movement and you have to carry forward the discourse of Marxism. You are a Bolshevik and dedicated to People (165)".

Manimohan also fought a cultural debate against the state and against political enemies. His old comrades who had enthusiastically transformed themselves into successful intellectuals, tried to prove his ideals wrong. They tried to justify CPIM's coalition with right wing parties including Janta Party for the sake of electoral politics in late 1970s. Manimohan firmly encountered their logic with previous examples and theoretical explanations. He pointed out why class struggle should be the only way to resist right-wing political parties. Manimohan has the gut to confess political blunders that CPI had committed during 1960s. Accepting a serious blunder of submitting party strategy to the Congress Govt. in 1964, Manimohan confessed, "We didn't understand peoples' sentiment. We have committed a political sin by dividing ourselves into factions (292)". He had been broken mentally after CPI's inactive role during Emergency which was declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. He had chosen the life of a whole-timer as his career. In a rapidly changing socio-economic condition in mid-'70s, the wage earned by a whole-timer was insufficient for livelihood. But Manimohan proudly rejected an editorial job in a big corporate house just to serve his Marxist Party. Manimohan understood that the Ruling class would inject globalized liberal culture to wipe out Indian cultural root. In a coffee bar, he firmly protested against using

Narcotic tablets. Today, after almost 4 decades of the text, these problems have become prominent. What he sensed as the future obstacles of the leftist parties in India has happened in reality after a few decades. This is also a trait of a hero to sense upcoming positive or negative changes and to trace a method to fight them.

Ranojoy had prepared next generation of revolutionaries through an actual Marxist education. That's also a basic duty of a communist. Kaushik Mitra, an internationally reputed professor of history was taught by Ranojoy after he got bail from jail in 1974. Ranojoy himself was a brilliant student of Presidency College who had got record marks in examination. But when he taught his student Kaushik, he refused to teach like an institutional teacher. Rather, he taught him how to interpret history out of syllabus and how to take lessons from it. "Ranojoy used to tell him stories of Long March, Stalingrad, Vietnam and liberation war of Cuba for hours. He used to explain war-strategies too easily to understand (134)". Kaushik didn't become a 'revolutionary' like his tutor Ranojoy, but he became an Anti-state Academician. Ranojoy successfully generated an elegant taste of reading into his next generation. This is a success of Ranojoy who like a progressive protagonist, has injected ideological strength into next generation.

Ranojoy named his newborn son Koba, inspired by one of the tech-names of Joseph Stalin. Despite his physical distance from his son, as he was forced to be admitted into an asylum, he constructed an image of his son in his thought. He brought up his son as he had wished to reform the society through a revolution. Both, nourishing a strong desire to revolt with arms and to build up his son as his comrade always run

through his thoughts. He was aware of the set back in the rebellious uprising in 1970. He does self-criticism and tries to make over all the mistakes they did. But at the same time in a monologue he consoles himself that the revolution is not over and next generation of youth will regenerate the insurrection. "Koba will read, 'ten days that shook the world', he will read Vasily Chapayev's story. He will upgrade his taste with Dyson Carter's 'The Soviet Science', Leo Kiacheli's 'Light of a new day'. He will certainly study Bengali and Chinese communist writers. Ranojoy has no doubt that Koba will become a real communist" (Bhattacharya, 114). In his illusions, he watches his son become a youth and Ranojoy teaches him to fight an armed struggle along with a communist ideology. Actually Ranojoy had created an alternative society to challenge the stereotypes of the existing one. There in his reality, he blocks the ideological institutions of the state; he defends all the establishments to protect his new hope, his son. The state succeeded in declaring him a madman but at the same time the State failed to resist his counter-ideology and to recognize his alternative world.

The same thing happened to Manimohan in 1977. He sensed a drastic cultural change to take over the Marxist culture. He feared that change which would lead the next generation to a consumer fetish society and would distract them from Marxist practice. Manimohan got a cultural shock after hearing that his 7 year old son Babua loves 'Cadbury' brand. His Communist values got a push when he heard that Babua loves to read Adventures of Tintin. Innocent Babua didn't hesitate to tell his father, "I'll drink alcohol with Captain Haddock… I won't be a communist like you, Papa (262)". Manimohan, in 1977, got anxious assuming a future society

full of consumerism and neo-capitalism. Manimohan's defeat looks prominent in his monologue, "how will you resist it Manimohan? This is a commodity fetish life and society. Children are brought up in this ideology. Fire has been spread inside home (262)". He couldn't resist that fire. A whole-timer of communist party, Manimohan, who had always thought that simplicity and anti-consumerism were the basic conditions to be a Marxist, received a shock when he heard his wife's views on modern life. Kanak, his wife, who is a member of communist party too. But she has adopted the changing time and upcoming socio-economic changes. She had seen her husband suffer due to economical crises for practicing Marxist ideology. She didn't deny his husband's way of being a communist but she wanted to keep her children out of that. "I don't want them to be proud of poverty just like you. I want them to live properly without any suffering. (263)". This is the urge of a mother. Manimohan did have a whole society to fight and an ideology to embrace but Kanak only had her family and children to live with. Parul, wife of communist Binaybhushan, asked the same question of her husband when her beloved younger son Bijay stood against his father and elder brother. "You have your party, Ajay has youth leadership and Bijay has Chairman Mao. But what do I have except you? (Bandyopadhyay, 441)" Binaybhushan didn't have any answer to this question as he knew how his family had been ruined due to ideological differences of different communist parties. Manimohan and Binaybhushan could not resist the ferocious time-period which had destroyed their personal relationships. But still they return to Marxist values and experiences which they had earned after a decade-long struggle. Binaybhushan hugged his wife to console her and to give her strength. "Parul,

please don't kill yourself. Please don't lose faith on communism to accept defeat (442)". This is the only hope for him to keep the struggle alive after enduring too much pain.

Ranojoy, despite being a 'failure', continues his anti-establishment activity through counter-hegemonic culture. His memory is enriched with the communist theories and culture. He activates that memory of cultural activity, study materials and theoretical boost-ups whenever he faces a problem in the 'battlefield'. Apart from his continuous effort to educate his son with the Marxist culture, the reader finds a different cultural space of his son Koba. Koba is a Post-graduate in English and a freelance writer. He loves Rock Music, attends Rock concerts regularly. The decade of 1990s brought a sea-change in the cultural sphere where Koba adopts himself. He knows the struggle and tragic failure of the previous generation where his father used to belong. In his reality, the State has succeeded to establish a hegemonic culture and an apolitical one. He knows the sacrifices that his father underwent but he doesn't have faith on that radicalism. To describe the reality of Koba, Nabarun Bhattacharya named some of the markers of that time-Punk Rock, Music Bands, and Coca-cola. Koba listens to Rock music; he attends concerts of Indian Rock Bands. In his reality, he doesn't compare Leninism and Maoism or Socialism and New-Democratic Revolution; rather he compares between Pink Floyd, Jazz and Classical Rock and gets involved into the performances of Shiva and High, two pioneers of Indian Rock Music. He feels sympathetic for the tragic failure of his father and doesn't want to walk on the same footprint. But he has disgust with the neo-rich section just like his father. He loves Western Music and has adopted the 'liberalization-globalization' culture but his resentment against neo-rich

audience reminds the reader of his father Ranojoy. "Neo-rich people are uncultured savage. They don't understand music but want to buy everything with money (Bhattacharya, 121)". Koba easily can differentiate between 'perplexed moron' Partha-uncle, the spy-professor and Kaushik uncle. Mekhla, wife of Ranojoy wants to keep her child away from all the calamities that happened in the 1970s. Like Kanak, wife of Manimohan, she tries to adapt herself and her son to the newly occurred socio-economic changes. Mekhla, Koba, Ranojoy all have their voices which are both for and against the voice of the narrator. Andrew Robinson, in his essay on Polyphony and Dialogism, stated that, "The text appears as an interaction of distinct perspectives or ideologies, borne by the different characters. The characters are able to speak for themselves, even against the author – it is as if the other speaks directly through the text." (ceasefiremagazine.co.uk) (iii) . All the main characters of the text represent their own time including Ranojoy who is subconsciously subverting reality.

Literary Technique to narrate the Protagonist's ideological resistance

Manimohan, Binaybhushan and Ranojoy- all belong to middle-class intellectual communist section. But they refused their career, job and comfort to challenge social hierarchies. They somehow defied their class position and took important roles in the revolution in favor of the working class. They came from the Bhadroloki (Elite) periphery and joined the class struggle by rubbing their shoulders with the Nimnoborgo (Subaltern) and marginal people. The literary model for most of the Bengali political texts where an urban intellectual elite protagonist stands for the oppressed class doesn't apply here

in these texts. These texts challenge that literary model too. Because, the authors of this texts know very well the flaws of this model; so they don't hesitate to challenge that literary industrial model! To some extent Binaybhushan or Ranojoy act like middle-class intellectual Marxists, their thoughts and methods reflect their class position. At the same time they do self-criticism and they analyze their class-position as to whether that's the root of their failure or not. Secondly, they question the theory of 'Intellectual led Proletarian Revolt'. Manimohan pointed out the failure of Communist movement in the mid-70s, when they got confused about representing electoral politics. Gradually after claiming seats in Central or in State election and by claiming the throne in 1977 in West Bengal, they overlooked class-politics. Manimohan blamed his partisan-turned-intellectual friends for quitting class struggle after getting power in 1977 Assembly election. Manimohan experienced that, "All communist and leftist parties of India are Petty Bourgeois. Bourgeois parties are financed by big capitalist lobbies and petty Bourgeois parties serve those big finance companies. (289)". What Antonio Gramsci referred as 'Organic Intellectuals' (iv), who are directly related to economic production and class-position, are rarely found in Indian Leftist politics. Traditional intellectuals from middle-class always tuned the note of revolution of workers and farmers but most of the time they failed to fulfill expectations of the subalterns. Manimohan wanted to go back to the basics to rectify errors, "I'll join again Peasant Union and will live with farmers as a whole-timer. I'm active in politics since my student life but in the urban area. Now I want to spend rest of my political career with rural people" (290). Manimohan defied his 'Bhoddorlok (elite)' identity.

He wanted to be a common man as one of the crores of oppressed people. He identified his failure as a communist, "I did want to become an absolute anonymity. That's why I refused all easy ways to success. But I have been remained as a Petty Bourgeois." (296). Ranojoy wants to rectify errors too. He too has experienced the failure of middle-class led 'Peasant Revolution'. As he never forgets the basics of New-democratic revolution in a rural economy based country like India, he wants to reclaim those hidden rifles and go back to peasants to prepare them for another revolt. Their journey never ends.

Yuddha Paristhiti is a non-linear text where the narration has been juxtaposed with past events and current events. To define a non-linear text, we can assert "The theme in nonlinear novels often deals with the ways people experience memory and time, and the role these elements play in human experience. (Morgan, https://penandthepad.com/literary-term-nonlinear-narrative-1816.html)". A non-linear narrative puts a twist in the chronological order, so does the novel *Yuddha Paristhiti.* Time travel, rather manipulation of time, is one of the structural formations of this text. The novel starts with Ranojoy's escape from the asylum in 1994. In Ranojoy's perception, he was breaking free from confinement; he was fleeing from enemy zone to collect hidden rifles. In his memory, he was continuously remembering the order of Lenin during October revolution and the mandate of Mao-tse-tung during the new democratic revolution of China. He judged a stranger as a renegade and prepared to combat him. Myths and stories centering around Lenin, Stalin and Mao were flashbacked in his thought which was leading him to find the rifles to protect the liberated zone that they formed fighting against the state

in 1970s. These events, the great moments of peoples' victory over the oppressive State haunt him and help him to become conscious about his comradeship. Such memories drag the narration backward but again the time-frame of 1990s brings the reader back to reality. Houston Taylor writes about a non-linear narrative, "Nonlinear narratives often use flashbacks or flash forwards in which past or future events are revealed through memory or other methods during exposition of a current event. However, there are other ways to use nonlinear narrative in which the narrative flow doubles back on itself while appearing to move forward" (Houston, https://litreactor.com/columns/out-of-order-a-discussion-of-nonlinear-narrative-structure). Ranojoy was never off from the war front. They declared protracted peoples' war against the State and they had been demolished, brutally tortured and annihilated by the State. But Ranojoy didn't accept defeat rather he was preparing to accumulate reinforcement to continue the War. "Don't inform the police. I'm going to accumulate Arms and Ammunitions (Bhattacharya, 117)" Ranojoy warned the bike-rider whom he believed to be a spy.

Quest motif plays a great part in this novel. Ranojoy's quest for the rifles and his quest for his ideology to restart the armed revolution give power to the plot of the narrative. The biggest failure of the protagonist occurs when the quest ends in a void. A former Naxal comrade recognized Ranojoy and said, "There is no rifle now. High-rise, flats have been constructed on it. Nothing is there (159)". It reflects the end of a revolutionary era when the ruling class has perfectly neutralized agitations of people. But it reflects the beginning of another journey where the protagonist consoles himself, "A revolutionary should be a

romantic. I won't lose hope. I won't leave dreaming a successful revolution. And I'll continue fight (160)". A hero can fall but he knows how to pick himself up.

Nabarun actually skipped two decades which has been erased from the memory of Ranojoy. Why is he jumping over time? These two decades have witnessed a drastic change in the international Marxist politics. USSR failed, the model of new democratic revolution failed and obviously the naxal movement had been liquidated in an apolitical culture after 1980s. Skipping the nothingness of the intermediate decades, Ranojoy or Nabarun has negated temporary win of capitalism over communism. Dead labor dominates the living labor and the past dominates the present- this Marxist theory is the skeleton of the novel and that's why socio-political past dominates the present. Time-frame has been jumbled up. The author stated a reason for this, "People do not count the time in which they live, that's the reason of their sadness. The world is changing over time; politics, money and the hero-heroine are changing too. But, people aren't conscious about these changes (125)". Doesn't he want to point the ideology of the ruling class which propagates an unchanging social relation through a false consciousness? Ranojoy denies that false consciousness of the ruling class, so does the author. Terry Eagleton talks about an authentic art as, "it always transcends the ideological limits of its time, yielding us insight into the realities which ideology hides from view (Eagleton, 16)". Defending the ideology of the rebel by fighting the dominant ideology of the ruling class is certainly a literary technique which has been applied by both Nabarun and Deependranath.

A hero redefined

Bakhtin told us, 'self is dialogic'. A dialogic self like Manimohan or Ranojoy have become the theme of the texts in Post-colonial era. The self has crises and dialectical socio-political periphery from where the struggle begins. Ranojoy or Binaybhushan are certainly the protagonists but their creators didn't want to write just narration of 'tragic heroes'. They want to find the clue about how a hero emerges in a decade of uprisings. A hero, who was born of peoples' movement, never becomes diluted in hegemonic policies. He always looks for an alternative way to keep the uprising alive. Raymond Williams in his essay 'Culture', righteously put that, "'Civilization' had produced not only wealth, order and refinement but as part of the same process poverty, disorder and degradation." (Williams, 18). Progressive activists like Ranojoy or Manimohan question that artificiality of Civilization. They uphold their values against the dominant culture. Nabarun and Deependranath didn't end the narration in darkness. An eventful decade may narrate a story of the darkest hour and a story of a broken hero but the revolutionary ideology never dies. Binaybhushan and Parul bid farewell to each other to join their offspring's funeral. Parul said to Binaybhushan, "We'll certainly meet at the Burning Ghat." The text ends here, but not the hope of life. Manimohan returns to his family with a bouquet of red roses. He has some hope left to fight the socio-political crises to protect his family. Ranojoy at last was found by his close mates and family. He was taken back to the asylum. But nothing could distract him from dreaming his reality. His son Koba, who will remain a comrade forever in his 'reality', joins him at the warfront. Ranojoy gives him instruction to rush to the front and to stay

by the Red Army. In his dream, "Koba is going to the front, overcoming snowfall and barb-wires. Is this Koba coming towards Ranojoy to take him to a new warfront? All are becoming blurred. But, Ranojoy won't sleep anymore (181)". How could a hero sleep in peace when the world is burning? How could a hero take rest when his ideology has been threatened?

What makes a hero? A hero is the person whose action is larger than life; who saves people, who courageously wins the battle. Do Ranojoy, Manimohan or Binaybhushan possess all the characteristics to qualify as 'hero(es)'? No, they don't. But they have extended the horizon of expectation of the reader to define a hero. They denied to be interpellated as 'subject' of the ideological praxis of the dominant class. This is also a heroic battle to resist pressing dominance and discourse of Capitalism. Although they have lost the decisive battles of their lives and are going through unfavorable events, they haven't given up the fight. Ranojoy had lost his mental stability and Binaybhushan had lost his sons during the bloodbath of 1970s political upsurge. But, they haven't lost faith in ideology. Binaybhushan told his wife, "Leaders can mislead but there are People, there is History made by them... That's my only hope (439)" Authors of these texts subvert the definition of a 'Hero'. Here, in these texts, a hero as a protagonist is not victorious; rather they failed pursuing their goal. They are alone. They are dreamers. They are searching a new way to succeed their goal. The readers and Marxist believers are too searching a new way to reclaim victory over oppressive ruling class.

(*Translations are done by me unless otherwise mentioned.*)

Notes:

i. The Tebhaga movement was an independence campaign initiated in Bengal by the Kisan Sabha (peasants front of Communist Party of India) in 1946–47. At that time sharecropping peasants (essentially, tenants) had to give half of their harvest to the owners of the land. The demand of the Tebhaga (sharing by thirds) movement was to reduce the share given to landlords to one third

ii. Althusser Louis, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, Mapping Ideology*, Ed, by Zizek Slavoj, P- 136.

iii. Robinson, Andrew, 'In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia', https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/

iv. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are more directly related to the economic structure of their society simply because of the fact that "every social group that originates in the fulfilment of an essential task of economic production" creates its own organic intellectual. [Rammos S. Valerino, The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism, Marxists.org]

v. "Nonlinear structure traditionally puts the emphasis on character as a strategy for describing a personality free of constraints imposed by a linear, goal-oriented plot. We may want to focus on a character's whole life. Or the character may have a nonmaterial goal or spiritual need compelling him to act that doesn't easily translate into tangible, goal-oriented action to dominate the plot, but nevertheless can serve as the basis for a strong thematic unity. [Cowgill, Linda, Non-linear narratives: The ultimate in time travel, http://www.plotsinc.com/sitenew/column_art_02.html]"

The Becoming of Ravana in Anand Neelakantan's novel Asura: Tale of the Vanquished (2012) (i)

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Michael Madhusudan Dutt famously said, "I despise Ram and his rabble, but the idea of Ravan elevates and kindles my imagination..." (qtd. in Seely 137). The idea of Ravana seems to have kindled many imaginations, as is exhibited by the immense diversity in the retelling of his character and story (ii). From Vimalsuri's *Paumacarya* dated between third BCE to third CE that describes a repentant Ravana with potential for good and even godhood, to Amish Tripathi's upcoming novel, *Raavan - The Orphan of Aryavarta* that promises to tell Ravana's tale from his birth, a range of Ramayana tellings explore the multiplicity and contradictions (iii) within this character. This oppositional strand of Ramayana tellings, according to RomilaThapar, is an "alternative system" of counter-narratives that has at least existed as long as the "popular" tellings such as Valmiki *Ramayana* (10).

In the contemporary resurgence of Ramayana retellings that question the traditional tale of Ramayana, while many adopt the point of view of marginal characters, very few attempt to tell the villains' perspective. One of these few retellings is Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* (2012) which is the story of *Ramayana* from the perspective of the dead, defeated, and the vanquished. The conclusion of the

Ramayana tale remains intact, that is, Rama wins and Ravana dies, but the perspective of the story is inverted so that it spans the life and times of Ravana.

This paper analyses the becoming of the character of Ravana in this novel in two ways- firstly, via the unbecoming of Ravana the villain and Ravana the demon king and secondly, the becoming of Ravana the human. It looks at Ravana's various roles within the novel- Ravana as a narrator, Ravana as the other, Ravana as a human, and Ravana as a repository of evil. It concludes by suggesting what the novel achieves through such a construction of Ravana.

Ravana - the narrator

G.N. Devy, in his work "Of Many Heroes," looks at Ramayana as a historical narrative, noting that it "describes the entire genealogy of Rama, giving this character an immense historical proportion; on the other hand the vanquished Ravana is given a relatively compressed historical representation" (13-14). One of the ways through which the retelling *Asura* re-makes Ravana from a popular antagonist to a protagonist is by giving him such "historical representation." The narrative is told in flashback as Ravana lies dying in the battlefield. He recalls his gradual downfall and loss of all that he accomplishes- his empire, repute and the growth of his mind and person. It traces his roots to a destitute childhood with his family ostracized as "wild, black" half-castes.

Through Ravana - the protagonist narrator, the story also creates space for the history of the vanquished race of Asuras. He recalls how Asuras were once a highly progressive and extremely developed, casteless democratic society before the leader of the "savage tribes of central Jambudweep" Indra

plundered their cities and drove them south some thousand years before this narration. (20) The reigning kingdom started calling themselves Gods, and hence became the Devas. This is an obvious inversion of the interaction between the two groups recorded in traditional Ramayanas.

Ravana the narrator also acknowledges the weaknesses of Asuras. Gradually, many wars ensue between the Asuras and Devas as the narrative progresses, with both sides participating almost equally in each other's cruel destruction and suffering. So, by the end of the novel *Asura*, the narrative does not seem to be aimed at inversion of the Ramayana "history," but instead- inclusion, thus questioning the process of history-making. In Devy's words, "a narration is conditioned by the conscious or unconscious ideology of race, class and gender within which the historian's intellectual sympathies are engaged" (7-8). Extrapolated to Ravana's "historical" narration, the above two statements foreshadow the conflicting ideologies within Ravana by the end of the novel- his love for his race Asuras, and yet his allure of the Devas, or rather, Brahmins. This is discussed in detail in the following pages.

Ravana - the other

Neelakantan's book, which he calls the *Asurayana* in its preface, paints a picture of an ancient Indian history where the caste system has just planted its seeds. This narrative is complimented by a secondary-character narrator called Bhadra, a common Asura. While this narrator gives voice to the plight of the Asura people, he also becomes a representative of the common man in both civilizations - Ravana's and later Ram's, making the Ramayana tale also about the people who were neither protagonists, nor antagonists- only the victims. He

brings to the fore the agony of the human condition of being "half human" - as a Shudra according to the Vaishnava caste divisions and as a lower class black and "ugly" Asura treated with disgust and contempt within Ravana's kingdom.

Bhadra is also a close observer of the becoming and unbecoming of Ravana within the novel. He seems to be a split image of the unconscious self of Ravana. Being a half-Asura and half-Brahmin, conflictingly, Ravana loves and hates these two parts of himself simultaneously. He is proud of being an Asura, a once superior race, and seems to hate the Brahminical hypocrisies and malpractices. But he also falls prey to the Deva biases against the Black Asuras. He looks down upon the "black, ugly" Asuras, including his sister, while welcoming the Brahmins to settle and practice in Lanka. He projects his unconscious hatred of his Asura self onto Bhadra, while outwardly hating the others- or the Brahmins in this case. But this hatred may be read as Ravana's guilt of being prejudiced against the Asuras, just like his Brahmin father is. In a way he subconsciously hates parts of his own self, his heritage of being half an Asura. This process is as political as it is psychological.

On one of his conquests, Ravana is called an untouchable and a Shudra by Anarnya, the old king of Ayodhya. Although Ravana angrily replies that he is not a Shudra, but an Asura, he is heard mumbling that his father is a Brahmin- a moment that is noted by Bhadra. This conflict becomes the seed that not only culminates into the destruction of Ravana and his race, but also indicates toward the complicated make of Ravana.

This conflicting identity of Ravana's self with the seeming other is also reflective of his contradictory

representation within the Ramayana tradition. Ravana is the epitome of other in popular Ramayana tellings such as Valmiki *Ramayana,* "'otherness' being a psychological phenomenon as well as a spacial term" (Devy 143). He not only belongs to Lanka or a space that is different but also has different morals and way of life than the 'self' or Aryan way of life. Further, he symbolizes the parts of society and one's person that are to be shunned. The self and other, or in G.N. Devy's terms the "Swa and Para", must not be looked at as polarities in Indian thought, or it would be "a profoundly ignorant act of consciousness" (143, 145).

Ravana's contradictory representations as part of the self and the other both co-exist within the Ramayana tradition. To counter Ravana's traditional image as the villain or the antagonist, the concerned novel rather becomes Ravanayana (Ravana's journey), making him the hero or protagonist of this retelling of the Ramakatha. To counter his popular image as the other or the demon king the novel makes him a narrator and a part of the self by making him a relatable human.

Ravana - the human

To become a human, he first un-becomes a rakshasa or a demon. From his childhood, Ravana starts questioning the beliefs and practices of the Brahmins. He asks,

"Why were our people so meek and humble? Why were only a few able to control the power and wealth while the rest obliged them, and even laid down their lives to help this small selfish gang oppress them and their children? Was it fear? Money, caste, rituals, traditions, beliefs and superstitions all conspired together to crush the humble majority. Why couldn't there be a more just way of living?" (18)

Ravana's use of "why" makes him seem "possessed by evil spirits" to his father's Brahmin friends and be called a Rakshasa or demon. This usage is also meant to make him likeable and relatable to the contemporary reader as the representative of an underdog questioning the oppressive norm and power structure.

The terms gods and demons are used as mere labels in this book, so that each character is purely human, realistic and often relatable. Rama is a simple prince weakened and manipulated by the stronghold of Brahmins and their principles. Sita is his wife and Ravana's ferocious but unknown daughter who chooses to commit suicide rather than burn in the superstitions of Brahmanism.

And Ravana is a complex human being who is neither an absolute demon nor a superbly versatile and religious man, as is popularly portrayed. He has ambitions, good intentions, prejudices; he makes mistakes, consciously commits crimes, and is even guilt-ridden, yet he is trapped by his destiny- that of bringing about his own undoing. The motive of such a tragic rendering is to make the reader relate to his humaneness. The author notes that Ravana "sees himself as the epitome of a complete human being; without any pretense to holiness or restricted by social and religious norms. He is as good or bad as any human being, and as nature intended man to be..." (5).

He also repeatedly stresses his idea of what makes a human. For instance, at the end of his training under the banished Asura emperor Mahabali, he rebukes the final lesson of "mind control and mastering the senses" (35) as he perceives it to be a way to attain godhood, and the rejection of what it truly means to be human. His definition of a human includes the traits given to

his infamous ten heads -anger, pride, jealousy, happiness, sadness, fear, selfishness, passion, ambition and the intellect.

According to Mahabali, these are nothing but deleterious human conditions also called as "self" and in order to achieve greatness, one needs to conquer, and then shun these traits, all except the last that is the intellect. He encourages Ravana to do so and go "own the world" (37), but the latter declares that it is these basic instincts that make him a human being. It is only as an absolute human, he believes that he can make the world better. Ravana successfully overturns the caste based society of Devas by conquering almost all of ancient India. He wants as much power as these self-professed Gods and wants to enjoy it in every humanly way.

At his life's end, he looks at his inner being in search of all the answers to the questions left unresolved, as his outer body is being eaten away by rats, jackals and other creatures. He accepts and owns his mistakes, but would not part with any of them. His spirituality and quest for peace, thus comes from accepting himself as a human, and denying any aspiration of being a god,

"I didn't want the seat Rama has reserved for me in his heaven. I only wanted my beautiful earth...I shall live like a man and die as one. I will never try to be a God. I will live exactly as my emotions tell me to. I do not want to be a model man for future generations to follow. My life begins with me and ends with me. But I will live my life to its full and die as a man should." (14, 41)

Ravana denies godhood for being a human, but he loses the war and is demonized in historical consciousness for eternity. It may be inferred then that it is through Ravana's

demonization that Rama becomes god. Ravana admits, "I had been born to fulfill someone else's destiny. To allow someone else to become God" (15). For the war to be a great symbol of the victory of good over evil, Ravana has to be evil. And yet, a human and ambiguous Ravana can only exist with a human Rama.

Evil

The story of Ramayana in its multiple forms may be seen as a portrayal of the value structures and systems of belief and meaning making of the community or culture that it emerges from. The tale is about victory of one value structure over another. One such value structure is the sense of good and evil, or right and wrong. These structures help define the differences between the self and the other guided by what Devy calls

> "the general principles of inclusion and exclusion sanctioned by the community for which, and within which, the narrative is being constructed. It is these principles, which remain almost entirely unarticulated, that constitute a community's sense of self. In fact, the same sense of self, in relation to the associated sense of the other, becomes the community's sense of tradition." (7)

Such a contextual understanding of what constitutes the self and the other further problematizes the canonical association of Ravana as the other, and begs for a more detailed study of the diversity of Ravana across different Ramakathas.

Anand Neelakantan's emphasis on Ravana's ambiguous morality makes the character relatable to the human condition, thus not only distancing him from the other but also making him a part of the self-and its contextual constitution. The novel

also questions Ravana's canonized association with a concrete concept of evil, as is exhibited by many scholars like RomilaThapar and Amal Sarkar.

Ravana may be seen as a tool across Ramayanas to define what is evil and how this evil may be explained. In Valmiki *Ramayana,* for instance, Ravana's evil is his rebuttal of samanya dharma or universal law and his svadharma or personal law. But in the concerned novel's context, "evil" is mostly defined as the rigid caste system- that destroys the Asura empire and its relatable emperor by gradually taking hold of both. This relative understanding of the concept of "evil" thus distinguishes it from an absolute irredeemable inexplicable value (iv) and makes it seem a construct.

In conclusion, Anand Neelakantan recreates the ancient tale of Ramayana in the novel form and problematizes its traditional definitions of hero and villain, or good and evil. The novel thus also questions the process of making history, while also re-imagining ancient India as a sum of distinct races Aryans and Dravidians.

The novel's efforts to humanize Ravana is aimed at deconstructing his image as the para or other, rakshasa and evil and reconstructing it as part of the swa or self, human and human condition. In this way, the novel may be read as being subversive to popular Ramayana tellings and continuing cultural practices of demonizing Ravana. This becoming of Ravana, thus, also justifies Anand Neelakantan's Asura's role as a counter-narrative in an alternative system within the over-arching diverse and "self-questioning" Ramayana tradition.

Notes

i. A condensed version of this paper was orally presented in the Research Scholars' Day of IIT Kanpur's Humanities and Social Sciences Department in IIT Kanpur on 24th March 2018.

ii. The Ramayana Tradition is a corpus of knowledge where a story or the Ramayana tale has a wide range of interpretations in quantity, content and form across the diverse contexts of cultures, languages and religious traditions in South East Asia. And according to the eminent scholar Ramanujan, all these tellings relate to each other.

iii. Paula Richman, in the Preface to her book Questioning Ramayanas: A South-Asian Tradition, refers to the inherent quality of multiplicity and self-questioning of the Ramayana tradition.

iv. An example of such an absolute evil is the image of Satan in Christian religion and mythology.

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'Only community constitutes humanity': Feuerbach's epistemology in Daniel Deronda

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George Eliot emerged from her relatively humble Warwickshire background to become the most respected novelist of her time; an intellectual, who, despite having received only limited formal education, followed her own moral judgement rather than the received perceptions of morality and religion of a predominantly Christian society. In her novels, she searched for a view of life that would give modern man a sense of purpose, dignity and ethical direction. She is known for her conversion from the devout Evangelical that she was in youth to the unapologetic atheist of her adult life. It is still debated by critics as to whether Eliot was an agnostic, a Deist, a Pantheist, or a spiritualist. Or, did she return to a thorough belief in Christianity?

It was the philosophy of the German anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), whose book *The Essence of Christianity* she translated in 1854, that offered her a bridge from the traditional theological formulations of religion to an essential humanism, which was meaningful to her, and which she then felt would be equally meaningful to her readers. "With the ideas of Feuerbach," Eliot wrote, "I everywhere agree." (GEL2:153) She translated Feuerbach's anthropology in her novels, thereby establishing her faith in firm and lasting

relations, which could be attained through the adjustment of the individual to the community. This adjustment comes as a corollary to the protagonist's realization of the principles that promote love, respect, tolerance and sacrifice for others. What her detractors saw as atheism, Eliot turned into a new religion, a religion of humanity free from the pessimism and cynicism of other non-believers. At times we reject the morals of society, including Christian teaching, in order to revaluate these beliefs for ourselves. If we, on our own terms, find merit in them, we can re-adopt them, but we need to have a surer basis for our beliefs than obedience.

"Only community constitutes humanity", (*Essence of Christianity* 131) is one of Feuerbach's most important dictums. A man existing absolutely alone would lose himself without any sense of individuality in the ocean of Nature – without other men, the world would be for him not only dead and empty, but meaningless. Like words in a sentence that have meaning only in relation to each other, man's unique twofold life depends on his relation to other men, the relation that Feuerbach calls 'I – Thou': "The other is my thou – the relation being reciprocal, – my alter ego, man objective to me, the revelation of my own nature, the eye seeing itself" (131). In this more radical insight of Feuerbach's epistemology, the isolation of an individual from agreement with others is a form of madness:

"… my fellow-man is to me the representative of the species, the substitute of the rest, nay, his judgment may be of more authority with me than the judgment of the innumerable multitude ... The agreement of others is therefore my criterion of the normalness, the universality, the truth of my thoughts." (132)

In *Adam Bede*, escape from the novel's community is difficult. Hetty Sorrel and Arthur Donnithorne, for example, are virtually destroyed when their dream-world challenges the world of their local community. *Middlemarch,* however, offers many more forms of community than does Adam Bede. The private dream-world becomes harder to separate from the public world of "old provincial society" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 95). Nonetheless, moving from one form of community to another is still difficult. Characters who make such a move risk temporary isolation from any form of community. This isolation causes the epistemological dislocation that Feuerbach describes as madness. Following the pattern set by George Eliot's studies of provincial life, *Daniel Deronda* tests English and European life by creating characters who do not easily fit into their available communities. I would like to examine the troubled strategies of selfhood in both Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda, and then the cure offered by the novel's visionary community.

The narrative of *Daniel Deronda* has typically been divided into two plots: Gwendolen's romantic story and Deronda's introduction into Judaism i.e. the English plot and the Jewish plot. The novel opens in a gambling casino in Leubronn, and the opening scene brings the two principal characters together when much of their stories has already occurred. Gwendolen, one of Eliot's foremost egoists, is engaged in an emblematic egoistic activity: gambling. Her favourite key to life is doing as she liked, and she has almost come to the decision to marry Grandcourt, a decision motivated only by her selfish impulses for social status and financial gain. She leaves Leubronn after she learns her family has lost all their money and shortly decides to go ahead and marry

Grandcourt. She ends up suffering because of this wrong decision through Grandcourt's emotional abuse and the assertion of his sexual power. Socially acceptable, strong-willed and silent, Grandcourt effectively displaces the romantic paradigm of the Byronic hero. He is egoistic in wishing always to have his own way and is blind to any ideals of commitment to others. In fact, his desire for power, ability to inspire fear, and regard for outward appearances are almost matched by Gwendolen, who had wished "to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself" (Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* 137). In such a marriage, as Eliot noted in Romola, there will be a struggle for mastery.

Like Dorothea, Lydgate, and Ladislaw in *Middlemarch*, like Hetty and Dinah in *Adam Bede*, GwendolenHarleth is not deeply rooted in a community. George Eliot's narrator comments on this rootlessness in a passage early in *Daniel Deronda*, a passage that fundamentally connects Gwendolen's situation with that of the novel's homeless Jews:

"Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge ... "(22)

This lack of roots makes Gwendolen create her self, or selves, as she goes along. She is the best example in George Eliot's fiction of the self as actor. As in *Middlemarch*, the consequence of such a strategy of selfhood is madness, a

madness for which *Daniel Deronda* is supposed to be the cure. Gwendolen is vulnerable to a kind of madness because she is different from those around her in the rural community in which her twice-widowed mother has settled. Like Dorothea, Gwendolen finds her life of leisure amid the rural gentry very dull. Her strong will makes her neighbours hope that she will soon be safely married. Her uncle, Mr. Gascoigne, says of Gwendolen: "The point is, to get her well married. She has a little too much fire in her for her present life with her mother and sisters" (78).

Gwendolen is bound by the "wirework" of social convention – her society is a cage, not a sustaining community (53). She has no way to share her private fears or awe with others. The inability to assert herself is tied to a need for an audience to escape from her private anxiety. She is fond of looking at herself in mirrors, says George Eliot's narrator, but she needs to find "a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass" (18). Like a character in fiction, Gwendolen exists only when she is read by another. In fact, her four nearly anonymous sisters habitually regard her as a charmed character from fiction. When she is first engaged to Grandcourt, the four sisters are thrilled to find that "real life was as interesting as 'Sir Charles Grandison'" (310).When Gwendolen rides up to Offendene on horseback after her marriage, the four sisters imagine that she is a heroine from Richardson or Scott. Paradoxically, the result of such highly mediated views of Gwendolen's character is to isolate her from those around her, from her audience.

The fits of dread that George Eliot dramatizes in *Daniel Deronda* are chiefly Gwendolen's fears of a bizarre picture in

the house at Offendene. When she first enters the drawing room, she sees an organ and immediately decides to play Saint Cecilia. She seats herself before the organ "in an admirable pose". The pose is interrupted by her sister's discovery of a sliding panel that hides a "picture of an upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms"; Gwendolen's mother gives the picture a look of "mere disgust", but Gwendolen "shuddered silently", and her perceptive sister says: "You will never stay in this room by yourself, Gwendolen." Gwendolen angrily responds: "How dare you open things which were meant to be shut up, you perverse little creature" (27)?

The reappearance of the hidden picture causes one of the most striking of Gwendolen's fits of dread. At one of the amateur theatricals in Offendene, Gwendolen has chosen to pose as Hermione from the ending of *A Winter's Tale*. At the moment when Hermione is to "come to life" before Leontes, the panel covering the ghoulish picture of the dead face and fleeing figure slides open (520). The sight terrifies Gwendolen, who shrieks and collapses in fear. George Eliot's narrator describes the experience as "a brief remembered madness, an unexplained exception from her normal life" (63). Gwendolen's normal life is acting; the unexplained exception to her normal life is a moment when she suddenly stops acting. In his *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach had noted that fear "inevitably intermingles itself" with primitive religion (154); the conscience is under restraint because doubt, the principle of theoretic wisdom, appears to be a crime to the believer. Also, since the highest idea and the highest existence in religion is God, so the highest crime is doubt in the very existence of God. But as Feuerbach further explains: "… that which I do

not trust myself to doubt, which I cannot doubt without feeling disturbed in my soul, without incurring guilt; that is no matter of theory, but a matter of conscience, no being of the intellect, but of the heart" (154). If Gwendolen's religion is utilitarianism – an egoistic desire for pleasure and happiness – these dramatic surges represent unconscious doubt about her way of life, an ungovernable force that wells up against her will.

The complexity of the above scene reveals that for Gwendolen, selfhood consists of roles within roles. It is difficult to decide when the 'real' Gwendolen appears from underneath her masks. Throughout the novel, mirrors multiply the image of Gwendolen, especially at times of crisis. When she arrives at Grandcourt's house after their wedding, she walks into her private suite and is happy to see "herself repeated in glass panels with all her faint-green satin surroundings" (358). The luxurious, cool surroundings provide the stage scenery that her "girlish dreams" have always included (357). A few minutes later, however, when Grandcourt's diamonds are sent to her with the bitter letter from Lydia Glasher, she is paralyzed in another fit of terror. Once again her image of herself is shattered by a surprise she cannot fit into her conception of herself. George Eliot returns to the multiple images of Gwendolen in the mirrors around the room: "She could not see the reflections of herself then: they were like so many women petrified white …." (359). Mirrors reflect Gwendolen's image of herself, except when she is too shocked to look at it. She goes from one shock to her self-image to another, each time restoring her sense of self by reconstructing, as best she can, a new fiction. Like the egoists Hetty and Rosamond, Gwendolen must keep lowering her expectations. Each shock produces a more chastened fiction, a more chastened image of herself.

When Grandcourt walks in and finds his new wife paralyzed in her chair with his diamonds strewn around the floor, Gwendolen begins to scream hysterically. George Eliot's narrator provides both the question Grandcourt asks himself – "Was it a fit of madness?" – and the affirmative answer – "In some form or other the Furies had crossed his threshold" (359). Grandcourt uses the language of madness much as Mrs. Cadwallader does in *Middlemarch*, to signify his disapproval of another's behaviour. When Lydia Glasher tells him she will not give up the diamonds, Grandcourt says: "Of course, if you like, you can play the mad woman" (350), and then, "what is the use of talking to mad people" (351)? Grandcourt dislikes Gwendolen's "carrying on" (398) with Daniel Deronda in public, so he tells her: "Oblige me in future by not showing whims like a mad woman in a play" (446). What strikes the "fastidious egoism" (278) of Grandcourt as madness will hardly qualify as such, yet Gwendolen's growing isolation becomes a kind of madness: "After every new shock of humiliation she tried to adjust herself and seize her old supports – proud concealment, trust in new excitements that would make life go by without much thinking …." (423). She conceals her miseries from her family, friends, and, as much as possible, from Grandcourt. By the time Grandcourt takes Gwendolen yachting in the Mediterranean, her ideal web has become a prison. The narrator says that Gwendolen "is at the very height of her entanglement in those fatal meshes which are woven within more closely than without …" (668).

Disillusionment in George Eliot's fiction often takes the form of seeing the world as having changed for the worse. Not surprisingly, enlightenment or conversion takes the form of seeing the world as having changed for the better. Heroines

like Romola, Esther Lyon, and Dorothea Brooke needed a confessor, a mentor, to help them convert to a better role, from a private vision to a public vision. What Gwendolen too needs is a new way to interpret her world, a new candle for the pier-glass of her life. Throughout the growing misery of her marriage, Gwendolen's only hope of rescue has been Daniel Deronda. From the first time she sees him watching her in the gambling casino at Leubronn, Gwendolen thinks that Daniel has an "evil eye" for her (10). As her marriage turns into a nightmare, she believes more and more that Deronda offers some sort of rescue from the distorted view of the world Grandcourt enforces on her: "[Gwendolen's] hidden helplessness gave fresh force to the hold Deronda had from the first taken on her mind, as one who had an unknown standard by which he judged her. Had he some way of looking at things which might be a new footing for her ...." (430)? The narrator describes Gwendolen's feelings about Daniel, for example, as the reverence one has for a priest: "Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest ..." (430). Through Deronda's guidance, she admits her own faults: "I am selfish. I have never thought much of any one's feelings, except my mother's. I have not been fond of people" (450). His advice for her is the moral advice of the novel:

"Look on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action – something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot." (446)

Deronda perceives that what Gwendolen needs is "the higher, the religious life, which holds enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities". She must transform herself from a self-pleasing character into a self-sacrificing character. Deronda sermonizes: "The few may find themselves in it simply by an elevation of feeling; but for us who have to struggle for our wisdom, the higher life must be a region in which the affections are clad with knowledge" (451). Eliot's conception of religion is at this point something other than organized religion. It means a self-sacrificing, dutiful life. Eliot hopes we can all be better people by learning from others, and in turn, giving them comfort and guidance. Even if we are simply good listeners, that is an invaluable service for some. At her most desperate moment, sitting in the yacht with Grandcourt and wrestling with her hatred for her husband and her evil desires, Gwendolen holds to the thought of Deronda as her only hope: "She clung to the thought of Deronda: she persuaded herself that he would not go away while she was there – he knew that she needed help. The sense that he was there would save her from acting out the evil within" (681). Although she does not end up murdering Grandcourt, she is plagued with guilt when he dies, thinking she could have tried a bit harder to save him, saying: "I did kill him in my thoughts" (695). Deronda comforts her, but does not turn to theology in his comfort; instead, he turns to Gwendolen's actions in the world: "I believe that you may become worthier than you have ever yet been – worthy to lead a life that may be a blessing" (700). Thus, Gwendolen's redemption and change has been through human means – through Deronda's sympathy and love. In fact, Eliot admits as much: "In this way our brother may be in the stead of God to us, and his opinion which has pierced even to the joints and marrow, may be our virtue in the making"

(763). When Deronda comforts her for the last time before leaving, and tells her that she could be "among the best of women" (769), his words have a spiritual effect:

"The words were like the touch of a miraculous hand to Gwendolen. Mingled emotions streamed through her frame with a strength that seemed the beginning of a new existence, having some new power or other which stirred in her vaguely… So potent in us is the infused action of another soul, before which we bow in complete love." (769)

But even now, Gwendolen cannot separate the spiritual from the human: " … the new existence seemed inseparable from Deronda" (769). He seems to be the kind of redeeming Christ of Eliot's religion: "Persons attracted him … in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence" (324). He is responsible for not only Gwendolen's renewed faith, but also Mirah's. The latter tells Mrs. Meyrick the story of almost drowning herself and, in the last lines, links Deronda's person to her own faith: "Faith came to me again: I was not forsaken. He told you how he found me" (223)? David Carroll points out that Deronda becomes each of the three persons of the Trinity for Gwendolen: he is her judge, then shares her guilt and crucifixion, and then leaves her but promises to always be with her. Mrs. Meyrick even chides her son for "… always taking Mr. Deronda's name in vain" (728). And Mordecai himself takes on the role of God, as the one who foresees the prophetic vision which finds its incarnation in Deronda. He says to Deronda: "You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow. You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages" (500).

At the end of the novel, urging Gwendolen to look for new duties in her life, Deronda says that if she can be selfless enough to keep looking for "newly-opening needs" then she will find her "life growing like a plant" (769). The organic metaphor is ironic because George Eliot's narrator has, from the very beginning, spoken of Gwendolen as rootless, and her acting supports a self not at all organically centered. The gap between Deronda's advice and Gwendolen's ability to follow it may account for Gwendolen's powerful reaction when Daniel leaves her for the last time:

When he was quite gone, her mother came in and found her sitting motionless. "Gwendolen, dearest, you look very ill," she said, bending over her and touching her cold hands.

"Yes, mamma. But don't be afraid. I am going to live," said Gwendolen, bursting out hysterically. (806)

Gwendolen's symptoms here are the same as in her earlier fits of dread when she played Hermione and when she received Lydia Glasher's letter: a cold, death-like paralysis followed by hysterical shrieking when she is touched. After a day and a half of such shrieking, at the end of the novel, Gwendolen wakes up in the morning in a calmer state and tells her mother that she will live, that she will "be better" (807). As with the calm mornings that follow Hetty's and Dorothea's nights of suffering over shattered illusions, Gwendolen has somehow managed to reconstruct a fiction to live by. It is a chastened fiction, of course, and its value is never tested in the novel. George Eliot does not offer a 'Finale' to follow up Gwendolen's resolve and to see if she is successful. At the end of the novel, Gwendolen's 'cure' remains a very open question.

That Daniel does not 'cure' Gwendolen more definitively – say, by the conventional last-chapter marriage – is especially disturbing to the symmetry of *Daniel Deronda*. Structurally, they seem similar to Adam and Dinah in *Adam Bede*, whose patterns of development lead them to a marriage that unites the novel and reunites the novel's pastoral community. Such a 'happy ending' does not occur in *Daniel Deronda*, of course, much to the displeasure of some of the novel's readers, and also to the displeasure of Sir Hugo within the novel. Sir Hugo thinks that Daniel and Gwendolen would make a "neatly prepared marriage" (764). Perhaps the effect is similar to the possible effect on Adam Bede if Dinah had, after all, married Seth Bede, a man from within her sect, and Adam had been left alone at the end of the novel. The possibility of a match between Daniel and Gwendolen is strongly felt in the novel by Daniel himself: "… if all this had happened little more than a year ago, he would hardly have asked himself whether he loved her: the impetuous determining impulse which would have moved him would have been to save her from sorrow, to shelter her life for evermore from the dangers of loneliness …" (765).

What has intervened is Daniel's new identity, his discovery of his Jewish origins and his dedication to the dream of a Jewish nation in the Middle East. As a vocation, this dream satisfies Daniel's quest throughout the novel for origins and community. This quest is Daniel's personal pilgrimage at first, the religious overtones of which are clear when the narrator says that for Daniel, "the words Father and Mother had the altar-fire in them ..." (469). Eventually his quest also becomes a communal quest, one that seeks to unify past and future in a vision of community that cannot be realized in England. In

Adam Bede, Methodism is the alternative that calls the community of the novel into question, although its radical inwardness is eventually absorbed into the community. In *Daniel Deronda*, however, Daniel's Judaism provides an alternative to the community of England itself, an alternative that cannot be absorbed into English national life. Methodism offers conversion to anyone, so joining the alternative community is relatively easy. Judaism, however, requires a historical-genetic link to the form of community it offers. This is why Gwendolen must make do with Daniel's advice, not his companionship. She cannot follow him on his pilgrimage. The Meyricks originally think about trying to convert Mirah to Christianity, but, as Mab exclaims: "How can an ugly Christian, who is always dropping her work, convert a beautiful Jewess, who has not a fault" (362)? Even when Deronda falls in love with Mirah and knows it is futile because she will never marry anyone who is not a Jew, conversion is not an option. Conversion, which is only a spiritual act, necessitates some kind of theological space, spiritual presence. And it is not a possibility in *Daniel Deronda* because spirituality has been transformed into the material world of human relations, as I have shown in my analysis of Gwendolen's renewal.

In a discussion about the differences between Judaism and Christianity, Mirah announces: "But I could not make myself not a Jewess … even if I changed my belief" (375). This adds some clarity to Eliot's choice of Judaism, for Judaism is not only a religion but also a heritage, a race. When Mrs. Meyrick suggests that if Jews kept changing their religion, making no difference between themselves and Christians, "there would come a time when there would be no Jews to be seen" (375), Mirah takes that statement as the first unkind thing

that Mrs. Meyrick had ever said to her. Judaism is something material, and therefore something that cannot be changed simply by changing belief. When doctrine (even human doctrine) fills theological space, it limits spiritual possibilities. Eliot admired the family bonds that characterize Judaism. Amanda Anderson points out that Mirah, rather than a religious model, "represents what Deronda comes to recognize and avow: the importance of a deeply felt connection to family and culture" (George Eliot and the Jewish Question 53). She is extremely conscious of her Jewishness, and despite an acknowledged ignorance of its tenets, she is loyal to her roots and follows the religion as best as she can. She is alive to the family connection and feels closer to her absent kin. Her "religion was of one fibre with her affections" (*Daniel Deronda* 364). When we meet Mordecai, he quickly displaces Mirah as the most devout. He is fully absorbed in his Hebrew origins, waiting eagerly for a disciple who can carry on his work. All the Jews are devout (except Daniel's mother and Mirah's father, who are essentially villains). Sympathy with the Jewish race becomes a virtue, and renunciation becomes a flaw. My argument is that Eliot, in *Daniel Deronda*, transforms theology into the material world in the form of the Jewish tradition because it is a religion which is not only grounded in history and community, but also a religion willing to transform its doctrinal beliefs as its history progresses.

Feuerbach blames theology – what he calls "religion contemplating itself" – for concealing the simple, "reflexive" relation of man and his religion. Theology denies that the real content of the divine nature is human nature. Theology "fancies its object, its ideas to be superhuman", says Feuerbach, and to defend the superhuman status of the divine nature, theology

separates God's existence from His human attributes (*Essence* 11). Theology claims that God is pure existence, pure being, to which attributes are accidental or unnecessary. The human qualities attributed to God represent only man's imperfect attempts to describe God's ineffable nature. Feuerbach argues, however, that such a supernatural mode of existence is impossible or irrelevant except as a logical exercise: "… that which has no predicates or qualities, has no effect upon me; that which has no effect upon me has no existence for me. To deny all the qualities of a being is equivalent to denying the being itself" (12). For Feuerbach, then, there can be no supernatural ground of being, no God, except one created by man. Eliot follows Feuerbach's notion that freeing religion from theology actually restores it to its "true original form" (22). By turning what was once a religious theological system into a material, political reality, Eliot transforms theology into something purely secular in the novel. Felicia Bonaparte explains Eliot's belief in the distinction between religion and theology; in the theological scheme, "ideals had their existence in God', but in the secular scheme, 'ideals must have material existence or they have no existence at all" (*Morality and Tragedy in George Eliot's Novels* 39). Since Jews have been able to separate religion and theology, they had been able to hold on to their faith and transmit their heritage. The vision Mordecai has for his people is political:

"I say that the effect of our separateness will not be completed and have its highest transformation unless our race takes on again the character of a nationality. That is the fulfillment of the religious trust that moulded them into a people, whose life has made half the inspiration of the world … Then our race shall have an organic centre, a heart

and brain to watch and guide and execute …" (*Daniel Deronda* 534-35)

And Deronda's plan at the end, the result of his Jewishness and Mordecai's transmitted vision, the outlet for his spiritual impulses, is also political:

"I am going to the East to become better acquainted with the condition of my race in various countries there … The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre … That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty; I am resolved to begin it, however feebly. I am resolved to devote my life to it." (803)

The way Eliot moves from religious (spiritual, theological) power to political or nationalistic power is explained in the Philosopher's Club scene, in which Eliot speaks theoretically of the dynamics she embodies in the novel. The discussion is built around the idea of nationality, particularly the development of nations. Mordecai articulates Eliot's views on this issue as it relates to Judaism's benefit for the world and provides another reason why she chose Judaism to explore these issues:

"I justify the choice as all other choice is justified, … I cherish nothing for the Jewish nation, I seek nothing for them, but the good which promises good to all the nations … Our national life was a growing light. Let the central fire be kindled again, and the light will reach afar … So will a new Judaea, poised between East and West – a covenant of reconciliation". (803)

The Jewish religion was the seed which will grow into the Jewish nation, which Mordecai foresees will be a light to

the whole world. Haris Meyrick, who falls in love with Gwendolen, wonders why Gwendolen didn't fall in love with him. He admits to himself: "No woman ever wanted to discuss theology with me" (800). The irony here is, of course, that Gwendolen and Deronda never really discuss theology, never consider God's character or the relationship between God and humanity. Their conversations, like the rest of the novel's narrative, only had to do with humanity's potential and how ideals can be worked out in the material world. Whatever divine power we find in the world of Daniel Deronda, it is only an outgrowth of humanity's own identity. Theology is only relevant when transformed into something that is not theological at all.

In acceding to Mordecai's desire, Deronda does not forsake Sir Hugo but goes beyond his conventional ideas. After aiding Gwendolen, he will marry Mirah and head East to help the Jewish people, in a destiny which reconciles East with West and past with present. His Jewish mission relates not to God but to man – the human species. Although his personal relation to Mordecai is based on the mystical Kabbalistic doctrine of the transmigration of souls, Deronda will, significantly, not profess to believe exactly as his Jewish forebears did, but he will maintain his grandfather's notion of "separateness with communication" and make his vocation the restoration or perfecting of the common life of the Jewish people (725). Amanda Anderson agrees that Deronda "persistently acknowledges the benefits accrued by his own displacement", but in a somewhat different sense (*George Eliot and the Jewish Question* 46). Deronda asserts that although he should have been brought up knowing he was a Jew, "it must always have been a good to me to have as wide an

instruction and sympathy as possible" (*Daniel Deronda* 662). Here Deronda explicitly links the wide instruction he received as a cosmopolitan Englishman with the wide sympathy that he developed through this experience. U. C. Knoepflmacher asserts: "To George Eliot, Judaism contains a proportionate combination of the ideal and the actual, the spiritual and the material, the traditional and the progressive. Like the religion of the ministers of the earlier novels, its emphasis is on the secular rather than the abstract ..." (*Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel* 144). This is more to the point. Eliot reconceptualises Judaism in a way closest to her existing philosophy, but though she saw its value, she would not have realistically envisioned its adoption or for it to replace Christianity. "For [Deronda], as to George Eliot, Judaism is an evolutionary faith", so perhaps she saw Judaism as more adaptable (146). The most important thing Judaism gives to Deronda is a sense of tradition. His recovery of an ancestral tradition provides him with a "fixed local habitation to render fellowship real" and makes him "an organic part of social life" (128).

In Feuerbach's analysis, community is not just a way to increase arithmetically the powers of the isolated self. The self must be validated by others – some form of community – to avoid an epistemological crisis that Feuerbach calls madness. Yet any form of community is created by the shared fictions of individuals. Neither self nor community, therefore, is grounded outside itself. In Middlemarch, escape from the local community becomes necessary for the characters of exceptional desire to make a happy ending in their lives and in the novel. Dorothea Brooke, for example, finds happiness in her marriage with Ladislaw and in their lives in the national community of English politics. This new community is

described only sketchily in the 'Finale' of *Middlemarch*, and we are simply told that Dorothea's beneficent influence in her new role is important, though diffusive. *Daniel Deronda* continues to widen the circles of community. The upper-class English society seen in *Daniel Deronda* is more cosmopolitan than that in *Middlemarch*, and not just the community life of a single village or town but the community life of a whole nation seems to be at stake in the novel. Important parts of *Daniel Deronda* are set in Europe, and England's national life is judged as part of European life. George Eliot's last novel might be called a study of national or even international life.

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'Strangenesses' and Selves : The 'Foreigner' in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

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"Strangenesses and Selves" discusses the crisis of identity of transnationals with special focus on Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989). It attempts to study the conflict and split within the immigrant, Jyoti. The paper analyzes conflicting situations confronted by the foreigner using the insights provided by Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991). The paper aims to comprehend the problems of immigrants adapting in alien lands. The processes of adaptation and assimilation in foreign culture lead to several transformations in the identity of a native. The diasporic identity keeps deconstructing and constructing self for progression in foreign lands. This deconstruction and transformation enable the 'foreigner' to attain autonomy.

The paper can be divided into three parts. The first part discusses the process of absorption of otherness in the foreigner with the insights of Kristeva on fugue and origin. It also dwells on the concept of uncanny strangeness to explain the remaking of the autonomous self of Jasmine, the protagonist of Bharti Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. The second part of the paper focuses on the wandering and constant metamorphosis of identity in Jasmine. It also discusses her loss of identity. The paper attempts to understand the disintegration of Jyoti's self and

her subsequent rebirths through the process of renaming in foreign lands. The third part of the paper analyzes Jasmine's sojourn in foreign land as disruption of static and biological notion of otherness to emphasize upon the emancipated and empowered adaptation of the immigrant. It concludes with the finding that Jasmine's strangeness and transformation eliminates the situation of in-betweenness in a foreigner. The acceptance of otherness and strangeness promotes happy living. It enables progression and evolution of self in both the protagonist and the diasporic writer. Jasmine's integration in the host society makes her autonomous. Bharati Mukherjee's integration in the foreign lands enables her to write creatively about transnational experiences. Physical sojourn across borders, in Mukherjee's life and in the lives of her fictive characters, reveal an Indian immigrant's struggle to come to terms with her self.

"I do what they want me to, but it is not "me" - "me" is else where, "me" belongs to no one, "me" does not belong to "me," . . . does "me" exist?" (Kristeva *Strangers to Ourselves* 8)

Immigration uproots 'self' from a family, a country and a language. The economic and political integration of communities due to crossing of borders leads to "new modalities of otherness" (Kristeva 2). Anyone who crosses borders, adopts and adapts to other nation is a foreigner. S/he is split within and bears strangeness and otherness. This split cannot be eliminated by eliminating otherness. The foreigner, believes Julia Kristeva, lives within self. S/he is the hidden face of identity that gets divided between the 'fugue' and the 'origin' and a temporary homeostatis. S/he is like fire that consumes self to shine forth (1-4). The religious and ethical

constructs of a 'foreigner' espouse different human beings as assimilated into the fraternities of the "wise," the "just," or the "native" which Kristeva considers to be "strangenesses" (12). The absorption of othernesses, in the contemporary times, leads the self to discover incoherences and abysses. Kristeva asserts that a subject/self must accept strangeness or foreignness that it experiences in itself to accept the foreignness it confronts from outside (Visker 427).

The foreigner challenges his own identity as well as of the group. Julia Kristeva's *Stranger to Ourselves* explores means of situating oneself with respect to the other to reach autonomy (Myrsiades 174). She explains the concept of foreigner by foregrounding it in Freud's notion of "uncanny strangeness." Kristeva discusses the joys, pains, silences of the outsider using Freud's concept of 'The Uncanny' (1919) (Dobson 83). The modern society transforms self of the outsider. She focuses on the multiplying masks and "false selves" that emerge when one crosses borders. The discomforts of the foreigner manifest as resistance. The foreigner, asserts Kristeva, is never "completely true" nor "completely false" to a single self. The foreigner is capable of tuning to love and aversions to both the borders. S/he becomes confident, happy and headstrong but has no self. His/her empty confidence focuses on the possibilities of becoming others according to the circumstances (8).

Kristeva recognises Freud's contribution "to dissociate the pathological from the strange in the unconscious psyche" and integrates otherness into the self (175). She considers otherness to be a part of the same self. The self isolates from the outside world. It projects out with unpleasant and dangerous

experiences to make itself an alien. It becomes double, uncanny and demonical (183). She perceives foreign as destroyer of the self which opens to something new. She observes:

"The uncanny strangeness allows for many variations: they all repeat the difficulties I have in situating myself with respect to the other and keep going over the course of identification – projection that lies at the foundation of my reaching autonomy." (Kristeva 187)

The foreign, according to Kristeva, turns to catastrophic aspect as one copes and resists in foreign lands. She asserts that murder, paranoia and violence precede the remaking of selves in the foreigners.

Freudian notion of self, observes Kristeva, is "a strangeland of borders and othernesses ceaselessly constructed and deconstructed" (191). Foreignness and a resistance to it disintegrate self which leads to uncanny strangeness. The protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* reveals this strangeness in self. Jasmine observes, "There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves – in the images of dreams" (29). Kristeva's discussion on crisis of social structures that transforms the ideological limits of the subject also leads to Bakhtinian concept of wild carnival (Myrsiades 176). The transformation brings the uncanny out in the subject/ foreigner. Uncanny situations mark the return of the repressed. All those things which should have remained hidden come to light in situation to reveal the uncanniness of a character/subject. The uncomfortable private self comes to public, when the border stops operating (Visker 429).

As strangeness and uncanniness get related to the otherness in a character, it defies definitions. Self/identity bears traces of exteriority/otherness that cannot be fully interiorized. Selfhood, thus, cannot be without foreignhood. Bharati Mukherjee writes :

"Bud calls me Jane. Me Bud, you Jane . . . Calamity Jane.Jane as in Jane Russell, not Jane as in Plain Jane. But Plain Jane is all I want to be. Plain Jane is a role, like any other. My genuine foreignness frightens him . . . It frightens me, too." (*Jasmine* 26)

The other is the small difference or aporia which is involved in construction of self. This difference is a presence that characterisesuncanniness in a foreigner (Visker 433, 437-438). The problem of the foreigners, according to Kristeva, is their incapacity to recognize strangeness within. Solidarity with the foreigner allows the foreign within one's self. As one opens to the strange/foreign, the divide between natives (autochtonous) and foreigners (allochtonous) can be overcome. The foreigner within self is the other within the self. The foreign within the self has the capacity to give birth to both the best and the worst in a person. Consequently, the self is either an acceptance or a negation of the otherness and strangeness (Visker 428). The foreign and self must have mutual respect for borders which signals inner extraterritoriality. Foreign, according to Kristeva, is the unconscious "fearful, empty and impossible" (192). This discomforting strangeness has a homeopathic function. This difference in self becomes a precondition for living with the difference outside (Visker 428).

The foreigner borrows the tongue and takes root in a nation but remains aloof. He tries resisting the chaos brought

by changes. He turns hard and finds himself in more than a country. The fusion consumes and annihilates him. It gives him a feeling that he belongs to nowhere (Kristeva 9-10). The protagonist of Jasmine, Jane, Jasmine, Jyoti – the name depends on the "Christian conscience of strangers" – remarks : "My third eye glows, a spotlight trained on lives to come. This isn't a vision to share with Bud. He is happy. And I am happy enough" (Mukherjee 21). The foreigner in the host country is torn by conflicts. S/he is "incorrigibly curious" for meetings and parties that nourish his or her memory. The moment of cosmopolitanism soothes him and lets him forget differences. According to Kristeva the foreigner feels emancipated due to lost of the bonding with his own people (12). His absolute freedom and solitude make him long for affiliation. On the border between himself and others, the foreigner attempts to knock himself in order to assert. He becomes solid, harsh and starts enjoying "perverse pleasure" (13). Alienation, in the foreigner, thus results in split identity, "kaleidoscope of identities" (14). The foreigner enjoys perversity as well as chooses the realm of silence. Cosmopolitanism gives an individual an artificial and sublimated self out of which the old self keeps resonating. As the new self readies for apprenticeships, at all ages, within the speech of others and assimilation, it gets stuck within polymorphic mutism. Instead of saying, the foreigner attempts doing (house cleaning, jogging, getting pregnant) and remains mute (16). When the foreigner does not utter his conflict, he takes root in his own world of a rejected person. The 'rooted' one is deaf to the conflict and the 'wanderer' is walled by conflict. These two seem peacefully coexisting in an immigrant to hide an abysmal world (17).

The immigrants wear several masks of sexual, national, political and professional identity (Kristeva 18-19). They get 'intoxicated' with independence and even challenge 'parental overbearance' (21). As they do so, the immigrants reflect a loss of self. They erect a new life which is like a "fragile mausoleum" integrated with thoughts of past (natives, relatives and language) (22). They invent a foreigner in themselves by being paranoid or perverse. The loss of consciousness and depersonalization starts getting permanent in such selves (25). Exile, believes Kristeva, shatters the former body. The lack of reins of maternal tongue and tearing oneself away from family in order to settle down elsewhere is accompanied by sexual frenzy (31). The immigrant/foreigner who learns a new language is capable of audacities and obscenities. The verbal constructs of the liberated and loquacious foreigner are dissociated from both body as well as passion. S/he remains silent on his/her drives. The foreigner utters indecencies because "his unconscious shelters itself on the other side of the border" (32). This is revealed by Bharati Mukherjee in *Jasmine*. The protagonist, Jyoti Vijh, "in a different city," remarks : "Bud wants me to marry him, "officially," he says, before the baby comes. People assume we're married. He is a small town banker, he's not allowed to do impulsive things. I'm less than half his age, and very foreign" (*Jasmine* 7).

Memory, wandering and instability repeat the evergoing metamorphosis or polymorphy of identities. The whirlwind of wandering shatters the origin in the lives of the immigrants and translates it to happiness. As the tears of exile dry up, instability due to migration transmutes into games. For a few foreigners these are void and for others it is happiness. On the contrary solitary exploration through memory and body, holds

Kristeva, can also weld the original and the acquired into mobile and innovative syntheses. The great immigrant scholars or artists are capable of this. By virtue of their belonging to nothing and weightlessness in infinity of cultures, great artists are extravagantly at ease to innovate (Kristeva 32). Kristeva considers multiple identities, ambivalences, divided values, accumulated exiles and untenable memories to be strangenesses which become "an art of living for the happy few or for artists" (38). The writings of Bharati Mukherjee resonate with such scholarship and art of living. The protagonist of Jasmine claims, "In our three and a half years together, I have given Bud a new trilogy to contemplate: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. And he lent me his: Musial, Brock and Gibson" (*Jasmine* 8).

The loss of permanent identity makes the postmodern subject open-ended, variable and problematic. Identity becomes a "moveable feast" which forms and transforms in relation to the surrounding cultural systems (Hall 598). Dislocation unhinges the stable identities of the past, opens up possibility of new articulations, forges new identities and produces new subjects (600). Julia Kristeva observes "The space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 7-8). Cross cultural encounters give rise to hybridity which pose danger to fixed categorization of identity. Post modernists believe that hybridity cause individual to live in a state of uncertainty (Ortega). Diasporic experiences explore the encounter between cultures, languages and people which produce hybridity. This paves away out of binary thinking and permits inscription of agency (for restructuring). Homi Bhabha also sees dislocation as a production condition. He perceives

identity as a process of negotiation and of articulation. The identity of the migrants gets recast in the in-between space. Homi Bhabha posits hybridity in the third space which engenders new possibility. Third space is an ambivalent site that intitiates new signs of identity (Bhabha *The Location of Culture* 1). It brings the conjunction of cultures to translate, negotiate and mediate affinity and difference through the dynamics of exchange. Third space enables rearticulation and negotiation for future re-invention of selves. The migrants who experience nostalgia, rootlessness, alienation and double consciousness are called expatriate. One who reroots, assimilates and replants himself in the new soil is referred to as an immigrant. As the immigrants assimilate in the new country and culture, they liberate themselves from the restrictions of parent culture to reconstruct identities. The shift from exile to migrant challenges the binary logic of here and there. Displacement and dislocation thus brings a radical shift in the sensibility and identity of migrant. The ambivalences in self perception, resistances and subversion of the cultural codes of both the home and host societies mark the narratives of the diasporic writers (Mardorossian 15-17).

Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian born Canadian/American novelist. The second of three daughters of Sudhir Lal and Bina Mukherjee, Bharati Mukherjee graduated from University of Calcutta in 1959. After her Masters Degree in English and Ancient Indian Culture from Baroda, Mukherjee moved to University of Iowa. Split into loyalty to two cultures, she married Clark Baise, a Canadian writer. Mukherjee immigrated to Canada in 1968 where she faced several problems. As a postmodern writer, the life of South Asian expatriates and the dilemma of acculturation are her foremost concerns (Soderberg

1-3). Her diasporic writings focus on the effect of immigration on identity. She engages with transnational experiences of women immigrants in her novels. Mukherjee depicts the complex process of identity formation and emancipation of self from the constraints of conventional society in the novel *Jasmine* (1989). Her female characters are autobiographical projections of her own experience as an expatriate. She represents the contemporary woman's struggle to define herself, to attain autonomous selfhood in cross cultures in the globalized world. She endeavours to present the distorted (uncanny) psyche of immigrant women who survive the conflict of traditional values and fascination for Western life in foreign lands. Mukherjee's writings include *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Darkness* (1985), *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1986), *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011).

The Tiger's Daughter is a fictionalized account of Mukherjee's own initial years of marriage and her return to home. The protagonist in this novel, Tara Banerjee, is caught between two worlds. *Days and Nights in Calcutta* reveals the lingering of the past and separation of cultures experienced by Mukherjee. Dimple, the protagonist of Wife, tries to reconcile cultural barriers but lacks inner strength and courage to survive the conflict. She fails to make a transition from one culture to other (Soderberg 4-5). Jasmine metamorphoses in alien culture. She exhibits strangnesses as a foreigner but discovers inner strength to move on courageously in America. Mukherjee interweaves the lives of three Indian born upper class sisters in *Desirable Daughters.* The novel explores the

diasporic experiences of Tara, the protagonist, who is more uprooted from her native culture than her two sisters. It registers her sense of alienation, lack of belongingness and fragmented identity. It does not describe her nostalgia. Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* also celebrate the process of gain that occurs after migration to foreign lands rather than the case of loss of culture. The protagonists, in these novels, journey from expatriation to immigration. They also move from strangeness to familiarity and from alienation to adoption and assimilation (Singh 62-63). Tara, as conservative Bengali girl, absorbs the vitality of the west and subverts every code of Indian tradition. American society provides her with those opportunities that Indian society denies to her. Divorce and solitariness make her sexually adventurous. She adjusts herself in the host country for survival. Like Jasmine, Tara also gets liberal. She believes, "Sometimes, bishey bish khai, the only antidote for power is poison" (*Desirable Daughters* 304). Tara is more like Jasmine in accepting the changes and reconstructing self. Mukherjee's fiction, therefore, celebrates the fluid identities of immigrant women characters. These characters move from aloofness of expatriation to exuberance of immigration.

Bharati Mukherjee articulates her movement from expatriation to immigrant in her fictional creation. She describes the new immigrant fiction as "stories of broken identities and discarded languages" (*Darkness* 3). Mukherjee is aware of the differences and similarities of expatriate and immigrant identities. She also writes about her transformation from an expatriate to an immigrant. According to Mukherjee immigration is the act of adopting new citizenship, "going the full nine yards of transformation" ("Imagining Homelands"

216). The overlap and displacement of past and present culture of diasporas makes them cultural hybridist. Hence, immigrant becomes a holder of hybridist multiple identities. The reconstitution of a coherent sense of self in the protagonist is central to the writings of Bharati Mukherjee. The narratives of Mukherjee reflect cultural encounters, difference and the will to change in the female characters. These characters undergo transformation that culminates in achieving autonomous subjectivity and self understanding. Mukherjee's fictional works reveal a distinctive identity attained in a place/ space by the protagonist that emerges due to the intersection and interaction of cultures. Identities in the transnational sphere get characterised by high modernity after reterritorialization (Gupta 8-9). The representation of such spaces and identities reveal break, ruptures and disjunction. Identities in such space become "naturally" discontinuous as these are the starting points of contact, conflict and contradiction of societies and cultures (6).

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* (1989) belongs to that creative phase which is termed as Phase of Immigration. In this novel Mukherjee unravels the odyssey of Jasmine, the protagonist, from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. Her struggle in these places lead to many transformations in her. The narrative shuttles between past and present, between India and America. Jasmine's transformation from Jyoti to Jane begins from the small village of Hasnapur, Punjab with her marriage to Parkash Vijh to Baden in Iowa in a live in companionship with Bud Ripplemeyer (a banker). "Widowhood and exile" is prophesized for her by a village astrologer (*Jasmine* 3). The cursed and hapless village girl,

Jyoti becomes Jasmine, a city woman after marrying Prakash (Kumar 107-109).

Jyoti identifies herself with Prakash'swishes – who wants to secure admission in America. Prakash falls a prey to the Khalsa Lions (rebels demanding separate land for Sikhs) and Jasmine is heart broken. This tragedy does not deter her from reaching America. She plans to burn herself a "Sati" on the campus of the engineering college in America. Jasmine leaves for America on forged papers. Estranged by uncertainties and with no clue about future, Jasmine's first encounter with America is through violence. She travels to the New World on a shrimper called "The Gulf Shuttle." The ugly captain of the ship, Half-Face, makes an indecent proposal to Jasmine. He outrages the modesty of an Indian widow. This makes Jasmine revenge her dishonour not by killing herself but by destroying the devil who rapes her. She assumes the perfect vengeful image of goddess Kali (by slicing her tongue and let blood ooze) and kills Half-Face (Kumar 109-110). As Half-face's blood congeals on her body, Jasmine walks "death, Death Incarnate" (*Jasmine* 119). This epistemic violence and killing of Half-Face becomes a life-affirming transformation and a kind of self assertion in Jasmine. She ponders over this and says, "For the first time in my life I understood what evil was about. It was about not being human" (116). After this violent encounter, Jasmine starts her journey afresh " without food and money. On Lillean Gordon's encouragement Jasmine proceeds to New York for a job. The dishonour and murkiness around do not deter Jyoti from moving forward in her mission. She breaks off the past, shuttles between identities and becomes new (77).

Jasmine always remembers the words of her deceased husband who had once stopped her regressing into "feudal" Jyoti (by the thought of jumping into a well if Prakash left her) (Jasmine 92). Whenever she is grief-striken, Jasmine is reminded of Prakash's exhortations. The feudal is dead and Prakash's Jasmine keep's "moving on to planes" (96). She survives the absurdities and keeps moving. She starts believing that her grandmother may have named her "Jyoti, Light, but in surviving [she is] already Jane, a fighter and adapter" (40). Although her identities and names remain in constant state of flux, Jasmine (self-conscious borderland dweller) undergoes psychological transformation. This transformation stems from resistance to the hybrid identities she assumes. Jasmine embraces self-contradiction and adopts instability of the cultural archetypes. This instability enables her to escape the oppressive social identity (Hazenson 6). Jasmine's journey epitomizes the tangled geometry of cultural identity which positively transforms others. She is "reincarnated" multiple times through the roles and names she adopts (8). She adopts American culture but actualizes self through pregnancy and renaming. Her renaming or rebirths map her identity, which is free from social categorization. The psychic violence and murkiness she experiences show the drastic process required "to sever from social categorization to attain personal agency" (9).

Jasmine's reincarnation/renaming to Jane Ripplemeyer expands upon *Jane Eyre*. She does not love Rochester. She lives with Bud. Like Jane Eyre, Jasmine serves as a moral beacon for Rochester. Bud is transformed by his Orientalist interaction with Asia after meeting Jasmine. Bud adopts Du to make up for his past selfishness. In the role of "Jane,"

Jasmine is more dynamic and individualistic. She is caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness. She chooses promise of America (Hazenson 11-13). Earlier as Jasmine, she takes from *Pygmalion* what suits her. Jasmine loses her "I-ness," prescribes to multiple reniscriptions of self and takes rebirth in cultures to nullify boundaries (between America and India) (15). Jasmine resists the ossified stereotype of the feudal Indian wife as well as subverts the West's desire to territorialize her. By doing so, Jasmine reveals her strangeness (Dyal 61). She cannot completely escape her past and becomes a mosaic of selves (Hazenson 25).

Jasmine finds New York to be an "archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens" (*Jasmine* 140). The sight of beggars and migrant doctor working as a taxi driver in New York shocks Jasmine. She tries to get away from the traditional Indianness. She is shocked to discover that Professorji makes a living out of trading in human hair and not by teaching. Unable to bear the austerities of widowhood in Professor ji's house, Jasmine leaves the place to live on her own. She gets a chance to work as a care giver to Duff, the adopted daughter of Wylie and Taylor Hayes, in Manhattan. She assumes a new identity of Jase. In this role begins her assimilation and acculturation. She enjoys the affectionate behaviour of her employers and is financially independent. Jasmine is enchanted by Taylor's life style. She stays with Taylor's American family for two years. She admires the American world and is half-way transformed. "Jyoti was now a sati – goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-can-funeral pyre behind a boarded up motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for the future, . . .Jase went to movies and lived for today" (176). She becomes a confident person through assimilation into the alien culture. No one forces her to change

herself. She wants to change herself because she feels it coward to "bunker one self inside nostalgia" (185). It is due to the kindness of Lillian Gordon, Kate and Taylor who treat Jasmine as an intelligent person that she blooms into adventurous Jase.

In Baden (Iowa), Jasmine works for Bud Ripplemeyer, the banker. She transforms from Jase to Jane – as Bud calls her. She lives with Bud without marrying him. Jasmine observes "I have had a husband for each of the women I have been Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane, Half-Face for Kali "(*Jasmine* 197). Jasmine's foreignness fascinates Bud. When Bud is crippled, Jasmine does not desert him. She, as Jane, takes all the duties of a wife and serves Bud. Though she gets pregnant, Jane does not marry Bud. With adopted children and pregnancy, Jane reveals herself as fully assimilated to American family life. Finally Jasmine leaves Bud for Taylor and Duff. She is not remorseful on leaving Bud. As she survives the worst in American life, Jasmine feels free like an American to choose her place in Taylor's life.

Jasmine's sojourn becomes an extended metaphor for a struggle to come to terms with one's self. She rejects fixed identities which are "other" – knowable and visible. Mukherjee's representation of Jasmine disrupts the biological notion of identity by challenging static notions of otherness. Jasmine accepts American space but articulates it for individualism, emancipation and empowerment to adapt to the game of survival (Chakraborty 199-200). She "re-positions the stars" (*Jasmine* 240). She reinvents herself. She draws the best from Indian culture and family values as a "care-giver, recipe-giver and preserver" in America (215). The mute Jyoti and tongueless Kali find a voice in Jasmine. The selves of

Jasmine and Jane blend 'wants and dreams' into 'possibilities and realities.' The three stages of development of Jasmine and the mosaic of selves created in the process of her evolution delineate a movement from self-denial to self-realization. Jasmine's transition from one culture to the other gives her the "formative and normative impulses" to reproduce her identity (Czaplicka 128). Both the communicative and collective memories direct Jasmine to adapt for survival.

Jasmine's journey and transformation truly encapsulate Kristeva's Freudian utopia of a world where one lives in peace with others. Her existentialist alienation or estrangement from the world or culture she inhabits brings Jasmine in "close contact with everyday . . . the realness of everyday life" (Friedrich 32). She spends most of time developing selves of others in the role of wife and mother with a little time to develop her potential self. The recognition and acknowledgement of self as an other, deprived of rights makes little room for change (33). Jasmine integrates herself in the host society and brings transformation for self realization and autonomy. Jasmine brings out Mukherjee's understanding of strangeness which enables progression and evolution of self. It also reveals Mukherjee's integration as a foreigner with an ability to write creatively in a language of the host society. Such integration eliminates in-betweenness that leads to nostalgia and unhappiness. The understanding and acceptance of otherness and embracing strangeness within promotes emotional health for happy living (37). The recognition of otherness and strangeness enables the foreigner to accept multiplicity of selves in the cosmopolitan culture.

Writing has a liberating effect on the diasporic writer who is enmeshed among his place of origin and place of exile. The multivoiced migrant novel expresses an 'open' indeterminate text of non- Writing authoritative reading (Boehmer 243). According to Ashcroft:

"The diasporic production of cultural meanings occurs in many areas . . . but writing is one of the most interesting and strategic ways in which diaspora might disrupt the binary of local and global and problematize national, racial and ethnic formulations of identity. (*The Empire Writes Back* 218)

Mukherjee develops multiple consciousness in Jasmine. Jasmine is neither unified nor hybrid but fragmented. She undergoes indeterminate multiplicity. This multiplicity which is contradictory leaves the character in uncertainty about her identities. She becomes capable of existing, not as unified individual but as many. She is not bound by borders. She is capable of inventing identities through infinite possibilities. Physical mobility of Jasmine heightens her spiritual or psychological sense of alienation from the places she moves between. In existential terms the world appears absurd and indifferent to her needs. But she feels like an outsider and keeps inventing her identity.

Foreignness and strangeness mark the metamorphosis of *Jasmine* in the narrative. Taylor, remarks Jasmine, never scours and sanitizes the foreignness in her (Mukherjee 185). The transition in her is a personal change for reassertion. Jasmine attempts to be autonomous by accepting the foreigner within her. The uncanny strangeness in the foreigner, Jasmine, depersonalizes her to take up "infantile desires and fears of the other " the other of death, the other of woman, the other of

uncontrollable drive" (Kristeva 191). Jasmine, the other (owing to her womanhood), detects othernesses, strangenesses and foreignness within her on crossing borders. The detection of foreignness and othernesses ceaselessly constructs and deconstructs Jasmine to maintain the positive aspect of being a stranger (Friedrich 27-28). This recognition of the foreigner within self spares detestation and increases tolerance to differences outside as well as within. The disintegration of Jasmine in the foreign land gives her the courage to accept the strangeness inside and outside to move on in the cosmopolitan culture.

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Anita Desai's *Voices in the City*: A Discourse of the Postcolonial Modernity

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The writing of Anita Desai begins to take birth at a time when the earth is in its fully-matured postmodern shape. Desai could neither shut her eyes to the aura of the multi-faced and multi-dimensional postmodern waves and write back about the traditional beauty of nature and generosity and magnanimity of human race, nor could she go unaffected by the sharp whack and bang of postmodernity. Desai tries to measure the epochal changes the postmodern brought over the human race and its habitats. She captures the real colors of human psyche that get distorted and vandalized in the postmodern era and observes the human hearts very neatly at a very close distance. She survives the poison of the postmodern because she struggles to maintain all the tunes of its dances merging into the darkness of the postmodern with her own distinguishable luminosity of identity.

The postmodern begins to engulf the earth during the mid-twentieth century, and it is the West that experiences its first drops. It reaches the East later and Anita Desai is among the first from this part to sense its impact. After surviving the two Great World Wars, the west sees the human approaching towards loneliness and alienation, depression and hopelessness, doubt and unfaithfulness, and that leads to

challenge the legacy of traditional values and beliefs. It changes the way people look at everything offering new meaning and significance to it. It changes the direction of the human journey to something that is marked with quest for identity, search for meaning of life but only ending with emptiness, nothingness, meaninglessness. People see everything as vague, impure, and untrustworthy. The whole habitat of human race turns into a dystopia that contaminates all the beings in it. Philosophers come up with new ideas and creeds to re-define the earth and its beings; writers repudiate the traditional way of looking and emerge with new artistries and approaches to paint the distorted human psyche.

Apart from the burden of the postmodern traumas, Desai experiences the laceration of the postcolonial legacy that infected a lasting wound on the civilization of Indian subcontinent from which India hardly recovered till date. The postmodern cry for freedom for the marginalized sections of the society is another fact that shapes Desai's writing, which emerged in the form of different movements - feminism, Human Rights movements, and so on. Like Margaret Atwood, Desai feels the need of voices for the hitherto un-noticed feelings of female hearts; like Virginia Woolf, she unbinds the flows of human conscious; like Toni Morrison she dissects different family relations and makes them aware of their status in that family and society. In the present chapter we discuss Desai's novel *Voices in the City* (1965) and show how the novel projects a dystopia of the discorded family relationship, a dystopia of torn marriage life, a dystopia of unsuitable waste land.

The novel tells the story of middle-class intellectuals in Calcutta and paints a picture of 'the cross-currents of changing

social values' that came after the uprooting of the British colonial legacy and the arrival of the postmodern upheavals. It is a family drama of four members and narrates their sweet and sour feelings for one another. Nirode is the brother of two sisters Amla and Monisha who are each living separately from their mother. The novel divides into four parts that are named after the three siblings and their mother. The first part 'Nirode' portraits the struggles of some educated adults in the fast-changing modernity and delineates the failure of Nirode to ensure a mental and social sustainability. He loses belief in the traditional inheritance of ancestral property and tries to see his surrounding on his own. He does not like others to pose their ideas upon him. He works as an editor in a magazine but finds it impossible for him to continue this. He thinks this job quite impersonal bereft of any personal involvement. In the end he runs into delusion and disappointment. The second part 'Monisha' unravels the failure of the modern society to arrange and sustain a compatible marriage life. Monisha is married to Jiban and continues to live in Calcutta with her husband and in-laws. She finds no one in this city compatible for her company and tears contacts with the world and lives in her own world of loneliness and alienation. She finds no one in her husband's house who can hear the inner voice of her heart. Her marriage was a failure which was arranged on the terms of money and property. And at last she ends her life in suicide. The third part 'Amla' details the character of Amla, the youngest sister, who is, in the beginning, presented as a positive girl, but, in the end, is dejected and disillusioned with her personal relationships. The fourth part 'Mother' presents her vain attempt to unite with her son and daughters.

The very opening of the novel echoes a tone marked with a touch of postmodern anxiety - people hopelessly rushing here and there in search for something they do not really know. The story opens with an account of a railway platform, where Nirode came to give farewell to his friend Arun who was leaving for London and where he noticed people rushing here and there with nervousness and anxiety on their faces. "On the platform people loitered in various attitudes of nervousness, impatience and regret…and latecomers pounding along with baggage wobbling and disintegrating in the seemingly hopeless search for the right carriage"(VC 7). The journey of these men in train symbolically turns a journey of life that has no visible and concrete destination. Nirode thinks people are in their search for something that cannot be really achieved on this meaningless earth. He does not find any hope in their journey. Nirode possesses some awareness of the hopelessness of people's vain journey and struggle. He thinks "that this is no actual journey but a nightmare one in which one is unable to start". There is nothing actuality in this journey but a vain attempt to gratify the human queries that ends in crushing on grounds with hopelessness and disillusionment. Nirode says:

"I'd never go, David, I never shall… I hesitate. That's my undoing - this lack of faith and this questioning. I just stand and watch the train rush off, leaving me behind like a ghost in a bloody nightmare." (Desai 39)

Unlike Vladimir and Estragon in Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, who are in total disillusion of their journey and destination, Nirode thinks he would rather not start the vain journey. He is dead with the meaningless journey of life and "what he wanted was shadows, silence, stillness… that is

exactly what he would always be left with" (VC 10). This is not Nirode, an individual who desires silence, stillness and shadows, but the whole human race that are infected with the virus of modern diseases are in search for this. Vladimir and Estragon start an endless journey or rather a waiting for their fate to be opened by an unknown authority. Their journey or waiting results in nothingness and ends with the message that life is really meaningless. Nirode is also a traveler who thinks that he has to travel alone. He converses with his friend David: "you and I will always be travelers, David and we'll always travel alone" (VC 90). But like Vladimir and Estragon who could never determine their minds whether to stay or move away, Nirode moves back and says: 'I haven't even begun yet'.

Nirode finds no solace or sense in the life's journey: "unfair, life is unfair - and how faint and senseless it sounded in that tumult of traffic and commerce" (VC 9-10). This is no more a holy journey of Bunyan's Christian, nor a crusade of Arnold's Arthur. As Desai writes:

"He (Nirode) loathed the world that could offer him no crusade, no pilgrimage and he loathed himself for not having the true, unwavering spirit of either within him. There is only this endless waiting, hollowed out by an intrinsic knowledge that there was nothing to wait for." (Desai 63)

Unlike many of the Western writers - Kafka, Becket, Camus - who see life only as an entity filled with 'absurdity' and whose works are quite concerned with the absurd and meaningless journey of humanity with no sign of hopeful attempt to find any meaning and purpose, Desai presents us with characters who possess some instinct and inner inquisitiveness to discover some marks of meaning on the face

of humanity. Nirode, in this novel, when he finds it difficult to reach the human destination through the normal ladder, likes to take a different way: "And since I never was any good to going along with the others, I thought, I would take the other direction and follow failure after failure and reach the bottom of the arc much quicker…" (VC 182). Unlike Willy Loman in Miller's *Death of a Salesman* who after finding himself failed in life ends his life, Nirode, though he knows'it is damned from the start' and 'it's a failure already', confirms:

"I have the spirit to start moving again towards my next failure. I want move from failure to failure to failure, step by step to rock bottom. I want to explore that depth. When you climb a ladder, all you find at the top is space, all you can do is leap off - fall to the bottom. I want to get there without that meaningless climbing…" (Desai 40)

Desai admits to an interviewer:

"I am interested in characters who are not average but have retreated, or have been driven into some extremity of despair and turn against or make a stand against the general current. It is easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, it costs no effort, but those who cannot follow it… know what the demands are, what it costs to meet them." (Anita Desai. Interview.By Yashodhara Dalmia. The Times of India 29 April, 1979:13)

Nirode and Monisha both are detracted from the mainstream of the current but they try to continue even against the current. Regarding Nirode's spirit to find some truth even after several failures, we can quote from Desai's interview where she says:

"Writing is my way of plunging into the depths and exploring this underlying truth. My writing is an effort to discover, underline and convey the significance of things. I must seize upon that incomplete and seemingly meaningless mass of reality around me and try and discover its significance by plunging below the surface and plumbing the depth…" (Desai Interview 1-6)

In the dystopian world of postmodern times, the word 'survive' comes to carry deep significance when each living species is facing threats to life in its own place. Desai doubts the long-believed security and stability of human life. Nirode here is the voice of those doubts and questions about the safety and happiness that are believed to lie in a family, or friendship or any human relationship.People someway turn crazy in searching the ultimate truth of existence. Nirode, while conversing with his friend David, expresses his doubt about the happiness his friend demands to have in his life,and thinks that all cannot reach the happiness: "if we were all to become - happy…The world would come to a stand still and no one would move another step" (VC 93). Nirode who voices the modern anxiety of surviving in this world finds it difficult to manage his life in the changing social values of (post)modern society. He asks a professor of his life's journey and tells him about himself of his queries: "I don't know. How can I survive? It seems hard" (VC 19). Philosophers like Camus who propagate the philosophy that "eternal suffering at least would give us a destiny" (VC 41) seem incapable to provide 'right carriage' to human journey. Nirode regrets: "but we do not have even that consolation and worst agonies come to an end one day"

(VC41). He continues: "happiness and suffering - I want to be done with them, disregard them, see beyond them to the very end" (VC 41).

People in this modern world just exist; they are just breathing and surviving, not living life of humanity. For many this breathing often becomes unbearable insomuch that they give up breathing. Nirode is from those who see the world changing to the destructiveness. "What does it all mean? Why are lives such as these lived? At their conclusion, what solution, what truth falls into the waiting palm of one's hand, the still pit of one's heart?" (VC 120). He rightly feels the threat to the normal survival of humanity. He tells his sister Amla that he is already undergoing difficulty in his survival and that he doubts of others' survival: "surviving! Yes, I'm surviving - I suppose that is just what one would call this state of existing, just breathing and eating and going around with a perpetual head-ache and stomachache"(VC 181). He thinks it "better to leap out of the window and end it all instead of smearing this endless sticky glue of senselessness over the world. Better not to live" (VC 19)

Things that most concern today's literature are death and the fear that crush down the very soul of humanity. The novel presents characters that are chased by the death and fear of total human failure in the meaningless human journey. They are in the fear that the journey they are continuing since their birth may end only in destruction which is accompanied by death. Jit expresses this fear to Amla telling her that she is moving towards the destruction: "you destroy - you destroy yourselves and you destroy that part of others that gets so fatally involved in you. There is - this dreadful attractiveness in your dark ways of thinking and feeling through life towards death"

(VC 174). The love that brings the humanity peace is replaced by the destructive fear - a fear of some unknown threats, a fear that eats up the heart of humanity. Amla says:

"… The vital element that is missing from Nirode and myself - the element of love. And I discover that it is the absence of it that makes us, brother and sister, such abject rebels, such craven tragedians. In place of this love… we possess a darker, fiercer element - fear." (Desai 134)

Monisha's suicide by burning herself in the kitchen makes the postmodern question regarding human survival more valid and intense. Like Nirode she visualizes the emptiness and nothingness that lie at the end of the journey. She shares many ideas with Nirode about the life and the world. When she, after getting married with Jiban, comes to Calcutta, she finds no person or place compatible with her ideas and thinking. She closes up herself and lives a life of her own, a life of loneliness, fear and disappointment. As the day wears on, she loses contact with everyone and descends into loneliness and alienation. Her loneliness is the loneliness of the modern generation; it is the loneliness of the modern people who live life of terror and suffering. Desai says in an interview published in The Massachusetts Review: "the subject of all my books has been what Ortega Y Gasset called "the terror of facing, single-handed, the ferocious assaults of existence" (The Massachusetts Review 1988, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 521-537). Desai writes:

"Slowly she (Monisha) began to realize that in her heart no fountain had spouted and that what he feared was the great empty white distance set between her and this moist, crimson flowering of emotion in the street below." (Desai 236)

The novel ends luridly with Monisha's death exposing the illusory façade of reality. Monisha and Nirode realize that the earth is no longer the heaven for man's living which people used to believe. Monisha hailed from Darjeeling and came to Calcutta to find a better life. She got married here to Jiban. After her marriage she could not settle mentally or physically. Her sadness and loneliness eats up her mind and body. She herself does not know why she is sad and afraid: "why am I sad? Why am I afraid? Do I recall a time - oh an epoch - when I understood as well they? Then I feel bereft because I have forgotten, I have lost touch" (VC 237). And at last she becomes invisible to her people and the world:

" I grow smaller every day, shrink, and lose more and more of my weight, my appurtenances, the symbols of my existence that used to establish me in the eyes of the world. I am already too small to be regarded much by anyone. I will be invisible yet." (Desai 138)

Kafka presents the extreme heights of human's incapability to survive on this earth and shows man's gradual detachment from the mainstream of humanity. Kafka, in his novella *The Metamorphosis*, metaphorically presents the transformation of Gregor Samsa into a strange insect so as to show human alienation in the human crowds. Monisha has the marriage family and in-laws but she never finds herself involved in the marriage bonds and rather finds herself gradually being aloof and detached mentally and physically from every relation: "I cannot really hear them. I cannot understand what they say. I have never touched anyone, never left the imprint of my fingers on anyone's shoulders, of my tongue on anyone's damp palate" (VC 237). Monisha, not

physically like GregorSamsa, but mentally is transformed into some strange entity that finds no room suitable for her to exist. Amla, her sister, realizes this struggle of transformation in Monisha. Desai writes of Amla's mind about Monisha:

"Amla jerked into wakefulness, overwhelmed by a new fear of this sister who had turned sleepwalker, ghost some unknown and dread entity. This unnatural silence and unobstrusiveness of hers, it seemed to emphasize the distance she had travelled from reality into a realm of still colourlessness." (Desai 147)

"Like Melville's Bartleby in Bartleby, The Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street Monisha travelled to her world of darkness insomuch that she could not get back to the life she left. When people in this postmodern world finds it difficult to survive the harsh reality, they create a world of their own so that they can get rid of the disturbance of the real world. Desai realizes this tendency of man/woman to go away from the reality in hope of getting some relief in their minds. Desai writes:"Monisha she(Amla) saw as seated upright and mute in one corner, her gaze fixed on some mysterious point as though it were a secret window opening on to darkness, gazing and gazing, with not a word to say of what she saw"(VC 198). But the darkness of Desai's Nirode or Monisha does not reach to the extremity of that of Melville's Bartleby, or that of Kafka's K or Gregor Samsa.

The novel is a family drama projecting a dystopia of modern family relationships where each member gets separated from each other and live a life of their own. The novel shows the dark island that emerges between the family relations. Jit, a character in this novel, arranges a party to bring Amla and

Nirode together. Nirode says: "yes and we sat together and formed a little island of sense and sensibility in the centre of that murky bog - did not we Amla" (VC 170). Nirode used to love Amla much when they were children and 'Nirode was the one in the family to whom she had always been the closest'. But now Amla finds Nirode too strange to have any intimate conversation with him. Desai writes: "obviously he had pulled himself through a crisis, both mental and physical… if she (Amla) worried about him it was because of this wasted appearance and his alienation from their yearning mother" (VC 157)

Nirode feels that he has nothing to do with the family and that 'between him and his mother's brilliant territory was erected a barbed wire fence, all glittering and vicious'. He does not respond to his mother's letters. He wants to live with his own ideas and creeds. He wants to create a distinct identity of his own that will have no touch with family name and obligation. He asserts his sister Amla that he cannot live obliged by the family name and obligation. He thinks the family would 'catch him and brand him with the family name, family money, family honour'. He says: "I have given up using a family name, Amla, and I want no more of a family life" (VC 156). He grows distaste for the family love, bond and affection that, he thinks, binds people to the boundary of a small family. Desai here shows the decline of social and family authority and that leads to individual depression and doubt within society. The family of the postmodernity is no longer a stable institution providing financial and social security and reliance.

People living in this postmodern world are experiencing an increasing situation of disintegration and fragmentation that fall on the family. They become strange towards their parents,

sister or brother. The postmodern literature is much concerned with this strangeness of people towards their family relations. The American playwright Eugene O'neill wrote the play *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) and showed the hollowness of the family bond and disappointment that resulted from the family failures. Each member of the Tyrone family in this play lives in separate island of their own delusion, disaster and disappointment.

Meursault, the main character in Camus' play *The Stranger* feels no shock and sorrows after getting the news of his mother's death, and rather feels annoyed to attend the funeral. One point worth mentioning is that the western postmodernity has left much impact on Anita Desai. She asserts to an interviewer: "I remember the first time I read Camus' The Stranger, what a tremendous impression it made on me…Dostoevsky was the other writer I think who interested me so much when I was young"(The Massachusetts Review 1988, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 521-537). Here in this novel Nirode's mother has some kind of Meursault's strangeness that she remains little moved even after her daughter's painful suicide and death. Desai writes about Nirode's mother when she came to visit after the news of Monisha's death:

"She did not look at once and he knew it was not out of cold vengeance but out of sheer disinterest. She no longer needed him nor her other children. She was a woman fulfilled - by the great tragedy of her daughter's suicide - and it was, he saw, what she had always needed to fulfill her." (Desai 249)

Desai sets her novel in a city that is undergoing such a phase of period that it neither totally leaves the old dying social

values behind nor properly devours the emerging social system, creating a total confusion and disappointment among its people. This city appears as dystopia where children cannot live with their mother, or respond to their sister; where mother does not feel the need of their children; where men cannot trust their friends. The novel shows the city as filled with illusions, disappointment and hopelessness. The city appears to be filthy monstrous, dirty and dark.

"Darkness fell on the city. It fell so quickly, naturally and with such ineluctability, that Amla accepted at last that this was the true colour of Calcutta and that the luminous island she had visited, where goose feathers shone like white china and each fold of a rolled pan leaf was sharp in clarity, was only a portion of a dream world, real only by reflection. It had not illuminated by the cheerful sun of her children but by the supernatural vision of those who live always underground, in the dark." (Desai 216)

This darkness engulfs its entire people making them partially blind. They see nothing but deception and depression. Nirode expresses his annoyance to his friend Jiban: "I am so tired of it, this crowd. In Calcutta, it is everywhere deceptively, it is a quite crowd - passive, but depressed" (VC 118). The city appears to him dead having no conscience. This city presses him from all sides transforming him into some strange entity. He describes:

"From all sides their moist palms press down on me, their putrid breaths and harsh voices. There is no diving underground in so under populated a burrow, even the sewers and gutters are chocked, they are so full. Of what? Of grime, darkness, poverty, disease… has this city a conscience at all, this Calcutta that

holds its head between its knees and grins toothlessly up at me from beneath black with the dirt that it sits on?" (Desai 116)

Nirode is one of the characters in this novel who realizes the violent thrashes of the postmodernity that disfigure the entire social fabric of his land. He sees the city transforming into some new shapes under the postmodern upshots. Niroderegets: "Once the smoke clears, slowly, I see another face of this devil city, a face that broods over the smouldering fire - a dull, vacant, hopeless face" (VC 117).

To conclude, Desai, in this novel, presents us with people who are caught in the trap of the postmodern eccentricity which leaves them self-divided, unpredictable and vulnerable. Desai does not aim to detail the social defectiveness, rather tends to project a sense of the malleability of Indian society in the postcolonial/postmodern aura. Her incorporation of such characters - Nirode, Monisha, Amla - should not be taken as nihilistic. Rather she tries to dig out a way of taking the postmodern at the centre of humanist concerns. She also takes us to the recognition that the postmodern tends to individualism, to have self-dependence and that it leads to loss of faith on the family and social authority.

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Memory Of Home : The Diaspora in Select Poems of Agha Shahid Ali

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Diaspora is a state of dislocation from one's culture or community into a different geographical location and culture which is caused by migration, immigration and exile. Diasporic writing is strongly characterized by the memory of home as it attempts to negotiate between the loss of one's home and the gain of a new one. Diaspora, in postcolonial studies however, is "concerned with the idea of cultural dislocation" (Gandhi 131). In today's globalized world, the diaspora has become a "representative protagonist rather than a marginalized exile" (Thieme 78). This is because the diasporic writer has described experiences common to others of the same community; which attributes to the diasporic narrative "both an individual story and, explicitly, a cultural narrative" (Bromley 21). This paper will attempt at an analysis of five poems of Agha Shahid Ali: "Postcard from Kashmir", "Snowmen", "Cracked Portraits", "The Dacca Gauzes" and "The Season of the Plains" published in *The Oxford Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1994) to introspect on how Shahid Ali treats the diaspora through his memory of home.

Agha Shahid Ali (1949- 2001) was born in Delhi and brought up in Srinagar. His father, Agha Ashraf Ali received a doctoral degree from Ball State University, for which his family

had moved to the United States. Shahid Ali's mother Sufia Noumani was of a Persian origin connected to the Sufi saint Abdul Quddus Gangohi of Rudauli. His ancestors being Shiite-Muslim migrants from Central Asia and his mother from Lucknow, Shahid Ali was exposed to different cultures from his childhood and to academic and the arts by his parents. With the ability to speak in Persian, Urdu and English, Shahid Ali called Urdu his "mother tongue" and English his "first language." As a poet, he identified himself as "an American writing in English" (Poetry Foundation Web).

Shahid Ali and his elder brother Iqbal had already settled in the United States when their two sisters Hena and Sameetah joined them. It was Shahid Ali who spent summers with his parents in Srinagar due to which he witnessed the political turmoil that seized Kashmir from the late 1980s. Most of Shahid Ali's latter poetry deal with the violence and counter-violence in the state even though he separated himself from the movement by choosing to remain a poet rather than an activist for the cause.

Close associates remember him as the poet who had the "sorcerer's ability to transmute the mundane into the magical" (Ghosh). True to his identity as a poet, Shahid Ali never strayed from his form of art in writing. Even when he would write about poems denoting the situation in Kashmir, he refused to be known as a "nationalist poet" as he did not want to be associated with the politics or the lack of it in Kashmir that had caused so much anguish to many lives. To him, religion is poetry and he has chosen to be a "devotee of poetry" after having lost his faith when one of their servants' sandals were stolen while he was praying in the mosque. There is religious sanctity in being a poet: it was "his calling" and Shahid Ali

seeks to be separated from politics in his religious practice throughout his life (Ghosh).

"Home," to Shahid Ali, is what transpires over borders and is contained in his "memory within memory." His poems reflect what Sudesh Mishra calls "the problematic question of home in relation to the translations engendered by memory across spaces and by languages across cultures" (292). This "problematic question," according to Mishra, is the act of "memory and forgetting" of people and things that are connected to his home and his roots. This happens because Shahid Ali relies on his "collective memory" from his mother and grandmother as is reflected in two of his poems, "The Season of the Plains" and "The Dacca Gauzes."

"The Season of the Plains" (1987) draws its subject matter from the reminisces of his mother speaking of her childhood in Lucknow which was then, the centre of Islamic culture. The poem is located in Kashmir where Shahid Ali grew up and the poet draws his memory of Lucknow from his mother's memory to display the rich cultural resources of India:

> In Kashmir, where the year
> has four clear seasons, my mother
> spoke of her childhood.
>
> in the plains of Lucknow, and
> of that season in itself,
> the monsoon, when Krishna's
> flute is heard on the shores
> of the Jamuna. (1-8)

It is interesting to note the cultural plurality seen in this poem. Here is a devoted Muslim mother telling her children

stories of her childhood infused with Hindu myths. In the poem, the legendary love story of Heer and Ranjha and the tradition of burning incense- sticks to their immortal love and the mention of the famed Thumri-singers Siddheshwari and Rasoolan depict the rich vibrancy of th e home the poet talks about. The mention of Rasoolan in the poem can be seen as a conscious political effort to identify with the 'mixed culturality' of the singer by the poet: Rasoolan was a Muslim singer but deeply influenced by the Hindu Benares tradition in her style of writing. These are the reasons why Shahid Ali is considered to be a cultural ambassador as his poetry displays the "attempt to make this culture available to the rest of the world" (Zaidi).

When the poet writes of the past, the diasporic note of nostalgia is filled with an elegiac note of "a lost rich past:" a loss which is both personal and collective. In the poem "The Dacca Gauzes" (1987), Shahid Ali talks about a particular type of cloth which was woven in pre-colonial India through the recollection of what he had learnt from his grandmother and history books:

> 'No one
> now knows,' my grandmother says,
> 'what it was to wear
> or touch that cloth.' (5-8)

Woven with such mastery, the Dacca gauze could be pulled through a ring and so was known as "woven air, running/ water, evening dew" (2-3). But as his grandmother recounted, it had become 'a dead art now/ dead over a hundred years" (4-5). Shahid Ali remembers how the art of weaving the material became "a dead art." In the poem, he writes:

In history we learned: the hands
of weavers were amputated,
the looms of Bengal silenced,
and the cotton shipped raw
by the British to England. (19-23)

The above poems reflect the theme of loss of home and the impossibility of going back to it. This sense of loss includes loss of "the protection of family, of friends, homelands or alternative futures" (King 258). This is where the condition of homelessness affects diasporic writing: the home that has been lost is "constantly worked into the imagination and myth of the displaced individual/ community" (Nayar 191). However, the poet does not present the tragedy of exile or the result of cultural conflict but loss as a natural part of "grown up existence." Loss is not to be associated with the diasporic rootlessness but the awareness of that loss facilitates Shahid Ali's attempts at reconstruction of memory of home. Central to the poet's memory of home are the memories of his mother and his grandmother. Together they form "collective memory": a collection of memories passed down from one generation to the next.

True to diasporic writing, the question of home becomes a metaphysical one: what Rushdie famously termed "imaginary homelands" or in the words of Pramod K. Nayar, "a product of speculation and imagination" (192). To Shahid Ali, the memory of home relates to Kashmir; where his grandfather had introduced him to thinkers like Plato and Socrates and where his mother had told them of her childhood days. Yet their present absence from the physical home and their subsequent displacement from it gives rise to the question of

belonging. As reflected in the poem "Postcard from Kashmir," home for Shahid Ali is, in the words of Sudesh Mishra, "no longer a topographical 'there' but an unattainable possibility" (292):

> Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox;
> my home a neat four by six inches. (1-2)

This is the poet's reconstruction of the memory of home: for him in his condition of exile, home is at a distant space and time which he can visit only in his memory. His memory of home finds its physical manifestation in the postcard of the Himalayas that arrives from Kashmir. The vast panoramic Kashmir in the mind of the poet has been rapidly transformed, "shrunken to the size of a postage stamp."

Holding the postcard in his hand, he realizes that what he is holding is what constitutes the memory of home:

> This is home. And this is the closest
> I'll ever be to home. (5-6)

Home has become a mere remembrance locked in memories. Even if he goes back to the land, he knows that he would never be able to be a part of it since the land itself has changed just as he has changed. In other words, the Kashmir of his memory has turned into a haunted valley as violence had disrupted the land. Here we see the expression of the diaspora where the loss of home and the memory of it is most often contrasted with the present reality: the reality of the present is never as has been imagined. This is where the memory of home becomes an idealized "mythic place of desire" (Nayar 192) that possesses a point of origin but no place of return.

Likewise, for Shahid Ali, the memory of home no longer rests in the physical existence of it but in the imaginary existence in his mind. The longing for home and the lingering patriotism for one's home entail romanticizing and idealizing the truth which often leads to poetic fault that Shahid Ali is keenly aware of. He knows that the richness and beauty of home that he is celebrating must have changed from his memory and thus he writes:

> When I return
> the colours won't be so brilliant,
> the Jhelum's waters so clean,
> so ultramarine. (Postcard from Kashmir 6-9)

His memory of home and the picturesque Kashmir of the postcard complement each other and yet the poet is sensitive about why he feels that way: he knows that his love for the land is "overexposed." The poet's personal relationship with home is given an artistic expression by the whole atmosphere of the poem. There is a parallel existence of quietness and clarity when he speaks of home: just as there is an unique quietness and clarity of the scenic beauty of Kashmir as would linger in the poet's memory of home. Thus the home that is in the poet's mind "can be retrieved, reached, or returned to only in memory" (King 192).

In his autobiographical poems however, there is a persisting search for one's roots as Shahid Ali attempts to trace the family history. In "Snowmen," Shahid Ali explores his ancestry: his ancestor, "a man/ of Himalayan snow" (1-2) had come from Samarkand to Kashmir carrying with him "a bag/ of whale bones:/ heirlooms from sea funerals" (4-6). Shahid Ali writes:

This heirloom,
his skeleton under my skin, passed
from son to grandson,
generations of snowmen on my back. (14-17)

Even as he identifies with his ancestors, the poet realizes the profundity of his dislocation; a dislocation which is not only from home but also from his family roots as the diasporic existence makes it impossible for him withhold the heirloom:

No, they won't let me out of winter.
and I've promised myself,
even if I'm the last snowman,
that I'll ride into spring
on their melting shoulders. (20-24)

There is a sense of homelessness in Shahid Ali's recollection of his ancestry that had begun from Samarkand with his ancestor and had continued with him as well. Homelessness has "hushed" (19) the voices of his ancestors to "ice" (19) and the poet realizes that soon his voice too would be "hushed to ice" (19) as he is carrying "generations of snowmen on [his] back" (17). There is a continuation of the image of bones from an earlier publication Bone- Sculpture (1972). In Shahid Ali's poetry, bones signify what Bruce King calls "a now-dead world" that will not reply to his interest. Therefore when the poet recounts his ancestor "carrying a bag/ of whale bones" (4-5), it connects his identification with the ancestor who had brought with him memories of a "dead world" to Kashmir just as the poet himself is doing in his relocation in America.

In the poet's insistence of identifying with his family heirloom through the poem "Snowmen," is a deliberate attempt

at negotiation with his dislocation from the old home and relocation at the new home. Shahid Ali ends the poem with a determined insistence on breaking free from their voices being "hushed to ice" (19) as he has "promised [him]self" (21) that he would "ride into spring" (23) on the "melting shoulders" (24) of his ancestors. This is necessary for the diaspora because there is the need to reclaim the past: through history, traditions and customs. This act of reclamation liberates the diaspora which in turn allows him to write about the present. To quote M.G. Vassanji:

"This reclamation of the past is the first serious act of writing. Having reclaimed it, having given himself a history, he liberates himself to write about the present." (63)

There are instances where the "problematic question" of collective memory occur in the diasporic poetry of Shahid Ali. In "The Dacca Gauzes," he mentions his grandmother regretting that the exquisite cloth was not woven anymore. Having little interest in history, his grandmother was unaware of the amputation of the weavers' hands which the poet later learnt in history books. In "The Season of the Plains," the poet realizes that his mother had never told him about her personal life in Lucknow when his mother "hummed Heer's lament" (24): if she had ever "burned sticks/ of jasmine" (26-27) like Heer and Ranjha for the sake of forbidden love. Exploring the difference between himself and his ancestor, he realizes that what is left of him is to embrace his present by "riding into spring" so that he could acquire the voice to speak about homelessness.

Further, in "Cracked Portraits" Shahid Ali traces the history of his family through portraits that have been handed

down from one generation to the next. The pictures of his grandfather's grandfather to his father resonate the changes that their family-lineage has been through. The pictures reveal the changes in each generation: with each recent generation, they were becoming more westernized. Although the old pictures attest to their glory of the bygone days, they have gradually lost their value in time as the new generations became more dislocated from their home and their memory of their ancestry growing dimmer. The passing of time has disrupted their legacy: his ancestors have disappeared from the land of the living and their portraits are compared to "soundless/ words" which have lost its significance:

> Cobwebs cling
> to the soundless
> words of my ancestors. (45-47)

If the two poems "Snowmen" and "Cracked Portraits" are read as an attempt at self- definition by tracing his origin, we find that Shahid Ali, like other diaspora writers, encounters the problem of self- identification. The poet is aware of inheriting an identity beyond his control: an identity that has undergone rapid transformation, and the poems offer interesting revelation of the poet's attempt to trace what has been lost in the history of their origin. The condition of the diaspora has coerced the poet to cling to the history of his origin while the other members of his family seem to be indifferent towards their lineage. Here Shahid Ali has revealed his "effort to retain/reclaim [his] 'original' culture" (Nayar 195) through the subjects of his lineage.

Shahid Ali is said to be different from his contemporaries because of his treatment of the problem of rootlessness and

his poetic form. He began writing when changes taking place in poetry writing in English language stabilized into the focus on reality. This perspective of reality shifted to the poet himself and encompassed an awareness not only of the self but also of others and the environment around him. Internalization of the self brought out the Indianness of the poet while the assimilation of Western thought into his Indian experience resulted in the production of hosts of poetry which were at once striking in their tone and complexity.

Shahid Ali's memory of home can also be attributed to his conscious use of the ghazal form in his poetry which can be traced back to the seventh- century Arabic literature in Persia. Undergoing a change when it came to India, the ghazal form is composed of autonomous or semi-autonomous couplet united by a particular strict form of rhyme and length. The opening couplet introduces the rhyme scheme by having it in both lines. Then the scheme occurs only in the second line of every couplet. The strict metrical form and the use of languages to signify clear images that reveal the thematic concern, the extreme repetition of words are all employed by Shahid Ali in his poetry, best exemplified in the following:

> This is home. And this is the closest
> I'll ever be to home. (Postcard from Kashmir 5-6)

> A dead art now, dead over
> a hundred years. (The Dacca Gauzes 4-5)

Shahid Ali attempted to re- introduce the ghazal form to American poetry where it has lost its primary form as many American poets tended to stray with free verse in their use of the ghazal form. It is due to this attempt that he has been said

to have introduced "an entirely new idiom in English poetry." The poet has remarked that through the ghazal form of poetry, he would "subvert Western civilization" (Zaidi). This poetic form gives him the access to present an echoing memory of home which gives him the possibility to explore the "in-between state" and becomes a "bridge between the two civilizations that he traversed and as a means to retain identity in foreign surroundings" (Ghosh). The ghazal form lends the conciseness and discipline in Shahid Ali's poetry. Amitav Ghosh has commented that the poet's voice is "at once lyrical and fiercely disciplined, engaged and yet deeply inward."

The poetry of Shahid Ali is characterized by nostalgia not only of his own past but also of others. He looks back to what was in his memory a "supposedly unified culture" (Ghosh) and to the nation which he has lost and attempts at reliving it in his imagination. Drawing memory of home from various experiences of nostalgia, Shahid Ali does not lament or brood over the loss of it. He has found in poetry "ways to transcend uprootedness and turn lamentation into a more encompassing vision" (King 258). This vision is that of finding "symbolic linkages" from the past that would bridge his present to a history that he cannot experience and yet endow him with a sense of continuity.

Despite writing about his homeland in many of his poems, Shahid Ali differs from the other diasporic writers in his style and temperament: he does not defend himself in his condition of exile nor does he attempt to assert his culture in his search for identity. Many critics see rootlessness lingering in the thematic concerns of diaspora writers in their dislocation from their origins. Yet Shahid Ali refuses to be called "rootless" for

in his sense of the term, "rootless" implies the loss of one's cultural inheritance and the inability to identify oneself with it. Shahid Ali's poetry is not preoccupied with the search for one's identity in a hybridized culture but is more a personal attempt to reconcile with loss: a loss not only of one's home but also the loss of the memory of his origins, a loss of his homeland with its rich cultural past. Thus, in his poetry, the memory of home is not only his own memory but also of the others' memory of home.

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Bijao & Binao : Transgender and Nupi Maanbi's Experiences in Contemporary Meitei Society, Manipur, Northeast India

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Using memories of my teenage past, this essay describes a specific beauty parlor in Imphal. The first part of the paper explores the generating of new gender parlance - bijao (older transgender women or effeminate men) and binao (younger transgender girls or effeminate boys). The second part defines gender and sexuality through the lens of linguistic performativity. The last part of the essay analyses Nupi Maanbi subjects {translated as AMB (Assigned Male at Birth) TG (transgender)} relying on personal interviews and oral narratives.

I

After my high school examination, back in 2009, Sooja Thokchom(i) took me to a beauty parlor. She promised that it was no ordinary place: fun and lively. Mostly located in urban Imphal(ii) and the rural outskirts of Manipur where there are dominant Meitei populations(iii), these are hair and beauty parlors operated by (but not limited to) Nupi Maanbis, Nupi Sabis (performance identity/ female impersonator in courtyard theater), TG women, transsexuals, gay subjects and effeminate men. Such various 'local' and 'global' gender/sexual identities are under the English epithet 'homo'.

'Mayang(iv) hair is different from ours, and this is why you should always make your hair appointment with a

Northeastern salon. They will cut your hair but won't chop it off. They are excellent!' I was a teenager with short fizzy bangs. Regardless of the hair cut, I might have needed from people who purportedly understood the intimate connection of my hair and my race, I did not go as a customer. I went there as a visitor. As far as I remember, this particular parlor was located in Imphal and because it is located in the urban(v) it had its own morality. In other words, the city tries to escape traditional morality of Meitei culture. It does so by working to be more modern, however not necessarily democratic.

The building was under construction. It had no colors, just grey from the outside. The building had only two floors: ground and top. The parlor was located on the top floor. The ground floor was a furniture repair shop and created a lot of noise. I had to climb up some flights of wooden stairs (without railings) to reach the parlor.

There it was, not very fancy but still stylized with its own charm. The room had three chairs facing a big mirror. Cosmetics and chemicals were kept neatly on the table. Pictures of Korean male models with funky hairstyles flooded every corner of the room(vi).

Concentrating on the beauty parlor, as a space of research, was perhaps thus, 'natural' with the discovery of queer studies and feminism. Beauty parlor as a site creates distinct terms: the binao and the bijao(vii). This relatively 'new' parlance is increasingly being used in public talk outside the TG community. The binao is the less experienced subject who the bijao mentors. In other words, bijaos act like the elder sister or at times the mothers to binaos. Kinship ties are of utmost importance in most community settings. This kinship

tie is similar to eche- enao (sister- younger sister/brother) in a leikai (space where a community or a group of community resides) which renders valid the hierarchy of age. It is important to note that such identities cannot be extricated from its time (twenty-first century), place (beauty parlor) and geography (Imphal, Manipur, India). Likewise, this knowledge opens up to the question of historiography. Because of my influence by postmodernist queer feminist, I doubt if history moves in a linear chronological fashion. This is not to deny historical events and happenings. Nevertheless, this is the awareness that facts are socially and culturally constructed. Furthermore, the past, present, and future cannot be so easily separated.

Evening, after rice and chicken curry (and some more rice), I waved my good bye. I was to leave alone as Sooja chose to spend the night there. She was not going back to her house. Her biological family had already used physical violence on her for wearing a phanek (sarong) some few weeks earlier. As I walked towards the exit door she added that she would not be attending school for the next one month. Revolving around the politics of respectability school encourages normal gender expression i.e. cisgender and heterosexuality. The school was painful for her as she was always already a 'he'; a 'homo'. Eventually, she dropped out of school and became a full-time beautician.

For Sooja, the parlor was not just a place to earn or to have fun; where she met her friends and felt free to be herself. It was a place where she got a sense of belonging. Such places are marked by histories of lived TG experiences. The place was a place to meet new people and old friends; where binoas meet bijaos on a regular basis. For her it was home, a relatively safer place where she can dream of a love; the possibility of a

better life; in fact, life itself because life back in her family or at school was abjection itself.

I never saw her in person as I went off to New Delhi for my higher studies. Yet, we remained friends on social media and had phone conversations once a while. With much help from cyber technology, our friendship blossomed. Also, through her, I got to know many Meitei MTF TG women and a lot of stories surrounding them. This flashback shows how, more than being a safe place for the TG and Nupi Maanbis. It was a meeting place for many TG and effeminate men: creating collective solidarity.

II

Sex is assumed to be a given, an unchanging essence. Male and female are assumed to be mutually exclusive. In other words, a person cannot be both man and a woman at the same time. Genitals, hormones, and chromosomes are tools which determine a person's sex. However, there are babies born neither male nor female. Because of modern society's notion that there are just two sexes, doctors surgically alter babies at a very young age to fit the binary mode of human sex. Through this trajectory, feminists have argued that there is nothing 'natural' about sex. In other words, it is the biomedical doctors who determine the sex of the intersex child. While none of the Nupi Maanbis I know/interviewed claimed to be intersex, it is important not to assume sex as a biological 'truth' for either being a male or a female.

Gender is known to be a social construct. Our definitions of what it is to be masculine or feminine keeps on changing in time and space. Most societies police the person to fit into one of these two genders (masculine and feminine). Hence the

person performs the gender norm which fits the sex assigned. This performance (through mannerism, clothing, and appearance) comes together to form one's gender identity. Gender expression of one's gender identity helps the 'others' to assume one's sex. Importantly gender expression is organized in a hierarchy. Here masculinity is assumed to be dominant to femininity. Also, one's gender expression is assumed to be ones' gender identity. Here the basis of gender is thought to be one's given sex. Because of this relationship between gender and sex, there can be only two genders, masculinity, and femininity (since the assumption is that there are only two sexes: male and female).

All bodies do not carry the same meaning of (homo) sexuality. Hence there is no objective (homo) sexuality. Sexuality is not only experienced differently in a different context. Sexuality is itself an ontological and epistemological Euro-American category (i.e. a product of Euro American histories and social formations). While it is true that homosexuality as an identity category imported from the global West to Meitei society, the 'homo' have become a part of the Meitei's everyday discourse. But contrary to the homosexual one needs to also examine critically the creation of the heterosexual. The imagination that heterosexual is historically universal and unchanging is to be contested. Through the historicization of heterosexual and homosexual, we can start questioning the default nature of the heterosexual: questioning if there is an inner truth about sexuality. It is in this direction that I orient my critic of gender, sex, and sexuality.

Most biological discourse will frame gender experiences of transgender children under gender identity disorder. *The*

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders , published in 2000, includes the following diagnostic criteria for Gender Identity Disorder (GID):

A. A strong and persistent cross-gender identification (not merely a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex).

In children, the disturbance is manifested by four (or more) of the following:

(1) repeatedly stated desire to be, or insistence that he or she is, the other sex;

(2) in boys, preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire; in girls, insistence on wearing only stereotypical masculine clothing;

(3) strong and persistent preferences for cross-sex roles in make believe play or persistent fantasies of being the other sex;

(4) intense desire to participate in the stereotypical games and pastimes of the other sex;

(5) strong preference for playmates of the other sex. In adolescents and adults, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as a stated desire to be the other sex, frequent passing as the other sex, desire to live or be treated as the other sex, or the conviction that he or she has the typical feelings and reactions of the other sex.

B. Persistent discomfort with his or her sex or sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex. In children, the disturbance is manifested by any of the following: in boys,

assertion that his penis or testes are disgusting or will disappear or assertion that it would be better not to have a penis, or aversion toward rough-and-tumble play and rejection of male stereotypical toys, games, and activities; in girls, rejection of urinating in a sitting position, assertion that she has or will grow a penis, or assertion that she does not want to grow breasts or menstruate, or marked aversion toward normative feminine clothing. In adolescents and adults, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as preoccupation with getting rid of primary and secondary sex characteristics (e.g., request for hormones, surgery, or other procedures to physically alter sexual characteristics to simulate the other sex) or belief that he or she was born the wrong sex.

C. The disturbance is not concurrent with a physical intersex condition.

D. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Specify if (for sexually mature individuals):
Sexually Attracted to Males
Sexually Attracted to Females
Sexually Attracted to Both
Sexually Attracted to Neither

While GID is one mode of capturing transgender subjectivity, various formwork needs to be heard. GID fixes gender identity and leaves less room for genderqueer subjectivity. Here the oppositional divide between biology (nature) and culture (nurture) needs to be deconstructed. When we thinking of the gendered body as 'natural', we miss the argument that nature is always already a concept in language.

Here it is important to discuss Bulter's work on performativity contesting biological sex: 'Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance'. (Butler, 1993: 95) 'Femininity is thus not the product of choice, but a forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment.' (Butler, 1993: 232). Following this trajectory, sex is discursively produced. This does not mean that there are no bodies as such. This means that discourse brings bodies into view.

III

Sadokpam Ranjeeta Devi in her article 'Re-defining Sexual Minorities: The Nupi Sabis of Manipur' writes:

"[N]upi Sabi, an amorphous term which can mean the following: a) cross-dressers or transvestites for the theatrical acts only. Their sexual orientation is according to the social norms and they can be termed as heterosexual. Most of them are professional actors and earn their living acting, directing and playwriting. Most of them are married with wives and children. b) Homosexuals by orientation, who play the roles of the women characters and do not necessarily only act for a living." (Sadokpam, 2012: 46)

The terms Nupi Maanbis and Nupi Sabis are often used interchangeably and equated together. I used the term Nupi Maanbis to escape the theatrical side of the story. In other words, Nupi Maanbis are not necessarily actors. Most of them are self-identified transgender women. Nupi Maanbis are thought to be homosexual by default. However, I claim that this stereotype is only because of their feminine disposition and have nothing much to do with the sexual activity they engage in. During sexual intercourse, men who take the penetrative role (informally known as 'tops') do not always identify as homosexual. In the West men who have oral or anal sexual activities with other men are generally termed as gay. On the contrary, this scenario does not always apply to non-Western cultures. Meitei society does not acknowledge tops i.e. active partners as 'homos'. While the passive partner, informally known as bottoms, are stigmatized as feminine, and therefore homosexual, the penetrative partners are not. The men who take penetrative role are considered merely horny and trying to fulfill a sexual desire. So, even during the same-sex intercourse, one partner is 'homo' and another is normal.

In Manipur, we are witnessing a period in history where all non-normative sexualities, including 'local' expressions in the Meitei society - like Nupi Maanbis - are being put under the singular, modern rubric of the 'homosexual'. The local term 'homo', a mixture of derision, stigma and very often disgust, is used to slot all these groups together. An epithet used extensively to police gender expression among men, particularly thrown towards young boys, 'homo' is considered offensive in Manipur. The term is used widely and extensively by Meitei subjects. The epithet also sustains masculinity among Meitei youths. Also, there is no other word in the Meitei

language expressing or describing homosexual identity. The NupiMaanbis themselves claim the word 'homo', with its violence; yet, use it amongst themselves to describe themselves. There is a need to understand why 'homo' is used in civil vernacular. This problematic language ('homo') is specifically targeted towards effeminate males in Meitei society including transgender and transsexual women. Rather than a backlash, most gender and sexual minority of the state embrace their identity as and also 'homo':

'I am a homo Darcy' (viii)

I do recognize that the history of the word 'homo' is rooted in shaming the other i.e. psychological abuse. It carries the burden of social abnormality; a systemic violence. It might be 'just another word' but it continues to shape experiences of sexual minorities in contemporary times. While many Meitei subjects throw the term 'homo' around to address sexual minorities, I am of the belief that such reclaimed words should only be spoken within specific marginalized social worlds; for example inside certain spaces such as beauty parlous operated by Nupi Sabis, Nupi Maanbis and other sexual minorities only amongst themselves.

To conclude, it is not necessarily the case that the Nupi Maanbis are born with a 'true' gender and sexual identity i.e. feminine and homosexual. However, it is the case that the Nupi Maanbis are born with a body and social-cultural powers help define what feminine and sexual is. Most importantly, there is no direct relationship between biological sex, gender expression, gender identity and sexuality. Also, the idea that heterosexual is normal or that males should only be masculine is a product of culture and society. To police ones, gender is to

control the freedom of individual expression. One needs to be free from the unnecessary control of gender. But is there even a necessary control of gender?

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Endnotes

(i) Sooja (name changed for protective purposes) is now (2018) a self-identified transgender woman. I first meet her at Manipur Public School (2008).

(ii) Currently, Imphal is the capital of Manipur. Manipur is one of the seven states of Northeast India.

(iii) In terms of population, Meiteis are the largest ethnic community of Manipur.

(iv) This is reconstructed from my memory from a personal conversation I had with a friend. Here, the term mayang is a Meitei word meaning 'foreigner'. However, the term is causally thrown around to anyone who is outside the distinctive South East Asian 'race'. Hence, the word others the outsiders and retains the authenticity of the insider. This was how my informal research began, seven years ago.

(v) The beauty parlor was located in an 'urban' setting (as class played a major role in such places). However, these rural and urban binary needs to be destabilized i.e. parlors in rural Manipur do not necessarily 'lack' in comparison to the urban. Through this trajectory, there is a direct connection between market, labor and the urban location of the parlors.

(vi) I only assume they were Korean because of the massive South Korean pop culture influence throughout Manipur and its surrounding Northeastern states (through television, compact disc, and internet).

(vii) One can understand the bijao as the 'drag mother' and binao as the 'drag daughter' through a Western lens.

They are relatively "new" local coinages which might have appeared in my lifetime.

The term is used in one 'funny parody video' made by Meitei subjects; Bony VS Binao; URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfNmISDO1VY

(viii) Darcy (named changed) is a TG identified person who introduced herself as 'homo'.

Sex and Sexuality in Mizo Culture: Truth beyond Tales

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Human sex and sexuality plays a major role in everyone's life regardless of whether we are young or old, man or woman because it is an integral part of what we do and who we are and throughout time, it has always been a vital part of the human existence for all civilizations. Sex and sexuality has continuously remained a sensitive subject throughout the ages and many cultures till today treat it as subject of taboo. But this stronghold is starting to evolve as we see tremendous changes in the perception and attitudes towards sex and sexuality during the last few decades because what was once considered obscene and abnormal is now universally accepted. People have become more expressive in terms of their sexual activities and other related behaviors with public display of affection found everywhere with the turn of a head. It is also a known fact that same-sex relationship is gaining acceptance as compared to years ago where gay people would be forced to go through intensive aversion-therapy like electric shock, put through immense torture and in many cases they would be even thrown into prison (Bulloug, 1979). In fact, many countries have legalized same-sex marriage with Netherlands being the first in 2000.

The term 'Sex' can refer to two things. Firstly, it refers to the biological characteristics differentiating male and female

in terms of their dissimilarity in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, reproductive systems, and other physiological components (Lindsey, 2011). Secondly, the term also refers to lovemaking or genital contact between two people, as in "having sex."

For centuries, societies all over the world agree to the understanding that sex means just one thing: sexual intercourse within the context of marriage for the purpose of procreation. Pursuing any other form of genital pleasure was not only viewed as sinful, but it could get you thrown in jail or, in some cases, put you to death. In contrast to this view, the concept of sex in modern times has been significantly expanded, and sexual activity has become quite complex. For instance, "sex" now refers to a wide range of behaviors and sexual activity today is no longer legally or morally restricted to traditional heterosexual marriage either; sex occurs between unmarried romantic partners, "friends with benefits," and people of varying sexual orientations. Furthermore, sexual acts can serve a wide range of purposes, with procreation being just one possibility. People now see sex as a form of recreation, a way to express love or get closer to a partner, a way to celebrate special occasions, and (for some) a way to make money (Lehmiller, 2014).

Sexual motivation is social because it involves other people and provides, according to many, the basis for social groupings in higher animals like human beings etc. and sexual behavior is highly regulated by social pressures and religious beliefs. Sex is also psychological in the sense that it is an important part of our emotional lives; it can provide intense pleasure, but it can also give us agony and involve us in many difficult decisions (Morgan, et.al., 1993).

Sexuality most importantly involves the subjective desire to experience sexual arousal and possibly to engage in overt expression of that desire. In many instances the sexual desire involves the motivation to engage in sexual contact with another human being (Hill, 2008).We can also say that human sexuality is how people experience and express themselves as sexual beings and the choices they make for expressing their sexual preferences may be termed as sexual orientation. This orientation can be categorized into four types; (i) heterosexuality, which is the sexual attraction to another person of the opposite sex (ii) homosexuality, is the sexual attraction to the same sex (iii) bisexuality, sexual attraction to both sexes and (iv) asexuality, which is attraction to no sexes in a sexual way.

Traditional Mizo Culture

The Mizo culture has always adopted a patriarchal society where men are considered the superior being and are given undivided authority. As such, women and children occupy a very limited space within the family in terms of administration, supervision and especially in decision making. The history of Mizo supported that man and woman become life partners solely for the purpose of procreation and the institution of marriage existed to control and regulate sexual activities of men. Although polygamy was prohibited, it was allowed amongst the chiefly clans where the chiefs could take up a mistress or concubine called Hmei portraying the place of women where they were subjugate to men. Also, there were many wars fought between the different tribes of Mizo and due to these constant battles it became unsafe for women and children to travel alone and they need the protection of men lest they be abducted and taken as slaves or be killed, which in a way gives more power to the men and greatly aided the

Mizo's patriarchal society. This patriarchal institution paves a way to silencing children and women about their needs and desires resulting in repression of their voices and suppressing them in communicating important lessons on sex and sexuality.

Mizo and Christianity

We can say that the arrival of Christianity in Mizoram during the late 19th century made the topic of sex and sexuality more taboo than it already was. The activities and daily lifestyles of the Mizo culture came to be greatly influenced by the teachings of the Bible. The Mizos start inculcating Christian values and practices in children at a very young age which greatly influence their thinking and actions in later stages of life in a very conservative and traditional manner. In fact, according to 2011 Census 87.16% of people in Mizoram are Christians. The Mizo Christians abide by the biblical teachings that pre-marital sex and different sexual orientations are sins which will send their souls to eternal death. It is also considered a sin to be romantically involved with other people outside the union of man and woman in marriage.

Christianity is embedded in their culture and the daily activities of the Mizos revolve around their religion. Children involve themselves in church activities from a tender age, men and women vigorously participate in religious gatherings and regardless of the numerous religious denominations present in the State, all churches expect active involvement from their members. All these practices have portrayed the Mizos as a society that is strictly bounded by the values of Christianity and follows a culture where activities like sex and sexuality remain dormant.

But with the impact of globalization and westernization, young Mizos today have started to represent behaviors beyond

Christian's values and teachings, which include a more liberal perception and attitudes towards sex and sexuality. So there is an imbalance between the youth and the elderly which can cause a lot of stress and tension across generations. This generation difference is also evident from the findings of Ralte and Sarathy (2010) which states that regarding the acceptance level of gay people in Mizoram, younger generations were more acceptable towards them while the elders have a more negative attitude. Further, traditional and conventional sexual behaviors are slowly being replaced by a more open and non-orthodox behavior resulting in different issues related to sex and sexuality like abortion, pre-marital sex, extra marital affair, etc.

Mizo and Homosexuality

Although there are instances of homosexuality in Mizo culture as unfolded through folklores and poems, it had never been addressed until lately. The people today have grown accustomed to the gay community and though their full acceptance is still far fetched, the Mizo society have indeed minimized their discriminations. This is evident from the fact that there are more gay people coming out of the closet and we can see many cross-dressers roaming the streets in public. Moreover, to add to this, in a study conducted by Ralte (2010) gay men in urban Mizoram do not perceive a high degree of stigmatization and felt discrimination is not as prevalent as expected.

Mizo and Pre-Marital Sex

In terms of sexual behavior, non-orthodox practices are rising where unwanted pregnancy is widespread between unmarried couple, so much so that according to a survey conducted in 2010 by the largest church organization in Mizoram, the Synod, out of the 13501 youth that participated for the survey, 43.27% revealed that they have had pre-marital

sex. The survey also highlighted that although Christianity is the leading religion in the State and children are born and brought up in a Christian family, 9.8% of the youth revealed that pre-marital sex is not morally wrong and they have no problem if people tend to indulge in it.

Mizo and Adolescent Sexual Behavior

In Mizo society the age group of adolescents is still considered as children. This is particularly because Mizo children are hardly taught about the importance of independence in the family milieu hence many youth, till their late adulthood, depend on their parents or other caretakers. Due to this reason there is the conception that adolescents are native and childlike with no knowledge or experiences about sex and sexuality. But contrary to this thinking, Chhakchhuak (2010) in her study among students of higher secondary schools in Mizoram found that children watched pornography, read sex related magazines, masturbated, watched adults having sex, have had Cyber-sex and phone sex, have had sexual intercourse and were also involved in paid sex. Findings conclude that adolescents in Mizoram do indulge themselves in sexual related behaviors. These activities are astounding especially among students of this age group because majority of them are still in their teenage years and under the supervision of an adult. This clearly reveals that young Mizos are no longer what parents or other elders seemingly think of them in terms of being ignorant about sexual activities and refraining from engaging themselves in various sex related behaviors.

Mizo and Divorce

Traditional Mizo women were seen to stand firm in the union of marriage despite severe gender prejudices and subjugations present in the culture, and women who were

married to village chiefs suffer more because their husbands were allowed to take on several wives as a practice of polygamy. Even though they were subjected to harsh conditions and were denied basic rights they stood by their husbands under all circumstances. Yet, as evident from the latest Census 2011, Mizoram has the highest divorce rate in the country with a whopping 6.34% of married partners resulting in divorce. This is very much in contradiction to Christian values because the Biblical teaching is not in favor of divorce. In fact, Christian weddings that take place under the supervisory role of a designated pastor always include vows in relation to having a bond that will endure any unforeseen events which would otherwise result in divorce. But as we can see the divorce rate in Mizo culture is spiraling uphill, the people have become less committed to the institution of marriage and they have so easily forgotten to uphold their promised bond in to have and to hold till death do them part.

Mizo and Abortions

The interplay of traditional and modern values have resulted in an increase rate of abortions; on an average 75 abortions are conducted per month in Mizoram (Das, 2014) and the exact number is believed to be much higher than this because abortion drugs are sold in countless pharmacies which can be easily bought without prescriptions as over-the-counter-drugs. The youth are actively engaged in premarital sex which would definitely contribute to an increase number of abortions in the society because it adds to the possibility of unplanned pregnancy and conceiving children out of wedlock which is against the Christian beliefs and hence condemned in the society. Thus, many people would choose to terminate their pregnancy for fear of discrimination and judgement.

Mizo and HIV/AIDS

The first case of HIV/AIDS in the State was found in the year 1990 and today there are many people living with the disease. Further, according to the latest HIV Sentinel Surveillance published by National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) in December 2017, based on population, the State ranks the highest in the country in terms of HIV/AIDS. Of all the modes of transmission for the disease, in Mizoram the highest case of transmission is through unprotected sex. There are also many cases of mother to child transmission and when probed into the matter it was found that this transmission was initiated by an unfaithful partner.

In conclusion, taking all of these into consideration, it is alarming to see that the Mizo culture which has evolved immensely on teachings of Christianity is witnessing a movement away from its beliefs of the statutes of the Bible. They are gradually losing their quintessential lifestyle and culture which has been passed on from one generation to the next. Their very reticent way of life is highly influenced by westernization and gradually being replaced by other cultures. Premarital sex is no longer an issue to the youth population, abortions are rising, extra marital affairs are unmistakably evident in every nook and cranny, and homosexuality is slowly gaining acceptance as a product of cultural assimilation.

The Mizo culture has always been known for their sensitivity towards sex and sexuality but time is evolving and it is no longer feasible to resort to this taboo and fail in witnessing these changes and disregard the needs of addressing the issue to generations who are wandering aimlessly away from the traditional values and belief system. Each person in

the society plays a vital role in dealing with this emerging new culture; the elders can contribute by being more open about sex and sexuality so that younger generations can talk about it with their parents which will definitely delay their sexual initiation and promote safe sex as found in many studies across different cultures (Davis and Friel, 2001. Aspy.et.al, 2007.Kim, 2008.)and children can also contribute by being responsible when engaging in sexual behaviors to prevent unplanned pregnancy, abortions, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and the like. It is also important that the church look into the matter since it has the biggest platform in addressing the issue and the Government can also add to the intervention by framing policies and programmes to cater to the needs.

This is the truth beyond tales.

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Where printed words are less important than spoken words : On the oral narratives of diverse communities in Nigeria

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In cultures where the printed words are less important than the spoken words, one would expect a rich oral tradition (Osa, 4)i

The oral tradition is a form, which is couched in a specific structure, suitable for oral transmission. The preservation of this tradition depends upon the powers of memory of successive generations of human beings. The expression "oral tradition" implies both a process and its products. The products are the oral messages, delivered by word of mouth, over time. Thus, the product of the oral tradition is an element of the oral process. The dynamic process of oral tradition includes the memorization of the messages. Jan Vanisa (13)ii distinguishes the oral messages in various categories; those are formula, prayer, poetry, epic and the narrative. The oral narrative is further categorized into two parts; that is; historical and fiction.

Nigeria was formed out of colonial policy and resistance to it by a number of diverse communities and this is the reason why across the boundaries of the present nation, nature of oral tradition varies from one community to another. In the various communities of Nigeria oral tradition is regarded as a way of communication. The oral tradition is connected with the very

existence of these communities. This tradition makes it possible to transmit faith, belief and customs, from one generation to another. Emphasis is placed upon the oral tradition as it is considered the carrier of culture. This paper aims to explore the way in which the oral narratives used to exist in the Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa speaking communities in Nigeria. Chukumwa Azuonye (679)iii classifies the Ibo oral tradition into three broad categories; prose, verse and drama. The prose form is inclusive of the historical narrative (akuko ala), fictional narrative (akuko ifo) and "artistic speech" or oratory (okwu oka). The verse form ranges from simple songs (egwu a na-ekwe ekwe or egwu-okwukwe) to various forms of ritual verse (okwunru) and the melic poetry (abu), which includes the lyrical, the invocative, the didactic and the narrative or epic. Igbo drama operates within the theatrical tradition, which includes forms such as dramatic festivals (emume), dramatic rites of passage (echichi and abamaba), dramatic dances (egwu a na-agba agba), masquerade plays (mmanwu), comedies (aniga) and various categories of improvised oral drama. In addition to this there are a number of other rhetorical or gnomic genres, which cannot be neatly placed within the frame of any of the three conventional literary forms. These include proverbs and related forms of similitude (ilu), riddles and related forms (agwugwa), tongue-twisters (okwu-ntuhi), jest and anecdotes (soromchia) and games and plays (oro). These forms can be best described as miniature forms of oral tradition, since they are independent literary forms of small dimensions which partake of the feature of prose and verse depending on the context.

It is quite difficult to maintain water tight categorization of genres in any synchronic study of the oral tradition of any

community. Even a diachronic survey, in this context, will fail to establish a proper pattern of evolution. However, a thematic approach, within the framework of Igbo oral historiography, reveals one basic concern of Igbo oral tradition, namely the close interdependence of man and the earth or land (ala) in his perennial quest for survival. This basic concern is summed up in the Igbo term for historical narratives (akuko-ala) or stories of the earth or land.

A major paradox arises in the critical approach to the content of akuko-ala. It has been observed that akuko-ala and the other related genres of the Igbo oral tradition, like okwu-oka and the epic (abu-akuko-dike), which purport to be historical in content, are the least reliable sources of the historical data and is purely imaginative like akuko-ifo or the fictional narratives. The narratives, categorized under akuko ifo used to mainly feature the animals and spirits. The intended audience of akuko ifo were mostly children. Because of this reason scholars like, Umeasiegbu (14) (iv), consider akuko ifo as the primordial source of contemporary Ibo children's narrative. Umeasiegbu states that akuko ifo can be classified in to several categories according to the subject matter, the nature of the chief protagonists and the approach of the narrator towards the narrative materials. By classification according to the subject matter what perhaps he means is the thematic classification of the fictional narratives; for example, animal tales, trickster tale; etc.

The akuko ifo session used to commence after twilight. Agbada offers the following explanation behind this practice. The akuko ifo sessions usually starts after twilight, never before. It also does not come before dinner, since it is meant for relaxation on the top of its educational function. (36) (v)

One of the functions of akuko ifo is to instruct the children to the path of righteousness. The fictional narratives of akuko ifo not only contained skeptical views about life but also focused on the observations of people's behaviour in the society. Akuko ifo was considered as an inspiration to the young and it used to provide moral standard, cherished by the society.

As akuko ifo used to mirror the activities of members of the society. It used to embody the problems and the success of the society. Besides this the other functions of akuko ifo was entertainment. As mentioned earlier akuko ifo was normally told in the evening after the evening chores. Children used to sit round the fire side in their father's "obi" or in their mother's hut to listen to folktales. Normally the elders, their father or mother used to narrate the stories. Children then used to take turns in telling their own stories (Agbada, 38). The following is one such narrative. It illustrates the pitfall of greed and stealth. Besides this, it also explains the importance and the responsibilities of the head of a family:

All animals fed well until the outbreak of an epidemic which caused a famine in the land. Tortoise was and his family suffered too. The famine notwithstanding, Goat and his twelve children fared extremely well; they had plenty to eat and drink. This puzzled Tortoise. He could not understand why his friend, the goat, fared better than he did. If he could not feed his three children, how could the goat, with twelve children?

One day Tortoise went to Goat to suggest that both of them could avert starvation if they teamed up to steal.

"Why steal?" asked Goat, "Instead of stealing we may go to seek for alms from people."

"This is not just ordinary stealing," explained Tortoise, "We're not going to steal from anybody; we're primarily interested in stealing from our close friends."

So it was that the two friends agreed to steal from a friend's barn. Tortoise was working for this friend. At the close of the day's work, he made sure he made a tiny opening in the barn.

Late at night, the two thieves raided their friends' farm.

They dug up yams and devoured myriad of palm fruits. From time to time

Tortoise went into the opening through which they entered the farm in order to size his stomach. This surreptous activity continued for a long time. Goat was resting near a cluster of palm fruits when the owner of the farm came in.

Tortoise quickly fled from the farm but Goat was caught and killed. The farmer claimed goat's wife and children.

If the head of a household is lost, the rest of the family is scattered. Who will consent to be friendly with Tortoise? (Umeasiegbu, 47)

These narratives were aimed to prepare the children for their adult life. It should be noted that these narratives were introduced to the children to make them speak fluently as orators who will be future representatives of their society on any occasion (Azuonye, 681). These narratives gave the children the opportunity of using imagination to decipher the truth and develop their intellectual ability. The children were encouraged to come up with stories and this helped in developing the creative faculty. In Igbo akuko ifo good always triumphs over evil, truth over falsehood, honesty over

dishonesty. Like this obedience and respect were inculcated in the children.

Like the Ibos apart from historical and social experiences fictional narratives dominate the oral tradition of the Yoruba. The Yoruba oral tradition comprises of four specific genres; that is; ofo (proverbs), ayajo (incantations), ekuniyawo (bride's lamentation), ijala (hunter's tale) oriki (praise incantations). Narrative, puzzle, proverb and riddles have not been segregated into separate water tight compartments and this is the reason why children's narrative, derived from the oeuvre of oral tradition, among Yoruba, is a composite mixture of puzzle, riddles and proverbs.

Even among the Yoruba people the tradition of telling moonlight stories was prevalent. These narratives were known as alo apagbe. This art of oral narrative has been passed on from one generation to the other. The major occupation of the Yoruba people has been agrarian hence oral narrative became a pastime for the people; especially in the evenings after a hard day's work. A gathering of family members or children from the neighbourhood under bright moonlight made an audience during the story-telling session. Karin Barber's comment on the genre is worth quoting to buttress our point:

Alo is the most communal, domestic and democratic of Yoruba verbal art forms. They used to be told within the compound in the evening after work, with the entire household present. All were entitled to tell a tale if they wished, even the youngest, and all were expected to support the others' performances by supplying a chorus to the songs. The moral values which are the issue in these stories are, correspondingly, those which make for harmonious communal living. (49) (vi)

Besides entertainment moonlight oral narratives were instructive in nature and this is the reason why the intended audience of alo mostly comprised of children. Alo was an effective traditional educational tool. This helped children to sharpen their intellectual faculties and also made them to understand the responsibilities of the society. Before the narration of the story moonlight story session preceded with riddles. Most of the riddles were made up of metaphorical interrogative statements or puzzles, which were intended for the children to resolve. The following is one such riddle,

Narrator: A small house, full of dirt. Who knows it?
Audience: I know it! It's the nostrils.
Narrator: You got it!
Narrator: It has neither hands nor legs. When it was trampled upon, it started
weeping. Who knows it?
Audience: I know it! Dry leaves. You got it!
Narrator: A beautiful lady, She lives in a thorn-thicket. Who knows it?
Audience: I know it! It's the tongue
Narrator: You got it! (Ogunpolu, 22) (vii)

However, recitation of some puzzles and their solutions were much longer than the riddle, which has been cited above. Here is an example that tells of how the tortoise was able to turn six peanuts into one hundred and twenty thousand cowries, before dawn:

Narrator: I have a puzzle to be resolved, I have a puzzle to be resolved. What a great puzzle. In my search for solution to the puzzle, I stumbled on a house full of money. In my search for solution to the puzzle, I stumbled on a house full of children.

In my search for solution to the puzzle, I stumbled on the house of the Creator, where the Tortoise was boasting to his in-laws, that he can turn six peanuts into twelve hundred thousand cowries before dawn. Who knows the solution to the puzzle?

Audience: I know it (the solution to the puzzle). It was the Tortoise that planted six peanuts on his in-law's farmland. It was the Squirrel that ate it. The Squirrel in turn planted corn on its farmland. It was the Bush-fowl that ate it. It was the Bush-fowl that, in turn, laid two eggs on the pathway. It was the Elephant that stepped on the eggs. The Elephant in turn dredged a pond by the roadside. It was the nursing mother that drank from the pond. The nursing mother in turn mounted her child up-side down. It was the palm-tapper that cautioned her. The palm tapper in turn climbed the palm tree wrongly. It was the queen that cautioned him. The queen then gave twelve hundred thousand cowries to the palm tapper. The palm-tapper in turn gave the twelve hundred thousand cowries to the nursing mother. The nursing mother in turn gave the twelve hundred thousand cowries to the Elephant. The Elephant in turn gave the twelve hundred thousand cowries to the Bush-fowl. The Bush fowl in turn gave the twelve hundred thousand cowries to the Squirrel. The Squirrel in turn gave the twelve hundred thousand cowries to the Tortoise. The Tortoise in turn gave the twelve hundred thousand cowries to its in-law before dawn (Ogunpolu, 32).

In essence, riddles and puzzles seem to serve certain functions that were not always expressed. First, they helped in keeping the audience mentally awake before stories were told. These were often used as interpolations between long sessions of story narration. Secondly, riddles were narrated to

test the intellect and wit of the audience. The participants used to display their imaginative power and sharp memory in answering the riddles. Mostly the answers to these riddles have been learnt by heart by the audience. Thirdly, these riddles and puzzles had entertainment values. For instance, people used to laugh at one another's wrong answers, and the competition to solve the riddles and puzzles used to create a cordial atmosphere. Finally, riddles and puzzles were instructive in nature, especially when they used to reflect the social and material culture of the Yoruba in their content. Thus, they used to help in developing a sense of observation and an awareness of the cultural values in the participants, who were mostly children.

A larger percentage of the Yoruba moonlight story telling session was devoted to educate children. The Tortoise was the hero of most of these moonlight tales. In both Ibo and Yoruba tales Tortoise was presented as a multi-faceted character that could play a plurality of roles. To bring the stories to life, the Tortoise was personified in most instances. Often, the Tortoise was remembered as witty, jealous and a cheat whose greediness, mischief and trickery could not be surpassed. For the sake of honesty, he was often paid in his own coin to emphasise the derogatory side of morality to the audience. Occasionally however, the Tortoise's deeds were crowned with success. It was not only the Tortoise that was personified in the Ibo and Yoruba tales, the other animals, such as birds and creatures, mentioned in the stories, were also personified.

The essence of alo among the Yoruba people was oriented to shape their children's understanding of life and stories and help in building up a responsible being. The cardinal virtues of life that were vital for the children's future happiness were

often adopted as themes for building up alo. One of the central themes of alo was greediness. Children were trained not to give in to greed. Appropriate stories were told to the child, motivating her/him through her/his sub-conscious mind onto the results and problems of greediness. For instance, the child could be told of how the Tortoise became bald-headed as a result of greediness. Babalola in his collection of Tortoise stories recounts that :

Once upon a time, there was famine in the land of the animals. In his search for food, the Tortoise came to a strange cave. Although the Tortoise had braved many dangers before, this time, he was so scared to enter the cave. He, therefore, retreated to a distance watching the cave and also thinking of what to do. To his surprise, many Vultures flew over his head to the entrance of the cave. As they landed, they entered the cave one after the other. As soon as each Vulture said the password, 'please give me some food and meat, mighty rock', the cave opened for him to enter. Plucking up courage, the Tortoise plodded breathlessly to the entrance of the cave and said the password just like the Vultures. Suddenly, the cave opened for him to enter. The Tortoise walked in and stumbled to a long table that was covered with variety of meals. A strange voice that seemed to have come from the walls told the Tortoise to consider himself invited to the dinner. However, the voice warned him that he could eat every food and meat that he wanted except the liver. The story goes on that the Tortoise helped himself to very delicious meal. Later, the Tortoise spotted some roasted liver at the far edge of the dining table. Ignoring the warning that he must not taste the liver, the Tortoise did not just taste the roasted liver on the dining table but he ate as many pieces as he could. As it was already dark, the Vultures suggested that they should

return home. But because of his greediness, the Tortoise did not pay any heed to what the Vultures said. Rather, he continued to eat more of the liver. When the Tortoise was through with his liver meal and was ready to go home, he could not remember the password that the Vultures used to exit. By eating the liver, the Tortoise had violated the law of the magic cave.

As the Tortoise struggled hard to get out of the cave, the Vultures made their entry into the cave the following morning. Out of fear, the Tortoise hid himself at the comer of the room. By this time, the Tortoise's bright eyes had almost faded on account of apprehension. He felt sorry for not listening to all the pieces of advice of the cave owner that warned him not to take any of the liver. After eating breakfast to their satisfaction, the Vultures sat by the dining table to relax. When the Tortoise could no longer bear the aroma of the meal, he jumped out of his hidden place, but the Vultures quickly apprehended him. The Tortoise appealed to the Vultures for assistance. Eventually, the Vultures agreed to help the greedy Tortoise. They were able to convince the Tortoise to dance round the pot of boiling water while they sang and chanted incantations for him. As the Tortoise got carried away by the Vultures' songs and their fake incantations, the Vultures suddenly pushed his head into the boiling water. When the poor Tortoise pulled out his head out of the boiling water, he realised that he had become bald headed. (15) (viii).

Apart from teaching against greediness, Yoruba alo were also used to encourage children to eschew pride if they have to succeed in life. Stories like the one about Tortoise; the great fisherman included in Ogudu's (34-40) (ix) collections of Yoruba narratives is one such example.

The story recalls how the Tortoise loved fishing before he became blind at old age. His fellow fishermen advised him to stop fishing since he could no longer see but the Tortoise would not listen. Because of the Tortoise's determination and insistence, his fellow fishermen decided to help him to fish. Every day, the Tortoise was walked to the sea, helped into the boat and helped to cast his net by his fellow fishermen. The fellow fishermen thought that the Tortoise would appreciate their kind gesture. But, instead, the Tortoise became rude and disrespectful to them.

The story goes on that one day, when the Tortoise was being helped to cast his net at a very good spot, he behaved very rudely. His helpers ignored him and continued fishing until they made enough catch for the day. Instead of rowing back to the shore, the angry fishermen rowed the boat into the deep waters. They stopped the boat as usual and told the Tortoise that they had reached the shore so he could step out of the boat. So, the Tortoise jumped out of the boat confidently, hoping to land on the beach. However, he landed in the water. Even at the point of drowning, the Tortoise was too proud to call for help from his fellow fishermen. His friends turned the boat round and rowed away. The Tortoise tried to swim to the shore. But instead of swimming towards the beach, he rather swam farther into the sea because of his blindness.

Thus, the oral narratives of the Yoruba community were meant to instil in children some social values such as respect for elders, tradition and custom, perseverance in times of crises and obedience to constituted authorities.

In the context of Hausa it gets immensely difficult to segregate the written tradition from the oral tradition due to the Islamic contact. According to scholars, like, Beverly Blow

Mack (103) (x), to some degree the entire literary tradition of Hausa can be regarded as oral as both written and the oral works were chanted or sung in public performance.

Since oral recitation is the standard means of presenting written works, the delivery styles, forms and contents of both are integrally connected. Traditional oral poetic style among the Hausa dates back to the beginning of its social history, which coincides with the legacy of Islamic and Arabic influence. There is a pervasive long term influence of Arabic language and culture in Hausa-land. The standard of written tradition is derived from Arabic literary form, with their origins in orality, song and music. However, that the indigenous Hausa speaking people retained some of the pre-Islamic practices is evident from the fact that oral tradition became the basis for Islamic education. Oral poetic recitation is well integrated into Islamic life and Hausa culture. Among the Hausa, both oral and written work share common ground, in fact, as mentioned above, they are delivered orally.

The contemporary children's narratives from the Hausa community are derived from tatsuniyoyi or fictional narratives, which is different from labaru or narratives featuring historical and social experiences and anecdotes. There's a separate genre, under tatsuniyoyi, known as Hira or the conversational tales. The contents of Hira differ according to its intended audiences. For example Hira, featuring, the tales of animals were exclusively kept reserved for the children. In Koranic schools, at craft sessions, during Ramadan and at certain festivals, old men used to narrate such tales to children and adolescents.

Often the function and purpose of tatsuniyoyi are confused. Whereas purpose involves conscious intention,

function denotes the latent and unintended effects of particular modes of social action. Thus to say that, while the tatsuniyoyi narratives were popular for their entertainment value and to say that their primary function was broadly educational, involves no inconsistency. Hausa narrators and audiences used to share certain institutional orientations and conceptions which were largely embedded in Hausa speech. The narrator, while relating his stories used to dramatize events to achieve appropriate histrionic efforts. This was a presupposed accepted canon of thought and conduct common to himself and his audience. Without this shared background, the dramatic gestures would often misfire, thereby destroying the tale. As individual stories had its context and meaning in the common culture, the audience responds by evaluating its incidents, characters and presentation in terms familiar to them, drawn from their own social experience, thereby indirectly revitalizing the cultural norms and social models to which they were socialized. Tatsuniyoyi served as a media for the socialization of successive generations of Hausa children who were gradually inducted to the social norms.

In a traditional society where schools were devoted to the study of religious texts in a foreign tongue, folk tales, proverbs, historical legends and etiological narratives, that represent approved and deviant behaviours and their consequences were, virtually for lack of competition, the most influential instruments for the transmission and reinforcement of customary values and attitudes. Such broadly educational effects did not imply that such tales had an educational purpose, solely or primarily; but its educational value was surely enhanced by its qualities as entertainment. Moreover, in a traditional preliterate society, education consisted mainly in

the transmission and reinforcement of stereotyped attitudes, values and conceptions, rather than in the transfer of technical knowledge, data or moral maxims. The following is one such tatsuniyoyi, which highlights the fact that trust should be placed with prudence :

The jackal was out walking one day, when he came upon a piece of shade and laying there a hunk of meat and some cool water. Said the jackal, 'There's something wrong with this place,' and going away he walked on till he met with hyena. Then he said to hyena, 'Hyena, the head butcher owes me money and won't pay. I've asked and I've asked but still he won't pay. And when I speak to him, he won't even answer me. Says hyena, 'Lead me to him!' and the jackal and 'You ask him – perhaps he'll pay you' and off they went.

When they approached the place, the jackal drew back some way off and said 'There he is, go on up to him!' The hyena went on and said 'Head butcher.' No reply. 'Head butcher.' No reply. Then she said 'do you want some meat?' and the jackal said 'Yes' and she sprang into the shade to grab the hunk of meat. The trap closed on her. Up it lifted her and down to the ground it dashed her. Off went the jackal, laughing, leaving her there held fast in the trap (Edgar, 69) (xi).

How these tales took shape is still unknown. Clearly, while some tales were diffused among Hausa by contacts with foreign peoples, including immigrants, others were probably indigenous; but whether borrowed from abroad or fashioned locally, for their preservation among the Hausa, tatsuniyoyi was dependent on its appeal and their meaningfulness for Hausa narrators and audiences.

Thus, regardless of their differing origins, the function and purpose of Igbo akuko ifo, Yoruba alo apagbe and Hausa tatsuniyoyi are more or less same. According to Sabine Dinslage, "Oral tradition is a rich source of maintaining the consciousness of traditional values and patterns of moral behaviour in Nigerian societies." (46) (xii). In most of the indigenous societies of Nigeria, like Igbo and Yoruba, neither a written code of behaviour nor a formal education, in the European sense, used to exist before the colonial advent. Children were taught to take their proper places, in the respective communities, through the narration of stories. In order to transmit traditional moral codes and patterns of behaviour to the younger generation, oral narratives were passed down as an educational tool and a pedagogic instrument by the elders of the community. However, in the context of the community of Hausa this situation was a little different. The Arab contact established the script culture and although formal education flourished through the help of madrassas orality remained significant, among the Hausa speaking people.

Storytelling was a social event among the members of the Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa speaking people. In Nigeria storytelling is still regarded as an art but in the context of orality the storytelling experience has almost disappeared with the introduction of the script culture.

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Translation Section

Cycle

Saurav Kumar Chaliha

A beautiful piece by renowned Assamese writer, Saurav Kumar Chaliha, about Germans and the town of Göttingen in Germany, as well as about the Assamese in contrast. It is about the time when he was living in Germany in the late 1950s and studying physics at the university.

The title is 'Cycle' but the actual subject of this piece is 'self-respect', a cycle just happens to appear in the course of events, just now. The word 'cycle' probably reminds us of two famous movies — Vittorio de Sica's Italian film Ladri di biciclette (Cycle thief) and Juan Antonio Bardem's Spanish film Muerte de un ciclista (Death of a Cyclist). The bicycle in this piece is not of the same standard, the topic associated to this cycle is pride and love for one's own land and its people – in other words, self-respect.

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Recently I had a discussion with a young journalist (with him a young social scientist), among various topics the current situation in the state also came up – we agreed that one big reason for our degradation was the disappearance of our love for our own land, our total lack of self-esteem – today we are a people who have given up all the good things that were our

own and who can only imitate the bad things from elsewhere like a bunch of apes. There is a group of people who say that patriotism or love for one's own land is a very narrow concept, parochial, chauvinistic (such big words), rather we should be open to the whole world, embrace the whole of humanity as brothers etc. Why don't they understand that loving the big wide world is a very good thing, 'vasudhaivakumtumbakam' (the whole world is our own family) is an ideal mental outlook, but all that can come only when first there is love and fraternal feelings in one's own home – charity begins at home. I should have some satisfaction, some pride, some pleasure regarding my own home, only then will I be able to share in the happiness and sorrows of my neighbours, not by neglecting or ignoring my own home, because if we do so then our dissatisfaction and sense of inferiority will keep pricking us like thorns. If we have pride in our own place then we shall be able to happily accept the outside world too as our own. No group of people worth calling a group gives up what is special or unique about them. The Bengali are always praising their great icons (like Rabindranath), they are also proud of Mother Teresa, they have other heroes too, but the photo that is always to be found in their living rooms or prayer room is that of Ramkrishna Paramhansa. Even today, the British have the slogan 'Buy British', meaning buy Japanese only if you don't find the equivalent British one. Japan seems to be a mechanical, dry land world filled with the latest scientific and technological innovations, but inside their homes the Japanese are completely Japanese, they keep their living habits and traditions alive; in the shops, markets and restaurants they might behave like the Americans, but their tea-ceremony or their drinking sake are still rooted in ancient traditions, they are still fascinated by their own people, forests, mountains, fields, clouds, snow,

cherry blossoms, they preserve all these feelings with the warmth of their hearts. The Germans…And it is only because they have this self-esteem, this pride, this love for their own world, that these people can keep their heads high and speak at international platforms about universal love and brotherhood. It is because they have this love for their country that they do not imitate others even if they imitate others – they take only the good and try to fit it in with what is their own. And love for one's land brings with it a pride about the good things that are one's own, enthusiasm, enterprise, desire to work harder, and the faith in the traditions and in the rules and regulations that enable our land to move forward in a disciplined manner. They know that the laws of their land protect their own interests, brings security and that is why in developed countries, everyone trusts in the 'rule of the law'. (This we do not have at all, because our laws shield the guilty, so no one has any faith in laws or rules, everyone tries to live the best they can by breaking rules, or by cheating – mainly because of greed, need to make money, and the complete absence of any love for the land they call their own.) One night, when I was in London, I was returning home by car with a British gentleman. He was driving quite fast but then had to stop at a traffic light which had turned red. It was quite late in the night, there was nobody to be seen anywhere, no police, no other cars. I said, 'There is nobody around, we could keep going.' The gentleman replied, 'Oh no, a rule is a rule, you know,' and kept waiting till the light turned yellow and then green. While in Germany, I once boarded a train with a German friend of mine. We were roughly of the same age; we were going to a place about half an hour away. I saw that we were the only two passengers in our cabin. I felt like smoking, I took out a cigarette and was about to light it when my friend

told me, 'This is a no-smoking cabin'. In other words, smoking is prohibited in this cabin. He pointed towards a sign that was put on the wall behind me, 'Nichtraucher' (non-smoker). I did not light my cigarette, but told him 'Yes, that is so, but still, this train will not stop anywhere before another half an hour, no train personnel will come this way, no other passengers will get on – my cigarette will be finished in 10 minutes, I might as well smoke, I really want to.' My friend looked rather surprised but thought it over (perhaps he had never encountered the Indian cheating mentality before), he then put his hand on the sign and tried to pull it; it got dislodged, he turned it over. On the other side was written, 'Raucher' (smoker). My friend then put the sign back in its place with the side showing 'Raucher', and told me, 'Yes, you can smoke now.' (I was a young man then, too young to be ashamed of myself or my behavior.)

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After coming out of the library of Göttingen University I followed the turning of the road to reach the narrow 'Arcade' with a few shops, sitting somewhere there I would have a cup of coffee, then go into a nearby shop to look for tobacco and the tobacco-paper (that means 'mixture' and 'mixture-paper'), to reduce the expenses on cigarettes I am trying to smoke cigarettes that I roll out myself. Just next door to this is a small cycle shop, through the glass one could see a few bicycles, tricycles, bicycle pumps, wheels, saddles, and other accessories (at the back is a room that looks like a workshop, a young mechanic is seen pottering around there doing something, turning a screw, welding something, and such like), I look at the bicycles, I quite like a red bicycle with gears (I had not seen cycles with gears in Assam before), I look at the price-tag and realize that it was beyond my reach. I go away. But

sometimes it starts to rain quite hard, then I am forced to stop, I stand in front of the glass-window of the shop, roll a cigarette and keep looking at the bicycle. The owner of the shop comes out (the shop does not have many customers) and stands next to me – middle aged, medium size, balding, bespectacled – "Eh, what a bad time to start raining. It won't stop in a hurry. I also wanted to go out." He starts his conversation in this manner with a few such assorted words. Later when I would stand in front of his shop, he would come out and greet me. 'How is it going? Hope all is well. Student?"(Göttingen is a small university-town. Whenever they see new faces, the residents assume that they are university students.) What subject? Oh, Physics. From where are you? India? Yes, I had guessed correctly that you must be an Indian, of course I often mix up Indians and Iranians, but seeing you I had a feeling that no, you are not Iranian, what is your name, if you don't mind? (I am Diederich, Walter Diederich) Nice to meet you – I read a little about India here and there.

In this manner, Herr Diederich asks me questions about India every now and then – Nehru-Gandhi, holy cow (HeiligeKuh) and monkeys – I heard that Hindus pray to them, is that true? Varanasi and the holy river Ganges (Ganges? I say, Oh, Ganga – it is not his fault, he has read the name as Ganges and has pronounced it accordingly) – Delhi and New-Delhi, what is the difference? Have I seen the Himalayas, its snow-laden peaks? The TajMahal in Agra? (One day he mixed things up and also asked me about the Pyramids – "Oh, I am sorry, of course the Pyramids are in Egypt.") How are you liking your stay here? Quite a lot, I told him. He said, "I am sure you like being here, the simple people of our little town and its friendly atmosphere makes everyone happy – you

probably know that the latest designs of cars are created in the research labs of this town, but our people prefer to walk – no unnecessary hurry, no crowded confusion, but there is love in the atmosphere, friendliness, life (I was reminded that in the Ratskeller (Town Hall cellar) the thoughts of the students are written: 'There is no life outside Göttingen' (Extra Göttingen non est vita). In this little pretty village enclosed with forests and plants needed for scientific research, are also industries producing optical instruments and micro-instruments that individuals have established through their own sweat and toil. One of the best theater houses 'Deutsches Theater'. The university is more than two hundred years old and can boast of several world renowned scholars and scientists, but even they behave in a most normal manner, without any affectation. Many Nobel laureates work at the university; hundreds of students come from around the world with lots of hope and enthusiasm to study here; their youth and activity keeps the city alive and throbbing with their Joie de vivre – very well, where do you stay?

I replied. Beyond the railway station, across the river Laine, at the other end of town – almost village but the room is cheap and also very convenient – the nearest bus stop is only about 300 metres away—from there to the Weenderstrasse in the city centre takes another half an hour – quite some time is used up – quite some money is also used up in travelling up and down – I am thinking of buying myself a monthly card.

"I suppose you cycle? (Of course.) Then why don't you do one thing – why don't you buy a bicycle? Our university students all move around with bikes, then you have no hassle with buses, there are also no expenses, you can wherever you wish whenever you want to, no problem with parking etc. and

what more should I tell you – cycling does not cause any pollution, it is also good exercise, the body remains fit…"

"Yes, I also think sometimes about buying a bicycle – what you say is correct – many of my acquaintances move about with bikes – but it costs a lot of money to buy a new bicycle, I cannot afford it."

"You can make do even without a new bicycle – of course I do not sell used bicycles, but I do know some people who do, if you wish…"

"No, I do not have faith in second hand things. If I ever buy a bicycle, it will be a new one, someday."

"Why someday? You can have one now. I can give you one at very easy instalments, you will not feel the pinch."

I live in the world of my thoughts, sometimes I get quite fed up with his chatter, I go away hurriedly. Today also I was rather impatient, I said, "No, that will not do, how will I keep reminding myself of instalments all the time, moreover I am not sure how much longer I will stay here – no, someday when I can afford it, I will buy one."

But Herr Diederich was insistent, said, "What is the amount you can afford? I mean, what is your upper limit?"

This time I was really annoyed, I had no interest whatsoever in continuing this discussion about bicycles, but the gentleman doesn't seem to understand, I told myself that I could stop this discussion by giving him an absurd, ridiculous answer, I replied, "Something like, say 10 marks."

[I have seen the price tags on the bicycles in the shop – I guessed that the price of the cheapest and most ordinary model

would be close to a 100 marks, the price of the more fancy ones with gears and other accessories go up quickly in steps of 50-100 marks, at that time, as far as I can remember, the exchange rate was 100 rupees for almost 88 marks, that is, 1 mark was equivalent to about 1 rupee 14 paisa (something like that).]

"Ten marks!" Herr Diederich stopped, putting his hand on this chin he looked at me, "Ten Marks?" A smile appeared on his face, he said, "Wow, you know how to be funny…"

"That was not a joke," I answered sternly, "Ten marks. Okay, Good bye (Auf Wiedersehen/ Till we meet again)," I walked away giving him no chance to respond.

I was a little unhappy after getting back to my room — did I misbehave with the gentleman? So the next day I went back to his shop (although that day I did not need to buy any tobacco). I saw that no, Herr Diederich smiled at seeing me and called out, " Hello Herr X, Guten Tag (Good Day), do come in." He took me inside and made me sit down, and said, "I have thought about your proposal in the meanwhile, it can be done, I can give you a bicycle for 10 marks."

"What? This time it looks as if it is your turn to be funny."

"No, no, it is not a joke, I am speaking seriously. Of course we can take the whole thing to be a joke – a comedy, once in a while it is also good to play a comedy, what do you say?"

Saying this he explained to me his plan in detail. He had tried to figure out if it was actually possible to construct a bicycle with ten marks. He felt that it was not entirely impossible, he remembered that there were many old parts of many bicycles in his workshop, frame, wheels, handle, chain,

break, nuts and bolts – all those things will never be put to any use, they were just lying in the rubbish heap waiting to be disposed off (he had thought he would sell them as metal) – he had more or less all that was required to construct a bicycle, perhaps he would have to buy one or two small things – yes, he thinks in all he would be able to manage within ten marks – he and Hans (his apprentice) could construct a bicycle that would work within that amount, of course it won't be a very comfortable and smooth vehicle, but "You are a young man. You do not need comfort. You will get used to it in a couple of days."

I was stunned, said," Many thanks, Herr Diederich, really many thanks, but you must have understood, I was only joking. I had not expected that you would take so much trouble just for such a silly jest of mine."

"No, no, it is nothing like that," Herr Diederich replied in a happy tone. "The thing is like this – you see Herr X, you have come from very far away to our university, it is a matter of great joy for us, students come from all over the world to our university – these students are our welcome guests, they come and go back carrying nice memories of Göttingen, you have also come, we wish that good memories of Göttingen also remain in your mind – you are looking for a bike within ten marks, Göttingen should be able to give you that."

He continued that he had no doubt that even without this bicycle I would never forget about Göttingen, because our city is small but beautiful, its weather is good and it natural beauty is very charming, "Have I been to the outskirts of the city? With the bike you will also be able to go to those places – you will see, you will like it very much." Göttingen is singularly beautiful, many hued trees and plants, flowers and birds,

gurgling brooks, wide open fields, clean air, open sky, picturesque small villages and towns, farmers huts, here and there a few schools….

All that is true, I said. I have gone a few times to the neighbouring countryside with my friends, it is really very beautiful – of course (I could not stop adding) from where I come, Guwahati, the capital of the state called Assam in India, Guwahati is also a very pretty city, actually the whole of Assam is incredibly beautiful – of course Göttingen is also pretty, but in a different way. "Yes, that must be certainly true," Herr Diederich responded, "Das kannichwohlglauben (I can well believe that)," I have also read that the natural landscape of India is incomparable.

Anyway (he said) he would try to keep the cost of constructing the cycle to ten marks – but a few things will certainly need to be bought, for instance, although he could use old tyres he would need to change the tubes – perhaps the cost will cross the ten mark limit because of a certain essential thing – I hope you will consider it to be something that you bought at your own fancy – "how much more?"

"One mark."

"One mark? Of course, that is not a big deal. Whether it is ten marks or eleven does not make any difference, but what is the extra thing?"

"A very ordinary thing. I mean, the cycle will work even without it, but I do not want to give the cycle to you without it."

"Really, what is it, please tell me?"

"You will come to know, just have some patience."

I waited patiently. (In any case I was in no hurry.) I did not go that side for a couple of days. Then one day I went and saw that my 'hybrid' cycle was ready – one could not make out that it had been made out of parts from assorted places – of course as Herr Diederich had already mentioned, the bike was not much to look at, but functional, and as he had also mentioned, not too comfortable, it had a couple of small defects, two teeth of the chain-wheel had got blunted with use, so the chain got stuck there at times before freeing itself – but as he also said, for young men a couple of such little problems were not worth mentioning.

"Here then is the first bicycle of your Göttingen model – we can christen it V-I, for Vielerlei Eins (Many-in-one One) and this is its symbol.

Just below the handle was fixed a shiny new letter – the letter G written in the Gothic script – that was the symbol of Göttingen, it is drawn on the bodies of all the city buses, many residents stick such a G also onto their cars.

"This I did not have with me. I had to find and buy a letter G to match with this V-I bike of ours – as I told you, the cycle would have worked also without it, but when you will ride this bicycle, people will see it, your friends will see it, and ask you, from where did you buy it? Then you will be able to reply, Made in Göttingen."

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I do not know what happened to the bicycle later – whether it just broke down or I gave it away to someone or sold it, or left it somewhere on leaving Germany, I do not remember that – it is from a long time ago. But I still believe

that even today people of Göttingen say, "Our Göttingen is very beautiful." (Although the anti-culture of so-called globalization and commercialization has certainly touched the Göttingen of today). On the other hand, we have, with utter indifference, left our pretty and lovely Guwahati to transform into a soulless, loud, dirty, and ugly foul-smelling concrete jungle, today I will not be able to say as I told Herr Diederich that day "Our Guwahati is also beautiful."

Translated from the Assamese original with the same title by Meenaxi Barkotoki, Volkach 27th Feb.2018.

Besides being a writer and translator, Meenaxi Barkotoki is currently working with some small ethnic communities living in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. She divides her time between Northeast India and Germany.

Book review Section

Avinuo Kire. *The Power to Forgive and Other Stories,* Zubaan, New Delhi, 2016. Pp. 139. ISBN: 9789383074921. Price Rs. 395.00

The last few years have seen an impressive body of work to emerge from Northeast India. Avinuo Kire's *The Power to Forgive and Other Stories* (Zubaan Books 2015) is a new addition to this burgeoning area of literature from the north east. It is a collection of twelve short stories that tries to realistically portray an evolving Naga society. Nagaland like the rest of the north eastern states is going through a transition from a rigid past to an uncertain future. Kire while being basically rooted to the cultural landscape tries to show how the quiet transformations taking place all around are gradually reshaping a new consciousness out of the old. These stories reflect a wide range of themes, from uneasy mingling of Christianity with traditional customary laws to the repressive conditions of patriarchy, from the everyday life of its people to the conflicts that trouble Nagaland. "The Power to Forgive" the title story of the collection is about a young girl in a Naga village who is violated by her uncle and is forced to live with the trauma of her 'shame'. In order to protect the family honour the father forgives the perpetrator leaving the girl to reconcile to her fate. There is irony and contrariness in equal measure as Christianity jostles with traditional customary laws. A more significant and subtle theme is how religion, in this case, Christianity, interacts with indigenous traditions and provides

a language to reconcile with the violence and heal. Kire is sensitive to how patriarchy and its strong mindset force women to live lives dictated by customary laws that deprive women of any social and political role. She is especially sensitive to how the changes can positively impact women's lives while being aware that this change will not be easy to embrace as traditional laws and customs severely restrict women's access to a public space. The repressive nature of clan based patriarchal society is shown in "Fallen Bird" when a young woman falls in love and marries outside her clan only to find herself trapped in an unhappy situation. In these stories Kire focuses on the misogyny prevalent in Naga society and how women are at the receiving end of things. Most of the time they are seen in the traditional roles of wife, mother and sister. For women the identity forged through the marriage bond is the primary one. In this story the woman compares her situation with a wounded and dying bird. The dying bird becomes a symbol of her own helplessness. "Closing your weary eyes, you found yourself praying for your fallen bird and you had a sudden sense that the words were for you too…Because praying for the bird was like praying for yourself"(p. 50). In "Promise of Camellias" a young woman is married off against her wishes and has to endure a loveless marriage while still longing for love secretly. Youth and beauty, love and hope are ephemeral things that dissolve at the first touch of reality. The importance of adhering to the traditions and customary laws for women comes at a price and there is little scope for personal happiness and fulfillment other than to be dutiful women of the house.

In other stories Kire portrays the Indo-Naga armed conflict that pervades the collective memories of the people and the clash between Naga identity viz-a-vis national

identities. "Solie" is the story of a young man drawn into the movement for Naga independence only to be left disillusioned. It sensitively depicts the issue of identity and belonging. Solie represents a generation of Nagas who will not subsume their ethnic identity to the Indian nation state. As Solie declares, "We are nationalists and we will always remain so" (p. 24). The fraught relationship between The Centre and the State is perhaps what gives these stories a political slant. In "Nigu's Red T Shirt" racism and cultural arrogance threatens to break down this fragile sense of belonging as Nigue who leaves his hometown and goes to Delhi for his education struggles to fit in his new milieu. He feels isolated and alienated at the cultural difference and he is constantly seen as a 'foreigner'. As he is befriended by a group of tourists he realizes that they have mistakenly assumed him to be like them, a tourist. Nihue's predicament represents the discrimination that northeasterns from the hill states have to face in metropolitan cities where more often than not they are pigeonholed as unsolicited citizens because of their cultural difference. In "The Last Moonrise" concern over indiscriminate killing of wild animals and wildlife conservation is emphasized. Deeply rooted practices along with superstitions about the medicinal value of wild meat are pointed out as the reason for the killing of wild animals: "He knew its exotic meat would fetch a good prize in the market (p. 104). It also points to the centrality of land issues peculiar to Nagaland; most habitats are either privately or community owned and there is a lack of local and national wildlife protection laws in Nagaland which leaves little scope to protect its natural habitat.

But these stories are not merely the documenting of social and political realities of violence and conflict. For too long the Northeast, especially Nagaland had come to be represented

as a conflict zone. What the author tries to do through these stories is to dislodge this image of the Nagas in popular consciousness; to remove the stereotype of Nagaland as a region of conflict. What Kire tries to do is to tell readers that that there is more to Nagaland that just strife and violence. By doing this Kire tries to celebrate the ordinary and the mundane and resist being defined by conflict alone. Kire very poignantly explores the universal themes of loss, death, grief and suffering. In "Rembering Uncle Peter" the young Anibu is plunged in grief when her uncle passes away. She had shared closeness with her uncle that she could not forge with her own parents as her young mind cannot understand the marital problems between them. The lack of warmth and intimacy in her home life was filled by Uncle Peter who treats her as his own child. While "That Long ago Summer" is about the pain of growing up and the pangs of unrequited love, "Knowing" celebrates the tenderness and romantic love within the context of the marital bond. In "Dielienuo's Choice" Dielienuo is a poor orphan girl. Her uncle finds employment for her as a domestic help with a family. Initially Dielienuo is befriended by the employer's child and they become fast friends. As time passes Dielienuo begins to realize her place in the family and retreats within herself, lonely and isolated, knowing that she will never be part of the family. Through these stories what is perhaps highlighted is the everyday life of its people, the land itself with its quaint villages replete with its rich tradition of folk culture, its oral narration of histories, customs and culture.

The narrative moves in the form of storytelling and there is emphasis on folklore and tribal customs. Orality is a way of life in ethnic indigenous societies and it is through stories or storytelling that culture, history and religion are passed on to family and

community. Many of the ethnic groups from the North East do not have any written document or archaeological or other evidences. In such a scenario folklore becomes an important source to understand these societies. For these indigenous people folklore thus becomes a medium to express and reinforce its cultural and social identity. Storytelling therefore becomes a way of rewriting history, a means of documenting ethnic history. Among the Nagas also, oral tradition is an important way to express their beliefs and social values. They believe that there exists close ties between the world of humans and the spirit world. Animism was widely practiced among the Naga tribes in the pre Christian times and even after the advent Christianity such indigenous beliefs of the past continue to coexist with the new religion. This is seen in "Bayienuo" where a mother fears that her young and beautiful daughter is possessed by forest spirit. She wonders if she was wrong to have given her a name different from the one intended. In "Mete and the Mist" the young child Mete is lured by a spirit and disappears in a nearby forest. Her mother's efforts to find her are in vain. As days pass and there is still no sign of Mete, her mother has a dream one night in which her dead husband appears and tells her about the whereabouts of Mete.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this collection of short stories is that it indicates an interesting insight into the political and cultural salience of Christianity in the emergence of an ethnic identity that is burdened with violence and conflict. Through these stories, the author perhaps tries to document that history which has been left out in history books. It is for this reason that they need to be read and heard.

Reviewed by Arpana Nath, Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, Cotton College, Guwahati, Assam

Poetry Section

Dredging

by Malsawmi Jacob

Here am I at midnight
waiting in bleary hope
for muse's visit.
Now to go
eyes on mountains
three-peaked, snow-capped
No mushroom to be found
season over, you see
rhododendrons faded
many months ago
Walk through the woods any way
among sullen alpine trees
listen to cold wind's howl
under dark clouds

The surface may be frozen
break the ice, shards of glass
dive into the lake
go deeper, deeper
till you see, perhaps
old man weaving a basket
or woman in white
knitting with golden yarn
may even be
chubby little boy
bouncing a ball.

Don't be afraid.
Whoever you meet
whatever they give
bring back and shape it
mountains in mind.
(From Four Gardens and other poems)

From death-dance
by Malsawmi Jacob

Is it dark December sky
or buried pains that rise again
called forth phantoms from the air to
death-dance before my face?

They smirk and snicker, hop and leap
dread-drum beating wild rhythm
fasterfaster whirling twirling
slapping their skeletal thighs
chanting "ho hohohohoho!"
bony fingers point my way

Now they ransack all the cupboards
pull out every hidden scrap
till dry bones fill all the floor,
my head hangs down in dismay
In triumphant grin they turn to me
accusing lidless eyes
crying "Avenge avengeavenge!
We must draw blood, we must take life

the soul that sins must die!"
rush at me like a wind
sharp claws piercing my skin
begin to tear my flesh

In agony and terror
with all my might
I cry out to heaven

Oh, what is this?
Rain of blood
on the spectres and me!
The sky clears
I stand in bright sunshine
around me happy children playing laughing
joyous voices blending with birdsongs.

Malsawmi Jacob is a bilingual poet, writer, and former lecturer in English. She has authored eight books and also contributed poems, stories and articles to several publications. She now resides in Bangalore.

Sunday, Aizawl

by Cherrie L. Chhangte

Church bells intrude into my musings.
Musings? Pretentious me.Thoughts.
I am not the type to muse.
But the bells – it is 6:00 pm
And I count three so far,
Of varying tones and volumes
Calling to worship the same God
In different voices.

Up the hill is the Big Church
Their bells seem more imperious;
Down the valley, a little muted
But insistent nonetheless.

I am unsure if the church
That meets in that apartment
Across my bedroom window
Has bells.

Downstairs, I am certain,
They don't need one.
Their flock is too scattered
To hear them anyway.

Soon there will be singing
And we will decide
Which church is more spiritual
By the way they sing.

The congregation downstairs
Don't stand a chance –
They are too small,
And a few straggly voices
Struggle to carry high notes
Accompanied by a lone *khuang*,
Easily drowned by the electronic
Euphoria of surrounding churches.

Aizawl.
So many churches.
Such dedication to dedication.

PLEDGE

by Cherrie L. Chhangte

India is my country.
A piece of paper
And the whims of the powerful
Made it so.
Some protested,
Others did not,
Most did not have a choice.

All Indians are my brothers and sisters,
I find siblings can be very different.

I love my country, and I am proud of its rich and varied heritage.
My country is not always proud of me

And does not always remember my heritage.
I tell myself it loves me back.

I shall always strive to be worthy of it,
Although worth is measured
In terms I do not understand.

I shall give my parents, teachers and all elders respect
And treat everyone with courtesy;
Even the man who rapes me with his eyes,
Or abuses my man
Because we look different.
Yes, I will answer with courtesy
Every time someone asks
If I am from China.

To my country and my people, I pledge my devotion –
For what it's worth.
Devotion.Devotee.Devoted.
Words to chew on.

In their wellbeing and prosperity alone lies my happiness,
And in my wellbeing and prosperity
Lies the future of the nation.

Cherrie L. Chhangte is a poet and translator. She is an Asst. Professor at the Dept. of English, Mizoram University, Aizawl.

Where Daffodils Grow

by Kristina Z. Zama

The incandescent armour weighs on us
Reflecting human godlike giants we carry
On shoulders drooping to the floor.
Yet
What of the albatross
What of killing fields
Where daffodils grow
Trumpeting spring
Most unlikely thing.

Go home!
They scream
In their indifference
And silent dreams.
"No home for me
No home to go home to..."
Where then is here?

The Roaming multitude
Claustrophobic exodus
Stolen of grace and beauty
Yet exhibiting kindness
Invisible phosphorescence
Swaying
Hiding
Sleeping near shallow pond
Squatting on hard earth
Eating off her womb
While, all the while

Scrambling to a nameless place
They will call home.
A promise of tomorrow
Where daffodils grow.

We only know
Overwhelming hunger
The wrenching kind
The grabbing-belly-eating-our-gut kind
Many miles under godless skies
A mother's tearful smile
Of sincere desperation
Looking down
On tender sensitive faces
Looking up at her
Nameless progeny crossing fields
Dusty hands and dragging feet
Over thick trail
Under thin hope
Of a home
Where daffodils grow.

Ideals once meant a meaning
Once disarmed
Entire generations.
It is what it is
Of yesterday
Long gone
Staining memory
While wincing at the sun
Our time is wrong
Being born
Under prostrated pillars

Holding the sky up
But no
Not for us.

Bear witness.
Climb the hill
Like Moses did.
Barren trees among tent cities
Tired limbs in outstretched sheets
Muddy earth mixed in drying dirt
A once small hamlet
Swelling and bursting in its seams
Stitched together in one direction
Looking toward Canaan
Promised city out of ruins
Across yellow white fields
Where daffodils grow.

**Trauma of displacement, hunger, loss and despair that millions of refugees across the world experience through different times in history, is imagined in the following poem.*

Old Aunty
by Kristina Z. Zama

"Bend down
Let the icy water sting your head!
Senses spiked yet?"
She sniggered at my head.
Savage scratching
Chewing through broken teeth
"Dead head!"

She shouted
A common refrain
Shampoo squirted
Dead head lathered
“Unfreeze your head
Bend! Bend!
Use hands
Use fingers
Use elbows
Behind ears
Above neck
Near eyebrows!
Yes! Thats it!”
She continued...
Beside me
Wet feet
Uriah Heep feet
Cadaverous and aged
Squishy and wobbly
They seem to speak to me.

Old Aunty
We called her
The ding ding ding
Her pounding her pounder
Mixing
Leaf and nut
Red and ready
Tossed in the air
Defying gravity
Came flying down
Screaming

Into her red open mouth
To be chewed, relished and spat out.

Freezing head
They come alive
A memory
I thought dead.
Of loose nuts rolling across the floor
Hiding under rows of beds
We, made to bend and retrieve
Pounding ding ding ding
Still rings
Thawed by a memory
I thought long dead
A very very Old Aunty indeed.

**This poem is a reminiscence, a homage to Kong old aunty. I never learnt her name, the maybe octogenarian warden in a girls hostel me and my sisters lived in for a while. We simply referred her as Old Aunty, white haired, tiny bent figure in my mind; sharp tongued, wrinkly skin, smiling through broken red stained teeth from eating her kwai. But she took care of her wards, us, wild as ever come rain or shine under Shillong fickle weather. She fascinated me for I was afraid of her and amused by her in equal measure. I learnt the art of hair washing from our Old Aunty, as the following poem confesses.*

Kristina Z. Zama is Asst. Professor at the Dept. of English, Mizoram University.

Headless Youths And Lighted Candles

Tayenjam Bijoykumar Singh

In the evening in a corner of the accursed land,
Where everything goes the other way around,
A medium, soothsayer of doubtful integrity,
Her head covered with white cloth,
Squatted on her haunches in front of a secluded shrine.

She kept ringing the hand-held bell in her right hand.
She swayed her body backwards and forwards.
She invoked the Almighty to communicate with her.

In a shrill voice she related the oracles of the Almighty.

Ah, you, simpleton of a person, listen to me.
I see youths, the future pillars of the land.
Ah, I see their bodies sans their heads.
Yes, I see torsos of young boys and girls.

Hey, don't you know this!
This is what your Master is saying.
I command you to give them light.
Yes, offer them light to save the land.
Light is what they need most.

Women waiting agog for the oracles spread the news.

It was prophesied in cipher —

Sons and daughters of the land will be decapitated soon.
Offer lighted candles at the gate to ward off the adversity.
One candle for each of them.

The news spread like wildfire.
Worried mothers rushed to neighbourhood shops to buy candles.
Dusk saw lighted candles at the gate of every household.

An inebriated man returned from the local vendor
After having his usual dose of evening shot.
He was startled to see lighted candles at their gate.

Oh, today is Diwali! How foolish of me!
I need one more shot, a small one for the celebration.

He turned and left hurriedly, walking with unsteady steps.
His body swayed from side to side like walking a tightrope.

At the only surviving tea-stall in the neighbourhood,
The vanishing monument of a bygone era,
Erudite persons as they are, a group of elderly men are having tea.

Each of them holding a mobile phone in their hands,
Not to be left out of the present trend, is reading
Statuses and comments posted on Face Book.

His eyes still glued to the mobile phone screen, one of them says —

Shame, shame, shame on our youths.

I pity our headless youths.
They haven't learnt how to use their heads.

They, who can't even spell their names
And write a single word correctly, are acting
As if they are experts of every topic under the sun.
What they need is light, the light of knowledge
To save the accursed land from the imminent doom.

We are ready to teach them everything
But they are not ready to learn anything.
This is the biggest challenge we are facing at present.

(July 6, 2017)

Tayenjam Bijoykumar Singh is a well-known, widely published writer, poet, short story writer, and translator, who writes both in English and Manipuri. He lives in Imphal, Manipur.

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